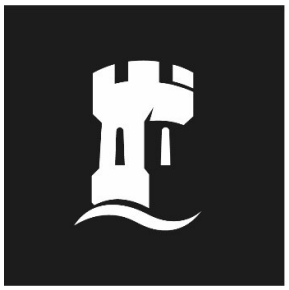

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Tackling Terrorism in Africa:
Post-9/11 US Security Policies and Radicalisation in Kenya

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Thesis submitted to the University of Nottingham
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Supervised by

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July 2021

Abstract

Since the beginning of the war on terror, the US has intensified security efforts in Africa, promoting regional initiatives and increasing bilateral cooperation with local governments to fight terrorism on the ground. Yet, despite Washington's attempts, Islamist violence on the continent is on the rise. What is more, several of US African partners have been criticised for overstepping legal boundaries in the conduct of counter-terrorism operations, committing human rights violations against African people. This study fills a longstanding gap in the literature by exploring whether, and above all, how post-9/11 US security policies may have a negative impact on radicalisation in African states, increasing dynamics culminating with mobilisation into terrorism. Relying on a critical theory-inspired research orientation, it sets up an innovative and interdisciplinary framework, shifting the emphasis to local politics as a determinant for the impact of US policies and pointing to dynamics of violent interaction between African states and their population as a crucial dimension of radicalisation. Incorporating analytical elements from the research on remote warfare, security assistance and the role of agency, and social movements, the proposed framework develops around a three-step causal mechanism hypothesised to connect US policies to the increase in radicalisation on the ground. The mechanism posits that post-9/11 US security policies have a negative impact in African states characterised by the threat of terrorism and the use of indiscriminate repression against suspect groups by: 1) leading to the establishment of a partnership relationship within the framework of remote warfare; 2) from the partnership relationship, African states gain resources and room for manoeuvre to implement indiscriminate repression; 3) indiscriminate repression causes an increase in radicalisation in African states. To test such a mechanism, the research is designed as a case study, focusing on post-9/11 US security policies in Kenya by using theory-testing process tracing to identify the case-specific manifestations of the three steps. The research provides extensive evidence in support of the hypothesised mechanism in the case of Kenya, showing how US remote intervention, based on the provision of indirect support, has inadvertently contributed to fuelling the repressive campaign conducted by local security authorities against Muslims and ethnic Somalis, pushing the latter into the hands of the terrorist group Al-Shabaab. Such findings have significant implications, pointing to the need of context-sensitive security policies acknowledging the political drivers of terrorism and the limits of remote warfare in Kenya. At the same time, they make a theoretical contribution, setting the foundation for a more thorough approach towards the study of US efforts in Africa which, by overcoming divisions in the discipline, could help shape more sustainable and effective security policies.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to the first supervisor of this thesis, Professor Andrew Mumford, whose guidance and feedback have been precious and have contributed significantly to making my PhD a great experience. I would also like to thank the second supervisor of this thesis, Dr Louise Kettle, for her insightful comments and suggestions. Andrew and Louise have been a great team and it has been a pleasure to work with and learn from them during these years.

I am profoundly grateful to my parents and my brother for their love, patience and wholehearted support throughout the course of the PhD. I am also grateful to my friends. I am lucky enough to have met fantastic people, both in my own country, Italy, and in Nottingham, who have always been helpful and supportive with me. I would like to thank them for every laugh, joke, coffee or glass of wine that we have shared in these years (and for putting up with me during the many hours I have spent talking about my PhD-related concerns!).

Finally, my deepest thanks go to my partner, Chiara. Without her support and encouragement this work would have not been possible. Even during these troubling times, she has always brought sunshine to each day, filling it with new adventures and opportunities. For this, and another million reasons, I love her.

Some material from across the thesis (especially from the section on Kenya's history in Chapter 4) has been included in the article "Framing frictions: frame analysis and Al-Shabaab's mobilisation strategies in Kenya", which was written during the course of the PhD and published in *Critical Studies on Terrorism* in December 2020.

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Acronym List

ACOTA	Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance
ACRF	African Crisis Response Force
ACRI	African Crisis Response Initiative
AFRICOM	United States Africa Command
AIAI	Al-Itihaad Al-Islaami
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
AP	Administration Police
AQEA	Al-Qaeda in East Africa
ATA	Anti-Terrorism Assistance (Programme)
ATPU	Anti-Terrorism Police Unit
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BIA	Bilateral Immunity Agreement
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIPK	Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya
CJTF-HOA	Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa
CSS	Critical Security Studies
CT	Counter-terrorism
CTPF	Counterterrorism Partnership Fund
CTS	Critical Terrorism Studies
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DMDC	Defense Manpower Data Center
DOD	Department of Defense
DOS	Department of State
EACTI	East Africa Counterterrorism Initiative
EARSI	East African Regional Strategic Initiative
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FMF	Foreign Military Financing
FMS	Foreign Military Sales
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GSU	General Services Unit
HRW	Human Rights Watch

HSM	Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahidin
IBEAC	Imperial British East Africa Company
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICJ	International Commission of Jurists
IRCK	Inter-Religious Council of Kenya
ICU	Islamic Courts Union
IMET	International Military Education and Training
IPOA	Independent Policing Oversight Authority
IPK	Islamic Party of Kenya
IS	Islamic State
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
JTTF	Joint Terrorism Task Force
JTTF-K	Kenyan Joint Terrorism Task Force
KADU	Kenya African Democratic Union
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KDF	Kenyan Defence Forces
KNCHR	Kenya National Commission on Human Rights
KPS	Kenya Police Service
MRC	Mombasa Republican Council
MYC	Muslim Youth Center
NADR	Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining and Related Programs
NARC	National Rainbow Coalition
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
NEP	North Eastern Province
NFD	Northern Frontier District
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSCVE	National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OIG	State Department Office of the Inspector General
ORG	Oxford Research Group
PDD-25	Presidential Decision Directive 25
PFLP	Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PKO	Peacekeeping Operation

PREACT	Partnership for East Africa Counterterrorism
PSI	Pan-Sahel Initiative
RBPU	Rural Border Patrol Unit
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SFA	Security force assistance
SGI	Security Governance Initiative
SMT	Social Movement Theory
SOF	Special Operation Forces
SOT Bill	Suppression of Terrorism Bill
SUPKEM	Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
TSCTP	Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOSOM II	United Nations Operation in Somalia II
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VE	Violent extremism

Maps

Figure 1. Kenya

The World Factbook 2021. Washington: CIA (Central Intelligence Agency). https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/static/90b306630066af14a88efc31cfda492b/KENYA_reference_map.jpg

Figure 2. Kenya: the coast

Map data ©2021 Google. https://www.google.com/maps/@-3.1529595,39.7397415,434046m/data=!3m1!1e3?hl=en

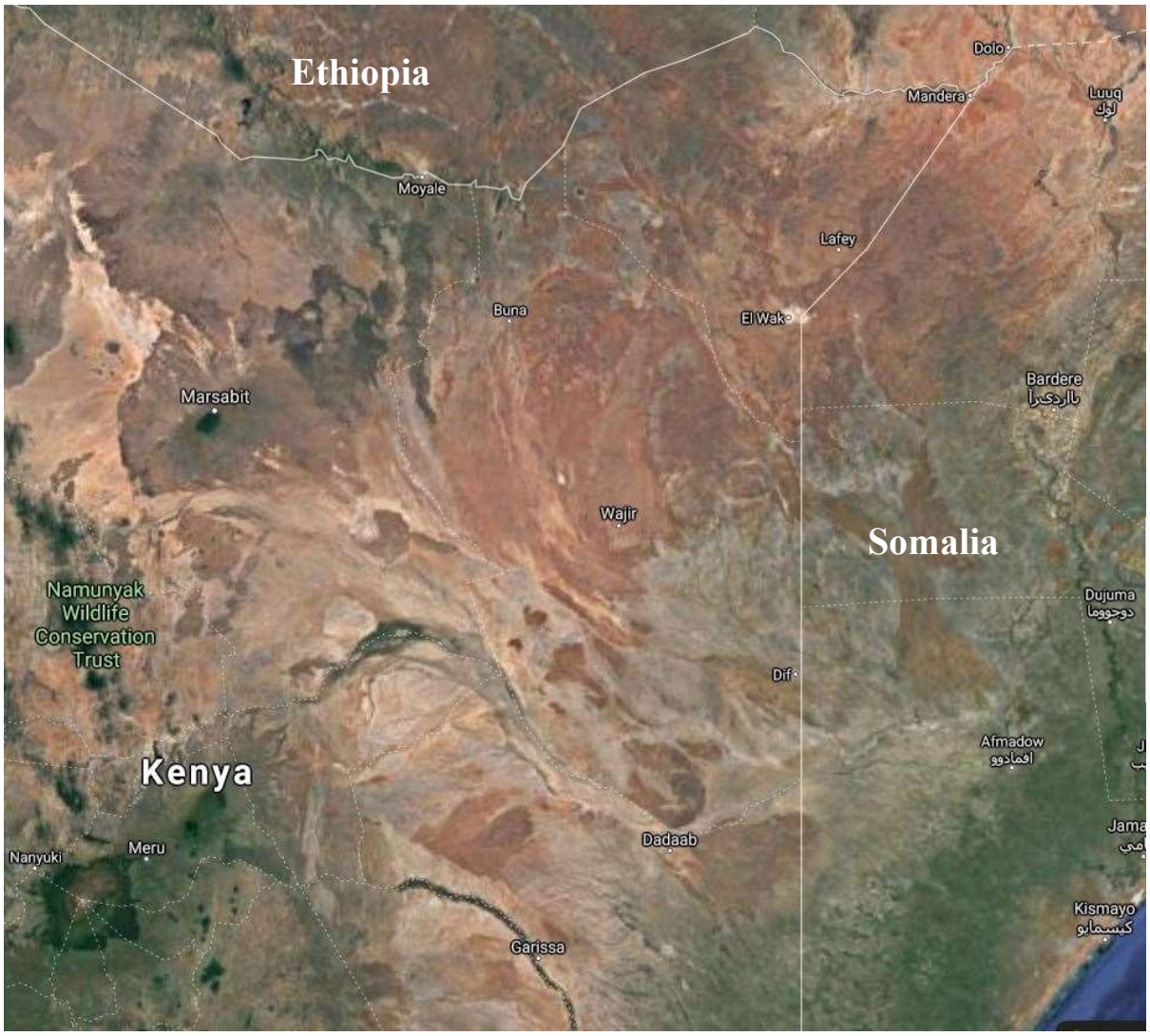


Figure 3. Kenya: the north-eastern area

Map data ©2021 Google. https://www.google.com/maps/@1.6610039,37.8019255,623444m/data=!3m1!1e3?hl=en

Introduction

Two decades have passed since the beginning of the war on terror and the reshaping of the US Africa policy. Yet, while Islamist violence on the continent is on the rise, we still know little about the consequences of American counter-terrorism initiatives in regard to the dynamics that nurture the jihadist threat on the ground. This work sheds light on these issues, exploring the effects of post-9/11 US security policies on the increase in radicalisation in Africa. The following pages introduce the research question of the thesis, discussing the conceptual, theoretical and methodological choices that are made to answer it, as well as the ethical considerations that such choices imply.

This chapter is composed of six sections.

The first section sets out the research question and explains the rationale behind its formulation. The section provides a brief overview on previous works focusing on post-9/11 US security policies in Africa, identifying a gap in the literature for what concerns the analysis of the negative impact that such policies may have on dynamics of radicalisation on the ground.

The second section presents the conceptual and theoretical choices made to answer the research question. The section introduces Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) as the research orientation adopted, outlining the benefits that such an orientation provides to the study of post-9/11 US security policies and the rise of terrorism in African states. Then, after having framed this research as a deductive study, the section introduces the research hypothesis and discusses its underlying theoretical framework.

The third section focuses on the design and methodology of the research. The section shows that the research is designed as a case study, presenting US security policies in Kenya as the case chosen to test the validity of the hypothesis. Then, the section discusses the methodological choices that are made to conduct case study research, introducing process-tracing as the method used to explore causal connections between US security policies and radicalisation in Kenya.

The fourth section deals with the ethics associated with this research. It examines ethical concerns that arise when exploring sensitive issues such as radicalisation and counter-terrorism, outlining the strategies adopted to address them.

The fifth section presents the findings of the research and highlights its contribution. The sections shows how this work provides strong evidence supporting the research hypothesis in the case under study, pointing out the empirical implications as well as the theoretical consequences that such evidence has for the study of post-9/11 US security policies in Africa.

Finally, the last section presents the structure of the thesis, providing an overview of the next chapters and their arguments.

Background and research question

Since the beginning of the war on terror, the US has invested a considerable amount of effort and resources in the promotion of African security. The last two decades have seen Washington developing a major security architecture in the continent, establishing military outposts, launching regional counter-terrorism initiatives and creating the first unified combatant command coordinating US activities on the ground: the Africa Command (AFRICOM) (Emerson 2014; Pham 2014; Turse 2015; N. D. Allen 2018). US soldiers have been increasingly involved in the provision of security aid to African forces under a dense web of bilateral and regional assistance programmes, which have progressively turned into the epitome of a 'light footprint' approach designed to tackle terrorism "by, with and through" local partners (DOD 2018: 10; see Kandel 2014; Burchard and Burgess 2018). Furthermore, Africa has experienced a substantial increase in the use of unmanned drones by US forces seeking to neutralise the terrorist threat in critical areas (e.g., Bachman 2014; Moore and Walker 2016; Rinehart 2016).

Yet, despite US initiatives, terrorism on the continent is on the rise, driven by the expansion of local groups affiliated with Daesh and Al-Qaeda, along with the emergence of new cells in countries historically spared from violent extremism. Several studies register a dramatic surge in Islamist terrorist activity during the last decade, noting how Africa hosts the majority of the states with the largest increase in terrorism worldwide (Adams 2020; ACSS 2020; IEP 2020; UN 2020). In this regard, an investigation shows that Islamist terrorist attacks increased fourfold between 2009 and 2017, causing an 850 per cent increase in the number of deaths (Allison 2017a). Of particular concern is the marked rise in states receiving significant amounts of US assistance such as Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, where attacks increased fivefold between 2016 and 2020 (Burke 2020).

Research points to the political nature of the African state as a key obstacle to the effectiveness of US security efforts, noting how many of Washington's allies on the ground tend to prioritise objectives related to the consolidation of power over counter-terrorism goals (e.g., Menkhaus 2009a; Solomon 2013; Metelits 2016; N. D. Allen 2018). Despite more and more states on the continent having authorised elections, Africa is still beset by authoritarian and illiberal regimes repressing political dissent and committing widespread human rights violations against their own populations (see e.g., Cheeseman 2019; AI 2020). According to data from Freedom House, in 2020 only nine out of fifty-four countries on the continent could be classified as 'Free' in terms of democracy and pluralism (Freedom House 2020; Temin 2020). Along these lines, studies emphasise how "violence

from militant Islamist groups still represents a relatively small share of total violence on the continent" (Donnenfeld 2019), which is largely caused by state forces (CFR 2020a). Exploring such trends, some authors raise serious concerns regarding long-term humanitarian and political consequences associated with the (indiscriminate) allocation of military and defence aid towards African governments (e.g., Hagmann and Reyntjens 2016).

Such concerns, however, have often clashed with those of stakeholders, noting how disengaging from African allied forces risks further deteriorating security in a continent recently defined by the US State Department's coordinator for counter-terrorism as a "key front in the next stage in the fight against terrorism" (quoted in Gardner 2020). In this view, making improvements to local security, even if minimal and in adverse conditions, can bring great benefits in the long run. Potential political and humanitarian repercussions of security initiatives have to be weighed against the drawbacks associated with inaction and non-intervention in some of the most vulnerable regions of the world. The logic behind such reasoning is captured by the words of the spokesperson of the US-led coalition against Daesh when confronted with the unintentional killing of civilians during counter-terrorism operations: "any unintentional loss of life during the defeat of [IS] is tragic. However it must be balanced against the risk of enabling [IS] to continue terrorist activities, causing pain and suffering to anyone they choose" (quoted in BBC 2019a).

Still, what if the unintentional consequences of US policies in African states could jeopardise the very security objectives that Washington aims to achieve on the ground? What if, by resorting to illiberal and repressive allies, US policy makers could inadvertently fuel local instabilities, exacerbating the threat of terrorism? Could there be a causal relationship between post-9/11 US security policies and the increase in radicalisation in African states? Surprisingly, these crucial questions have received little academic attention. Some authors suggest that, when cooperating with African governments that engage in "corrupt and abusive behavior", the US "might create more enemies among local populations than it eliminates" (Bruton and Williams 2014: 75; see also Klare and Volman 2006; Keenan 2013; Solomon 2015a on this argument). However, this scholarship has rarely, if ever, provided a detailed account of *how* post-9/11 US policies may contribute to the deterioration of security in African states, shedding light on the *mechanism by which* dynamics of radicalisation may be affected. Despite the increasing role played by African forces within the US counter-terrorism framework, the impact of US policies on local security "appear[s] to have remained relatively untested" (McInnis and Lucas 2015: 15).

Such a state of affairs is largely due to the persistence of a major gap between the study of US interventionism and contemporary warfare in Africa on the one hand, and the study of radicalisation on the other. The scholarship has provided detailed accounts of post-9/11 US security efforts in

Africa, analysing the technical and logistical architecture set up by Washington in the last two decades to fight enemies on the ground. Still, such accounts have rarely intertwined with a study of how social actors in local theatres react to US policies, shedding light on local perceptions and objectives while exploring dynamics of mobilisation to violence. On the other hand, the research on terrorism and radicalisation has tended to prioritise a focus on militants and their organisations, often treating radicalisation as an apolitical process abstracted from a specific time and context (for a critique, see e.g., Jackson 2009; Jarvis 2009; Solomon 2015b; Tellidis 2016). Such a tendency has contributed to providing legitimacy to a view of militarised approaches as the most effective response to emerging threats on the ground, overlooking the impact that state actions and local security efforts may have on the expansion of terrorism.

This research aims at filling the above gap by focusing on the primary research question: *have post-9/11 US security policies had a negative impact on radicalisation in African states, and if so how?*

Here, the term 'security policies' is meant to encompass the spectrum of US military, diplomatic and intelligence initiatives and measures dealing with security in African states. These include direct forms of intervention through the deployment of US forces on the ground (both for combat and for more development-oriented activities) as well as indirect forms of intervention through the provision of support to local security authorities. For the purposes of this research, however, US military initiatives based on air power are excluded from the definition of security policies. Although, as mentioned above, in the last two decades Africa has seen a surge in the use of unmanned drones by the US, the reliance on such instruments as a means to achieve security objectives in African states has – so far – been relatively limited and circumscribed to specific areas (mostly Somalia and Libya). Drones might turn into a critical weapon in the next stage of the war on terror on the continent, as trends seem to suggest (Whitlock 2013; Penney et al. 2018; Turse, Moltke and Speri 2018). Still, they are unlikely to replace other forms of intervention as the major instrument to counter terrorism and achieve security objectives on the ground.

As regards the term 'radicalisation', this research focuses on "behavioural" forms of radicalisation (Vidino 2010: 5; Neumann 2013: 873), exploring dynamics culminating with involvement in terrorist activities, rather than with the mere acquisition of a radical mindset. For this reason, the term radicalisation is employed to denote the process of mobilisation into terrorism.

Research orientation, approach and hypothesis

Overcoming the division between the study of US policies in Africa and that of radicalisation requires some specific conceptual, theoretical and methodological choices. This section deals with the first

two of such choices, introducing Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) as the research orientation guiding this work and presenting the research hypothesis with its underlying theoretical framework.

Rather than representing a full-blown theory, CTS is conceivable, in broad terms, as a critical theory-inspired research orientation that "self-consciously adopts a sceptical attitude towards state-centric understandings of terrorism and which does not take existing terrorism knowledge for granted but is willing to challenge widely held assumptions and beliefs" (Jackson 2007a: 246; see also e.g., Gunning 2007a; Jackson, Breen-Smyth and Gunning 2009a; Jarvis 2016). The term 'critical', therefore, denotes the self-reflexive approach of CTS towards the subjects of study, which implies "stand[ing] apart from the prevailing order of the world and ask[ing] how that order came about" (Cox 1981: 129; see also Toros ang Gunning 2009: 87).

CTS highlights the complex and heterogeneous nature of Islamist violence, criticising de-historicised and de-politicised explanations of jihadism based on psychological disorder or religious ideology as the main cause (see e.g., Jarvis 2009; Toros and Gunning 2009). As some of its founding scholars clarify,

> CTS research entails a particular ontological position which accepts that 'terrorism' is fundamentally a social fact rather than a brute fact; that its nature is not inherent to the violent act itself, but is dependent upon context, circumstance, intention, and crucially, social, cultural, legal, and political processes of interpretation, categorisation, and labelling (Jackson, Breen-Smyth and Gunning 2009b: 222).

This research aligns with such a position, approaching terrorism as a form of political violence whose logic and strategic significance has to be found in the convergence of specific social, political and cultural dynamics in a specific time and setting. As discussed in Chapter 2 when setting out the conceptual basis of the thesis, the term 'Islamist' terrorism is used in this work just to refer to the "appropriation of Islamic concepts" on the part of "individuals, groups and organisations that pursue political objectives" relying on violence as a method of contention (Chome 2020: 8).

Adopting a CTS orientation provides two major benefits to the study of US security policies and the rise of terrorism in African states. Firstly, it helps frame local politics as the link between US security efforts and radicalisation on the ground. Providing a context-sensitive lens for the study of terrorism, CTS challenges the predominance of a "problem-solving" approach that, rather than questioning existing power relationships and institutions as a source of frictions underlying dynamics of radicalisation, "takes the world as it finds it", conceiving such power relationship and institutions as "the given framework for action" and seeking to make them "work smoothly by dealing effectively

with particular sources of trouble" (Cox 1981: 128-129; see Jackson 2007a; Gunning 2007b). In so doing, CTS brings the state under the radar of the research as a potential agent of mobilisation, questioning heavy-handed security measures as a driver of violence among vulnerable groups (Gunning 2007b; Lindahl 2016). Such a move has considerable implications for the study of US initiatives in Africa. Indeed, it points to African partners as a critical variable affecting the rise of terrorism. African authorities play a key role within the post-9/11 US security framework, translating US directives, assistance and support into concrete measures. As such, they connect the input given by US policy makers with its outcome on the ground. At the same time, however, African authorities are one among other social actors involved in dynamics of interaction within the local context, engaging in activities that can have major repercussions for the emergence of political violence. Exploring how African states react to US policies and, most of all, how such reactions are perceived by other actors on the ground, affecting dynamics of radicalisation, enables us to assess the impact of Washington's security policies on the process of mobilisation.

The second benefit provided by CTS concerns the way in which its versatility and propensity towards disciplinary pluralism allow us to capture multi-scalar connections between the subjects of study and formulate hypotheses regarding their causal relationship. As a research orientation, CTS encourages the incorporation of analytical elements from different theoretical traditions. Jackson, Breen-Smyth and Gunning (2009b: 222) stress how CTS is "a very broad church that allows multiple perspectives…to be brought into the same forum", some of which may even "originate within a problem-solving approach". Applied to the study of US security policies and radicalisation in African states, such an element of eclecticism enables the setting up of an interdisciplinary framework approaching the phenomena in question from various angles to explore how US policies are translated into concrete measures by local authorities and how, in turn, such measures affect mobilisation into terrorism on the ground.

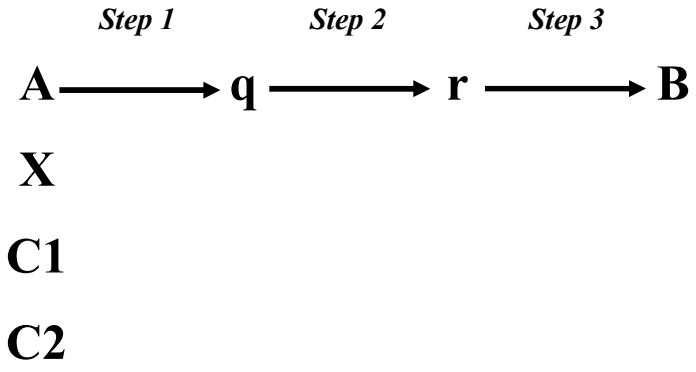
Reaping the benefits provided by the CTS orientation, this research adopts a "deductive approach" to answer the research question, "develop[ing] a theory and hypothesis" by engaging in deductive theorising, and then "design[ing] a research strategy to test the hypothesis" (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2009: 124). The research hypothesis is: *post-9/11 US security policies have had a negative impact on radicalisation in African states by reflecting a strategy of remote warfare in contexts characterised by the threat of terrorism and the use of indiscriminate repression against suspect groups by local security authorities*.

The theoretical propositions underpinning the research hypothesis can be conceptualised into the following causal mechanism (which is arrow-diagrammed in Figure 4):

1. *Post-9/11 US security policies in African state* (indicated with the letter 'Y') *lead to the establishment of a partnership relationship within the framework of remote warfare.*

2. *From the partnership relationship, state (Y) gains resources and room for manoeuvre to implement indiscriminate repression.*

3. *Indiscriminate repression causes an increase in radicalisation in state (Y).*



A: Post-9/11 US security policies in African state (Y).
q: Establishment of a partnership within the framework of remote warfare.
r: State (Y) gains resources and room for manoeuvre to implement indiscriminate repression.
B: Increase in radicalisation in state (Y).
X: This sign simply indicates that the occurrence of the causal mechanism is dependent on the presence of the conditions below.
C1 and **C2** are scope conditions, that is, the conditions that "identify the theory's domain" (Powner 2014: 24), defining the "context in which a theorized mechanism is expected to operate" (Beach and Pedersen 2013: 177).
C1: State (Y) suffers from the threat of terrorism.
C2: Local security authorities in state (Y) use indiscriminate repression against suspect groups.

Figure 4. Arrow diagram of the causal mechanism. Adapted from Van Evera (1997: 12)

A causal mechanism can be conceived just as "a complex system, which produces an outcome by the interaction of a number of parts" (Glennan 1996: 52, quoted in Beach and Pedersen 2013: 1). As such, causal mechanisms are used to provide explanations of the dynamics that link a cause, or independent variable (post-9/11 US security policies in African states), with its presumed effect (an increase in radicalisation in African states).

As detailed in Chapter 2, the theoretical propositions underpinning the first step of the causal mechanism (A → q) build on research on remote warfare (e.g., Watts and Biegon 2017; Knowles and Watson 2018a, 2018b; Biegon and Watts 2020; Knowles 2020; McKay, Watson and Karlshoej-Pedersen 2021). Remote warfare is a concept developed by the Oxford Research Group (ORG) to capture recent evolutions in the character of war, denoting a "strategy of countering threats at a distance, without the deployment of large military forces" (Watts and Biegon 2017: 1). Such a strategy emerges from the increasing willingness of states to contain military, economic and political costs associated with the deployment of 'boots on the ground' in contemporary forms of conflict. Rather than taking risks by sending militaries to do frontline fighting, states turning to remote warfare seek to achieve security goals while maintaining a strategic distance from the theatres of violence, relying on private military contractors, resorting to air power or establishing a partnership relationship with local forces and providing them with indirect support (Demmers and Gould 2021; Watson and McKay 2021).

This research hypothesises that, being driven by a problem-solving perspective on the war on terror in Africa, the US establishes partnership relationships with local actors to achieve security objectives remotely. Such a hypothesis rests on the presence of the first scope condition (C1), meaning that, for A → q to occur, the African state in question (Y) must suffer from the threat of terrorism. This implies that there is (at least) a terrorist organisation operating in state (Y) and/or in the region in which state (Y) is located (otherwise almost any state in the world would suffer from a certain degree of threat). The rationale behind C1 is that, in line with what is argued by the scholarship on remote warfare (see e.g., Knowles and Watson 2018a, 2018b), to reflect a strategy of remote warfare, US indirect support in state (Y) must be aimed at fighting an enemy on the ground. Thus, the theory is not valid in cases where the US provides military support to an African state but there is not a local terrorist threat to fight (as, for example, US assistance might be just aimed at strengthening the security sector of the recipient state to prevent future threats). In such cases, as it will emerge from the next step of the causal mechanism, the US would hardly face major constraints if confronted with the repressive behaviour of local security authorities and could easily withdraw support.

The second step of the causal mechanism (q → r) builds on research on security assistance and the role of agency (e.g., Cochran 2010; Schroeder 2010; Biddle 2017; Matisek and Reno 2019; Knowles and Matisek 2019; Mezzell 2019). Here it is hypothesised that adopting a remote warfare strategy to fight threats from a distance entails significant risks. This is due to two main factors characterising a strategy of remote warfare, which impose considerable limitations to US policy makers while allowing partners to use US indirect support with fewer restrictions. Firstly, the lack of US oversight over the security performance of African forces receiving indirect support, due to the

physical and strategic remoteness separating the US from surrogates (Biddle 2017; Ucko 2019). Secondly, the generation of a moral hazard in that, rather than being passive actors, African states are more than conscious of their frontline role in the US counter-terrorism framework and can exploit the tension between US security imperatives on the ground and its reluctance to intervene directly as a leverage to gain negotiating power while evading Washington's pressures regarding the use of military support (see Abrahamsen and Sandor 2018).

The above factors highlight how, the context in which US policies are implemented plays a crucial role in determining the outcome of Washington's security efforts. In socio-political environments where the perceptions and interests of local security authorities converge towards the adoption of security measures diverging from those desired by Washington, US indirect support risks inadvertently contributing to furthering such measures, providing resources and room for manoeuvre for their implementation (see Knowles and Matisek 2019; Matisek and Reno 2019). This point is of key importance given the high levels of state repression in the African continent. Along these lines, this research hypothesises that, in contexts in which the second scope condition is present (C2: local security authorities in state (Y) use indiscriminate repression against suspect groups), the establishment of a partnership relationship within the framework of remote warfare by the US unintentionally results in the provision of resources and room for manoeuvre for the implementation of indiscriminate repression. As further clarified in Chapter 2, the term 'indiscriminate' denotes the extension of repressive measures by local authorities to people merely suspected of involvement in terrorism (as opposed to 'selective' repression, which only targets militants and their followers, see Hafez 2003). When implemented against 'suspect groups', indiscriminate repression targets entire communities (either real or imaginary, see Breen-Smith 2014) whose members are suspected of being involved in terrorist activities.

The third, and last, step of the causal mechanism (r → B) deals with the effects of indiscriminate repression on radicalisation in African state (Y), building on research on social movements and political violence (e.g., McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Hafez 2003; Wiktorowicz 2004a; della Porta 2013; 2018; Bosi, Demetriou and Malthaner 2014a; Klandermans 2014). Adopting a Social Movement Theory (SMT) approach to the study of radicalisation, this research hypothesises that the use of indiscriminate repression by local security authorities in state (Y) causes an increase in radicalisation among targeted groups. Including activities such as the curtailment of "political and civil liberties", "the use of physical violence against human beings", as well as "intimidation or the threatened use of violence" (Osa and Shock 2007: 133), repression fuels a motivation to take revenge against the state (Hafez 2003; della Porta 2013), increasing the appeal of terrorism. At the same time, generating a disconnect between the state and targeted groups, repression allows terrorists to navigate

the vulnerable sections of the society, establishing connections with local people and enabling aspiring militants to concretise their propensity for mobilisation.

In line with the CTS orientation, the causal mechanism places local politics at the heart of the analysis, framing the actions and reactions of African states as a crucial determinant for the impact of US policies on the ground. The turn to remote warfare as a major strategy guiding US counter-terrorism efforts is hypothesised to facilitate the abuse of indirect support by local authorities, entailing critical consequences for radicalisation in contexts where such authorities rely on indiscriminate repression against suspect groups. One might question the actual impact that US policies might have on the process of mobilisation within the mechanism, given that the presence of C2 implies that Washington's partners on the ground (already) rely on measures based indiscriminate repression (which are deemed to trigger radicalisation in the mechanism). In this regard, drawing a parallel with the provision of indirect support to parties involved in conventional forms of warfare can help grasp the hypothesised causality between US policies and the increase in radicalisation. Indeed, as an actor that provides aid to help an allied army on the battlefield contributes (at least in a minimal way) to the activities of the army that are aimed at defeating the enemy, the same can be said in case the army in question redirects its military efforts towards other targets. The provision of weapons, training, knowhow, logistical and economic resources inevitably plays a role in increasing the scale and scope of the activities carried out by the surrogate on the ground. What is at stake here is not the extent of such a role, which also depends on the resources and capacities on which the surrogate can already rely, but instead its existence. If US policies contribute to the mobilisation of even just a single new adversary each time they are implemented in a given context, they turn the conflict in question into a potentially never-ending war. This does not mean that the activities of local allies could not have similar outcomes (albeit on a different scale) without US involvement. However, it does raise serious concerns regarding the effectiveness of US initiatives, indicating that, despite the effort made by Washington to defeat enemies on the battlefield of the war on terror in Africa, US policies inadvertently end up increasing their ranks.

Following the CTS orientation, the hypothesised mechanism also links strands of research that have so far remained largely unconnected, setting up an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that captures the links between the study of US security efforts, African agency and the consequences that the latter has in terms of radicalisation into terrorism. Covering such a wide spectrum of subjects, the framework inevitably glosses over some nuances in their structure and configuration, often sacrificing specificities in favour of the big picture. As the most critical example, US security policies and Kenyan counter-terrorism measures are often treated as the product of unitary actors, overlooking the competition between different bureaucracies and agendas within and among state institutions. For the

purposes of this work, such a line of action brings more benefits than disadvantages. Generalisations and approximations may raise ethical concerns, which will be discussed in the following pages of this chapter. Still, if they do not affect the integrity and functioning of the hypothesised mechanism, they have no relevant impact on the reliability of the research findings. On the contrary, by smoothing the research process, they can provide a clearer overview of the connections between the subjects of study, shedding light on the chain of causality. Indeed, sometimes it is necessary to "ignore a vast number of trees in order to see the forest" (Herbst 2000: 4).

Research design and methodology

This research is designed as a qualitative case study. As Gerring elucidates (2006: 20), a case study "may be understood as the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is…to shed light on a larger class of cases (a population)". Such a study is of great utility, if compared to large-*n* studies, when seeking to explore whether and, most of all, *how* a given phenomenon can occur, as is the case with this research. Indeed, focusing on a single unit, case study enables the researcher to provide an in-depth investigation of the intermediary dynamics through which initial conditions lead to the final outcome (Van Evera 1997: 54). As such, it allows for a relatively large degree of flexibility and eclecticism in the structuring of the research, being particularly suitable for qualitative research integrating multiple perspectives to provide a thorough understanding of those dynamics at different levels of analysis (Snow and Trom 2002: 154).

Cases characterising case study research have specific temporal and spatial boundaries (Gerring 2006). In this research, since African states (characterised by the presence of scope conditions C1 and C2) identify the population of cases to which the hypothesised causal mechanism refers, the spatial boundaries of a single unit coincide with that of an African state. As regards the temporal boundaries, the research focuses on the 'post-9/11' period, which is meant to last up to the year 2020. Such a time limit, coinciding with the last year of the Trump presidency in the US, is due to the shortage of data for the year 2021, which overlaps with the final stage of the research process.

To explore the impact of post-9/11 US security policies on radicalisation in African states, this research focuses on Kenya as a case study. The rationale behind such a choice is based on the "typicality" (Gerring 2006: 96) characterising the Kenyan case, that is, the high chance of representativeness of the case in relation to the population. A "typical" case is a case in which both the independent variable (A) and the outcome (B) are present, and the scope conditions (C) are favourable, "allow[ing] the theorized mechanism to operate" (Beach and Pedersen 2013: 150). Due to such characteristics, typical cases are ideal for "confirmatory" purposes, that is, for proving the

existence of a causal mechanism and validating its underlying theoretical framework (Seawright and Gerring 2008: 297).

In the post-9/11 period, the Kenyan case has presented both A (US security policies) and B (increase in radicalisation) as well as favourable scope conditions. As other African states, the country has suffered from terrorism, being subjected to the activities of Al-Qaeda and its local affiliate in East Africa, Al-Shabaab. Since the late 2000s, the latter group has represented a major and unprecedented threat in East Africa, causing approximately half of the Islamist terrorist incidents on the continent (ACSS 2019). Hundreds of the group's attacks have concentrated in Kenya (START 2019). Taking advantage of the nearly 700 kilometres of porous border separating militants' strongholds in southern Somalia from Kenyan territory, Al-Shabaab has stretched its tentacles in the country, increasing incursions southwards (ICG 2014, 2018; Anderson and McKnight 2015a; Bryden and Bahra 2019). In so doing, the group has managed to establish links with local madrassas and religious organisations, gaining traction among the marginalised sections of the population, where an increasing number of Muslims of both Somali and non-Somali ethnicity have mobilised into terrorism (e.g., Botha 2013; K. Allen 2015; Miriri 2019; Mkutu and Opondo 2019). Indeed, while turning into one of the main targets of terrorism on the continent, Kenya has progressively become a key recruitment pool for militants in East Africa, providing most of Al-Shabaab's foreign fighters and giving rise to a local affiliated cell, Al-Hijra (Kajee 2014; AP News 2017; Mogire, Mkutu and Alusa 2018; Cannon and Ruto Pkalya 2019).

Faced with terrorism in the country, the US has intensified security efforts, fostering military and diplomatic cooperation to strengthen the national security architecture. In the last two decades, Kenyan forces have received increasing amounts of training under bilateral and regional programmes, becoming a major US security ally in the fight against Al-Shabaab in East Africa (Muhula 2007; Mogire and Mkutu 2011 Whitaker 2014).

However, reflecting major trends on the continent, Kenya's security performances have raised serious concerns among observers. Reports of human rights groups and NGOs highlight how Muslim and ethnic Somali communities in the country have increasingly been suspected of having links with Somali terrorists and subjected to harsh counter-terrorism measures by Kenyan forces, whose initiatives have often degenerated into the perpetration of violence and abuse (e.g., OSF 2013a, 2013b; AI 2014; HRW 2016). Research studies warn against the adoption of such measures by local authorities, arguing that human rights violations risk deteriorating the living conditions of vulnerable Kenyan communities, creating dangerous tensions, and even increasing the resilience of Al-Shabaab (Mkutu, Marani and Ruteere 2014; Anderson and McKnight 2015a; Lind, Mutahi and Oosterom 2017; Mwangi 2017a). In so doing, some works place the emphasis on the consequences of US

policies, maintaining that Washington's support may further undermine humanitarian and political conditions in the country (see e.g., Ruteere and Ogada 2010; Mogire and Mkutu 2011). Still, reflecting the aforementioned gap between US policies and the emergence of terrorism in Africa, the scholarship has tended to overlook potential repercussions of Washington's security initiatives in terms of radicalisation.

Testing the presence of the hypothesised causal mechanism in the Kenyan case, this research addresses such a gap, investigating the impact of post-9/11 US security policies on mobilisation into terrorism in the country. To do so, the research relies on "theory testing process-tracing" as the method to conduct the analysis (Beach and Pedersen 2013: 14). Process-tracing is "a key technique for capturing causal mechanisms in action" (Bennet and Checkel 2012: 12). The 'theory-testing' version of such a technique is conceptualised by Beach and Pedersen (2013) for studies that (like this one) adopt a deductive approach, allowing for inferences regarding the presence of a hypothesised causal mechanism (and its underlying theoretical framework) in a single case study (Beach and Pedersen 2013: 15). This requires a specific procedure to render the causal mechanism 'visible' and capture its empirical manifestations.

As Bennet and Checkel remark (2012: 13), hypothesised causal mechanisms are unobservable, as "we do not get to observe causality – we make inferences about it". To test the presence of a causal mechanism in a case study it is necessary to "operationalise" it, that is, to "translat[e] theoretical expectations into case-specific predictions of what observable manifestations each of the parts of the mechanism should have if the mechanism is present in the case" (Beach and Pedersen 2013: 14). Process-tracing scholars emphasise how such a procedure resembles the work of "a detective in search of specific evidence that will help solve the mystery", in that "the investigator specifies in advance the…[prediction]…that counts in favor of or against a hypothesis and then looks to see if…[supporting]…data are present" (Mahoney 2012: 587).

The degree of *certainty* and *uniqueness* characterising the predictions formulated by the researcher in relation to the hypothesised steps of a causal mechanism determines the confirmatory power of the inferential test (Van Evera 1997). Here, 'certainty' refers to the unequivocal character of the forecast (i.e. the forecast has to occur for the related step to be valid), while 'uniqueness' denotes the exclusive relationship between the forecast and the hypothesis (i.e. the forecast cannot have causal explanations other than those implied by the occurrence of the hypothesised step) (Van Evera 1997: 31). The more a prediction is formulated in a way that, if supporting evidence is found, such a prediction is necessary and sufficient to validate the related step, the more the test acquires strength and approaches a *doubly decisive test*. The latter is the strongest inferential test for causal

mechanisms (being characterised by the highest values of certainty and uniqueness), although, as Beach and Pedersen highlight (2013: 104), its role is more that of an ideal type:

> in real-world social science research, it is also almost impossible to formulate predictions in such a manner [i.e. pure certainty and uniqueness] given the difficulty of finding and gaining access to the type of empirical evidence that would enable doubly decisive tests. Furthermore, inverse relationships often exist between the uniqueness and certainty of tests in that the more unique the empirical predictions, the less likely we are to find the evidence, and vice versa.

The following table (Figure 5) shows the operationalisation of the hypothesised causal mechanism and the consequent predictions that this research formulates for the case under study.

	Hypothesised causal mechanism	**Case-specific predictions (observable manifestations of the hypothesised causal mechanism)**
Step 1 *A → q*	Post-9/11 US security policies in African state (Y) lead to the establishment of a partnership relationship within the framework of remote warfare Scope condition (C1): state (Y) suffers from the threat of terrorism	If C1 is present (meaning that Kenya suffers from the threat posed by Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab), the research expects to see *the US providing security assistance to Kenya to fight Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab while keeping a low military presence on the ground*
Step 2 *q → r*	From the partnership relationship, state (Y) gains resources and room for manoeuvre to implement indiscriminate repression Scope condition (C2): local security authorities in state (Y) use indiscriminate repression against suspect groups	If C2 is present (meaning that Muslim and ethnic Somali communities are subjected to indiscriminate repression by Kenyan security authorities), the research expects to see *Kenya managing to use US security assistance to implement indiscriminate repression against Muslim and ethnic Somali communities*
Step 3 *r → B*	Indiscriminate repression causes an increase in radicalisation in state (Y)	The research expects to see *Kenyan Muslim and ethnic Somali communities becoming prone to*

		mobilising into Al-Shabaab, and managing to do so, in the face of indiscriminate repression

Figure 5. Operationalisation of the causal mechanism. Adapted from Beach and Pedersen (2013: 112-113)

As it emerges, rather than leaving room for alternative explanations, this research formulates very specific predictions, seeking to maximise the degree of certainty and uniqueness. In the first step of the causal mechanism (A → q), if C1 is present (meaning that Kenya suffers from the threat posed by Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab), the research expects to see the US providing security assistance to Kenya to fight Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab while keeping a low military presence on the ground. Such a prediction is measurable by looking for trends concerning the number of US military personnel in Kenya and the amount of security assistance provided by the US to Nairobi in the post-9/11 period, along with data from statements and documents attesting that the purpose of the assistance has been to fight terrorism. If supporting evidence is found, it strongly corroborates the hypothesis that post-9/11 US policies in African state (Y) lead to the establishment of a partnership relationship within the framework of remote warfare. Indeed, by including key elements denoting such a relationship (the provision of indirect support to a local actor to fight an enemy while containing troops on the ground), the prediction has a high degree of certainty (in its absence there could be no A → q) and a relatively high degree of uniqueness (if confirmed by evidence, the prediction could hardly have causes other than the establishment of a relationship in which a benefactor country relies on a local actor to achieve security goals from a distance).

In the second step of the causal mechanism (q → r), if C2 is present (meaning that suspected Muslim and ethnic Somali communities are subjected to indiscriminate repression by Kenyan security authorities), the research expects to see Kenya managing to use US security assistance to implement indiscriminate repression against Muslim and ethnic Somali communities. Such a prediction is measurable by looking for evidence attesting that Kenyan security authorities benefiting from US security assistance have been involved in practices of indiscriminate repression against such communities, along with evidence of Kenya avoiding sanctions from the US. If such evidence is found, it validates the hypothesis that the partnership relationship means that African state (Y) gains resources and room for manoeuvre to implement indiscriminate repression. Indeed, on the one hand, the observation of Kenyan authorities managing to use US assistance to carry out indiscriminate repression against Muslim and ethnic Somali communities could hardly have plausible explanations other than the establishment of the security partnership allowing the recipient state to gain resources and room for manoeuvre for repression (high degree of uniqueness). On the other, such an observation

is highly necessary to validate q → r (high degree of certainty), as there could hardly be such a step in its absence.

Finally, in the third step of the causal mechanism (r → B), the research expects to see Kenyan Muslim and ethnic Somali communities becoming prone to mobilising into Al-Shabaab, and managing to do so, in the face of indiscriminate repression. Such a prediction is measurable by looking for data from statements and documents attesting that members of such communities have decided to mobilise into Al-Shabaab when facing indiscriminate repression by national authorities, along with evidence of suspect groups translating their aspiration into action. Even in this case, if supporting evidence is found, it strongly corroborates the hypothesis that indiscriminate repression causes an increase in radicalisation in African state (Y). Indeed, due to its specific character, the forecast has a high degree of certainty (there could be no r → B without groups targeted by indiscriminate repression becoming prone to mobilising into terrorism and managing to do so) and a high degree of uniqueness (as the emergence of a propensity for mobilisation into Al-Shabaab among groups subjected to indiscriminate repression, along with the concretisation of such a propensity, could hardly have explanations other than r → B).

Importantly, being expected to lead to an 'increase' in radicalisation, nor post-9/11 US security policies neither local practices of indiscriminate repression are conceived as the sole factors causing mobilisation into terrorism in Kenya (which would require a different kind of analysis to rule out rival explanations) but instead as "factors that contribute to an outcome" and whose removal (or absence) does not necessarily "eliminate the outcome" (Mahoney 2015: 203). As regards such an outcome, this study restricts its focus on mobilisation into Al-Shabaab (including its affiliate Al-Hijra) as the sole indicator of behavioural radicalisation of Kenyan people. This means that, despite the focus on Al-Qaeda as a potential threat in Kenya and a consequent target of post-9/11 US security policies, dynamics of mobilisation into the group are not considered when exploring the increase in radicalisation. Although Al-Qaeda played a substantial role in East Africa between the 1990s and the early 2000s, also affiliating with Al-Shabaab in 2012, its relatively limited presence on the ground during the last two decades implies that (differently from Al-Shabaab) the group could not benefit directly from the consequences of Kenyan harsh security policies, capitalising on emerging tensions in the country to gain new fighters. In the same way, despite the increasing media attention on the Kenyan separatist group Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) during recent years, topped off by the allegations of Kenyan officials regarding the existence of links between the group and Somali Islamist terrorists (Chonghaile 2012a; ICG 2014), dynamics of mobilisation into the MRC are not considered part of the increase in radicalisation. Such a choice is due to the ambiguity surrounding the portrayal of the MRC in Kenya, which has been found to be affected by "systematic bias", often highlighting

the violent nature of the group "despite the lack of supporting empirical evidence" (Goldsmith 2018: 27), along with the release of several authoritative investigations remarking that "no direct operational or ideological link exists between Al-Shabaab and…the Mombasa Republican Council" (ICG 2018: 8).

The high degree of certainty and uniqueness characterising the case-specific predictions that this research formulates implies that, if evidence supporting each prediction is found, the mechanism (with its underlying theoretical framework) is confirmed. This, however, does not mean that the mechanism is generalisable. Process-tracing is used to prove that the theory that has been developed operates in the case under study. As Beach and Pedersen highlight (2013: 89), "neither inferences about necessity nor sufficiency of a mechanism in relation to the population of a phenomenon can be made. To prove necessity or sufficiency of conditions in relation to a population requires cross-case comparative methods". Such a state of affairs reflects a limit of case study research, which is "weaker with respect to external validity than its crosscase cousin" (Gerring 2006: 43). Thus, even if the predictions are confirmed, the causal mechanism cannot automatically be assumed to operate in cases other than that of Kenya. Still, this does not mean that the research question (concerning the wider population of African states characterised by C1 and C2) would be left unanswered. On the contrary, "the validity of the [proposed] theory and its ability to explain at least one case…[would be]…strongly corroborated" (Van Evera 1997: 66). As one scholar remarks, "for any given process tracing test, the key requirement is simply that the generalization apply to the kind of case under analysis" (Mahoney 2012: 585). The research hypothesis is to be considered valid if within-case findings suggest so, as it proves to explain (at least) the case for which it has been tested. Such a validity can then pave the way for "cross-case speculation" and stimulate further investigations testing its ability to explain other cases composing the population of reference (Gerring 2006: 85).

To find the evidence necessary to confirm the case-specific predictions, the research follows the guidelines laid down by Beach and Pedersen (2013: 120-143), collecting data by – deliberately – looking for observations enabling assessment of the forecasts. As the two scholars clarify,

> the selection of sources in process-tracing research is not driven by random sampling; instead, we select sources based on the type of evidence that is best suited to enable us to engage in a critical theory test. In other words, source selection is theory-driven (Beach and Pedersen 2013: 132).

This poses serious challenges in light of the accessibility of the data required in this study. As regards the case-specific prediction of A → q, for example, several analysts highlight how "it is extremely challenging to compile a comprehensive picture of how much security assistance is being provided

to each African country, given the complex patchwork of legal authorities and programs under which the State Department and DOD are currently operating" (Ploch 2015: 3; see also e.g., McDonald 2015). Even data on the use of repression by security authorities and on dynamics of mobilisation are often difficult to access, given the fact that repressive states rarely "advertise" their violent actions against the population or enable enquiries about the consequences of such actions to be conducted freely among targeted communities (Blakeley 2009: 13; see also Blakeley and Raphael 2017). These difficulties are exacerbated by the persistent dangers complicating the conduct of interviews in areas affected by high levels of terrorism (for studies discussing such dangers in northern Kenya, see, for example, Kfir 2017), along with more recent limitations to field research imposed by the outbreak of Covid-19.

To cope with such challenges and mitigate access problems, contact was made with human rights practitioners with an expertise in counter-terrorism and post-9/11 security issues in Kenya to arrange online interviews. However, after many attempts, it became evident that, despite the assurance of anonymity and confidentiality, potential risks for personal safety (due to the sensitiveness of the research topics) meant that people were extremely reluctant to speak. On more than one occasion, NGO workers with a well-known expertise on Kenya and the war on terror took a step back when informed of the nature of the research. Consequently, an alternative route had to be taken to gather data.

Following recent studies addressing methodological issues caused by the pandemic, this research adopts documentary research as a method of data collection, using documents as a "substitute for the…material gained from seeing, hearing, and analyzing with one's own eyes" (Krause et al. 2021: 4). Documentary research refers to "the analysis of documents that contain information about the phenomenon we wish to study", whereas the term 'document' simply refers to "an artefact which has as its central feature an inscribed text"; in other words, "a written text" (Mogalakwe 2006: 221, 222). Despite being traditionally regarded as a specific feature of historical research, during the last two decades such a method has been promoted by several studies in the field of social science as a major instrument "to read between the lines of our material world" (McCulloch 2004: 1).

This research relies on multiple types of documents, both primary ("eyewitness accounts of a given process") and secondary (which are "produced based on primary sources") (Beach and Pedersen 2013: 132). Data are gathered from media articles;[1] UN reports; reports and briefings released by human rights groups, NGOs and think thanks; reports from Kenyan security institutions

[1] In two cases, media articles included a video document of which selected passages have been transcribed verbatim (see McLellan, MacQueen and Neidig 2003). Parts of text quoted from such documents have been indicated as 'transcribed' in the thesis.

and African regional organisations; documents released by Wikileaks; Kenyan and US governments' official documents; documents released by the US Department of State (DOS) and Department of Defense (DOD); and academic research articles. To ensure maximum levels of robustness in the research and support claims with substantial evidence, a major effort has been made to triangulate consistently between different data sources. Such a modus operandi has enabled the thesis to overcome potential difficulties caused by the lack of interviews, avoiding biases in the selection of the observations and the evaluation of their accuracy (see Beach and Pedersen 2013). In the case of post-9/11 US security policies, triangulating data from DOS and DOD official documents with data from media articles and thinks thanks (for example, the Security Assistance Monitor project run by the Center for International Policy), the research has managed to acquire a detailed picture of the trends regarding US security assistance in Kenya, as well as crucial information concerning the US military presence in the country. Data from Wikileaks has complemented such a picture, also contributing to shedding light on important aspects concerning the US-Kenya security and diplomatic relationship. In this regard, the research aligns with previous studies stressing the suitability of Wikileaks data for research purposes and their capability to "offer unique insights into political phenomena" that would "otherwise be impossible to obtain, or in the best-case scenario, [would] require years or even decades of delay" (Michael 2015: 183). Of course, such insights are often the expression of opinions and perceptions that may not necessarily reflect those of all the social actors at play. In this study, for example, most of the leaked data provide the viewpoints of members of the US embassy in Kenya. Still, triangulating such data with data from other sources and reading leaked information through the lens of the 'facts' (that is, what the US has actually done in relation to the topics treated) enable to assess the influence that such viewpoints have had on US policies and to contextualise them within broader trends.

As regards data on repression and radicalisation, triangulating between media articles and reports of human rights groups and NGOs has enabled the thesis to provide a thorough overview of dynamics of state violence and counter-terrorism in Kenya, capturing the perceptions of targeted communities and the implications that such perceptions have had for the emergence of radicalisation. Despite the criticism of some scholars towards the use of newspapers and media articles in academic research (e.g., Ortiz et al. 2005), this work aligns with studies maintaining that, if triangulated with other data sources, media articles can offer an extremely useful lens to explore dynamics of mobilisation (e.g., Koopmans and Rucht 2002; Earl et al. 2004). In the case under study, they have provided precious information regarding the occurrence of specific episodes of violence in the counter-terrorism framework, contributing to shedding light on the feelings of local Kenyan communities. Furthermore, rather than merely focusing on the interpretation of the events provided by the authors of the articles,

this research has consistently sought to extract the 'raw material' (i.e. the primary data; see McCulloch 2004) included in the documents (for example, gathering data from interviews of local actors providing eyewitness accounts of events) and to interpret such material by contextualising it within the local socio-political landscape.

This latter procedure of contextualisation is of key importance for two reasons. Firstly, because it enables us to critically assess the content of the data, avoiding bias by evaluating observations based on "what is known about the actors, their intentions, their interactions, and the situation in which they found themselves" (Beach and Pedersen 2013: 126). Secondly, because it helps mitigate potential cultural bias stemming from the vast cultural gap existing between the author of this research (born and raised in Europe) and many of the topics that the research treats (for example, the perceptions of radicalised people in Kenya). Although, as critical scholars note, "the condition of objectivity is impossible in a historical human subject" (Booth 2008: 71) and "no individual can pretend to being…entirely unbiased", "striv[ing] for fairness, balance and inclusivity when making inferences" by contextualising narratives within their landscape of meaning is nonetheless a key task to produce high-quality research (Froese 2013: 124).

In line with what suggested by Bennet and Checkel (2012: 32), both data collection and analysis have been stopped "when repetition occurs" and new evidence cannot alter the emerging picture or contribute to better defining its structure. As the scholars clarify (2012: 32),

> for each test in determining whether an animal is a duck – walk, sounds, etc – a small sample is sufficient. A thousand steps or quacks provide no more convincing evidence than a few.

Ethical considerations

Although the scholarship on terrorism and counter-terrorism tends to discuss ethical considerations mostly in relation to the conduct of fieldwork and interviews (e.g., Bikson 2007; Dolnik 2013; Mills, Massoumi and Miller 2020), this research takes into account the ethics associated with documentary research, acknowledging that treating sensitive topics such as radicalisation and repression implies several concerns of which to take care. In the first instance, the research is responsive to ethical concerns that may arise from seeking to explore the 'rationale' underlying radicalisation in a state such as Kenya, where the wounds left by terrorism are still fresh among the population. Here, the contextualisation of documentary material plays a critical role in adding historical depth to the analysis and avoiding the production of misleading and deceptive explanations (based on data abstracted from their spatial and temporal dimensions) that may hurt the feelings of stakeholders in the country (see Subotić 2020). As will be further discussed in Chapter 2, seeking to identify the

"human faces of terror" (Booth 2008: 74) by locating dynamics of mobilisation within the socio-political and cultural environment from which they originate is not a procedure aimed at normalising jihadism or providing some sort of justification for its occurrence. On the contrary, the main objective underlying such a procedure is to contribute to the eradication of terrorism by shedding light on the dynamics that add fuel to it and light the fire of instability in vulnerable contexts. Yet, too often works de-exceptionalising Islamist violence and highlighting the acts of terror committed by state forces under the banner of counter-terrorism come under heavy criticism. As Edward Said emphasised during an interview after the 9/11 attacks,

> if you start to speak about this [i.e. terrorism] as something that can be understood historically—without any sympathy—you are going to be thought of as unpatriotic, and you are going to be forbidden. It's very dangerous (Said 2001, quoted in M. Smith 2016).

This research also takes into account ethical concerns that may emerge when exploring security policies and dynamics of state repression, acknowledging that documentary research can "cause significant reputational damage [to security actors] when unflattering documents, pieces of writing, or testimonies are uncovered" (Subotić 2020: 8). Such concerns can be of particular relevance in a work that, as already mentioned, often treats US policies and Kenyan measures as the product of unitary actors. Indeed, glossing over nuances in internal divisions among state institutions risks implicitly extending potential reputational damages to all people and entities that form part of the establishment. The research is aware of such a risk and recognises the heterogeneity and pluralism characterising both US and Kenyan institutions. Rather than implying the existence of a unanimous consent regarding the character of national security efforts among social actors composing the US and Kenyan establishment, the generalisations that are made in this work are functional to the achievement of its main goal, that is, to contribute to the effectiveness of such efforts by enabling investigation of potential repercussions on the ground.

In this regard, during the last two decades the study of US security policies in Africa (and, more widely, the global South) has been subjected to a tendency towards a division between a strand of research omitting or overlooking lines of responsibility when exploring humanitarian and political implications and another strand manifesting a propensity towards a systemic criticism, often resulting in the production of approximate and ethically questionable material. Reality is much more fluid and complex than that captured by such strict dichotomies: even the road to catastrophes is often paved with good intentions. This thesis acknowledges that adopting a critical orientation towards the study of (counter-)terrorism implies rejecting preconceptions and being willing to "say the unsayable" if

that is necessary for research purposes (Booth 2008: 68). Along these lines, it makes a major effort to contextualise security strategies within their landscape of meaning, exploring the rationale guiding policies on the ground by consistently providing the analysis of the choices and actions taken by social actors with historical depth. To do so, the research does not refrain from resorting to data sources such as Wikileaks documents.

The ethics of Wikileaks has been a matter of debate in recent years, driven by concerns related to the risks and moral dilemmas associated with the reliance on leaked data. This research aligns with studies identifying the benefits of using Wikileaks to reduce the distortion of information in global politics as outweighing the costs (e.g., Marlin 2011; Cornut and de Zamaróczy 2020), framing "self-censorship…[as]…a giant step backward" in academic research (O'Loughlin 2016: 343). On the one hand, the use of leaked data in academia can hardly cause risks in terms of the security and reputation of stakeholders, due to the fact that academics just retrieve data that is already available to the public (Michael 2015). To even further minimise such risks, this research has avoided including the names of stakeholders. On the other, the use of leaked data does not condone the leaking of information. On the contrary, in the same way that "computer security researchers frequently analyze stolen password databases to better understand how real people choose passwords, with the ultimate goal of improving computer security", even social science researchers can decide to use leaked information "precisely because its nature makes it particularly unique and valuable" to improve security from threats such as terrorism (Michael 2015: 180).

Findings and contribution

This research finds strong evidence in favour of the case-specific predictions of the steps of the causal mechanism. As regards the first prediction, after having attested the presence of scope condition 1 (C1) in the case under study, showing that Kenya has suffered from the threat posed by Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab in the post-9/11 period, the research provides evidence of the provision of US security assistance to Nairobi to fight such a threat. US assistance, which has increased significantly after the rise of Al-Shabaab as a regional player in East Africa in the early 2010s, has not been associated with the maintenance of a major military presence in the country. On the contrary, while training and equipping local forces to project its power on the ground, Washington has maintained just a few dozen soldiers on active duty in Kenya. Such observations provide a strong inferential test for the occurrence of A → q in the case study, supporting the hypothesis that, if C1 is present, post-9/11 US policies in African state (Y) lead to the establishment of a partnership relationship within the framework of remote warfare.

The research also provides evidence supporting the second prediction. After having shed light on the presence of C2 (use of indiscriminate repression by Kenyan security authorities against Muslim and ethnic Somali communities), the research shows how Kenyan authorities have managed to evade pressures and avoid major sanctions from the US while using security assistance to implement indiscriminate repression. On the one hand, increasing remoteness between Kenyan surrogates and US policy makers has reduced US oversight capabilities over the activities of local forces, limiting considerably the enforcement of legal provisions regulating the allocation of aid to repressive actors in the country. On the other, the awareness of the critical role played within the post-9/11 US security framework on the part of Kenyan authorities has generated a moral hazard in that the latter have managed to resist US pressure, being conscious that the reluctance to intervene directly through the deployment of troops has turned Kenya into an essential partner for Washington to achieve counter-terrorism goals on the ground. Such findings corroborate the second step of the causal mechanism (q → r) in the case study, supporting the hypothesis that, if C2 is present, the partnership relationship means that state (Y) gains resources and room for manoeuvre to implement indiscriminate repression against suspect groups.

Finally, the research provides evidence in support of the third prediction, showing how Kenyan Muslim and ethnic Somali communities have become prone to mobilising into Al-Shabaab, and have managed to do so, in the face of indiscriminate repression. The research highlights that the use of indiscriminate repression has been accompanied by an increase in the propensity of Muslims and ethnic Somalis to rebel against the state and join Al-Shabaab along with the generation of conducive socio-political conditions enabling them to concretise such a propensity through emerging connections with militants. These observations substantiate the last step of the causal mechanism (r → B) in the case study, supporting the hypothesis that indiscriminate repression causes an increase in radicalisation in state (Y).

The validation of the three steps of the causal mechanism in the case study (A → q → r → B) makes both empirical and theoretical contributions. At the empirical level, it firstly highlights the need for more targeted security strategies by Kenyan authorities to tackle the terrorist threat in the country. Besides increasing significantly the cost of intelligence activities, in terms of time and resources spent by Kenyan forces to penetrate the social fabric of suspect groups, harsh security measures generate deep social fractures, setting in motion processes playing into the hands of violent entrepreneurs capitalising on growing discontent and disaffection among the population.

Such insights regarding the impact of Kenyan measures have major implications for US security policies in the country, highlighting the need for a recalibration of US initiatives in light of the character of local responses to terrorism. Whether the establishment of a partnership relationship can

contribute to strengthening the Kenyan counter-terrorism architecture, improving the capacity of Nairobi to detect jihadist cells and foil their plots, it also increases resources and room for manoeuvre for the perpetration of human rights violations by local forces against vulnerable groups, unintentionally fuelling the vicious circle of violence by favouring the process of mobilisation into Al-Shabaab.

At the theoretical level, despite not allowing to make generalisations, the validation of the causal mechanism in the Kenyan case corroborates the research hypothesis, validating its underlying theory as an innovative framework to explore the impact of post-9/11 US security policies in the continent and paving the way for further studies focusing on other African states composing the population of reference. Combining analytical tools from different (and previously unconnected) strands of research, the proposed framework fills the gap between the study of US policies and that of the emergence of terrorism in Africa, shifting the emphasis to local politics and shedding light on the way in which US policies intertwine with the preferences and perceptions of local actors. In so doing, it allows us to capture how Washington's security efforts are translated into concrete measures by African authorities, enabling appreciation of their repercussions in terms of radicalisation and providing a more thorough lens to assess their effectiveness on the ground.

Such a lens points to post-9/11 US security policies in Africa as a matter of concern. Being driven by a problem-solving perspective on the war on terror that frames (counter-)terrorism as a (largely) military issue and African security institutions as necessary allies to restore local stability, the US strategy of remote warfare increases the resources and capabilities on which African partners can rely when dealing with common threats on the ground. At the same time, however, it decreases the ability of Washington to exert control over the use of such resources and capabilities. In contexts characterised by the implementation of indiscriminate repression by local authorities against suspect groups, such dynamics contribute to fuelling the process of mobilisation on the ground, jeopardising the very objectives that US security policies are meant to achieve.

Structure of the thesis

This work is organised into six chapters. The first two provide the knowledge and analytical tools for approaching the research topics, making a review of the related literature and laying down the conceptual and theoretical foundations on which the research is based. Then, the subsequent three chapters provide an analysis of the case study, exploring the impact of post-9/11 US policies on radicalisation in Kenya. Each of these chapters is dedicated to a different step of the causal mechanism, providing evidence in support of the predictions formulated. Finally, the last chapter sets out the conclusions of the study, discussing its implications.

Chapter 1 reviews the literature on the subjects under study. Starting by examining the main themes and debates related to post-9/11 US security policies and terrorism in Africa, it discusses works on the effects of security assistance and on the use of repressive policies by US African allies, showing the presence of a gap for what concerns the impact of US initiatives on the emergence of terrorism on the continent. Then, the chapter shifts its focus to the case study, providing a review of the literature on post-9/11 US security policies and radicalisation in Kenya.

Chapter 2 sets out the conceptual and theoretical basis of the thesis. It lays down the definitions of radicalisation and terrorism adopted, offering a greater insight into the role played by CTS as the research orientation of this work. Then, the chapter examines in depth the proposed causal mechanism, exploring its underlying theoretical framework, along with the case-specific predictions for the Kenyan case.

Chapter 3 focuses on the first step of the hypothesised causal mechanism (A → q). The chapter firstly provides a brief overview of US security assistance Africa, showing the programmes and initiatives implemented by the US administrations in the last decades. Then, after having confirmed the presence of scope condition 1 (C1) in the case under study, shedding light on the evolution of the terrorist threat in Kenya and East Africa, the chapter provides evidence in support of the prediction related to A → q. The chapter shows that, while keeping a low military presence on the ground, the US has provided increasing amounts of assistance to Kenyan security authorities to project its power in East Africa and fight Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab remotely.

Chapter 4 deals with the second step of the causal mechanism (q→ r). It starts by attesting the presence of scope condition 2 (C2) in the case study. The chapter provides a historical account of the emergence of socio-political fractures between the Kenyan state and Muslim and ethnic Somali communities, showing how the latter have increasingly been perceived as a potential threat to security and subjected to indiscriminate repression in the post-9/11 period. Then, the chapter provides evidence in support of the prediction related to q → r, showing that, due to the limits characterising the US strategy of remote warfare, Kenya has managed to evade Washington's pressure and avoid major sanctions while using security assistance to implement indiscriminate repression against Muslims and ethnic Somalis.

Chapter 5 focuses on the third, and last, step of the causal mechanism (r → B). The chapter provides evidence in support of the prediction formulated in relation to r → B. It shows that Kenyan Muslim and ethnic Somali communities have become increasingly prone to mobilising into Al-Shabaab when facing indiscriminate repression, managing to turn their aspiration into action thanks to the emergence and consolidation of conducive socio-political conditions.

The last chapter sets out the conclusions of the research. It discusses how the validity of the causal mechanism in the case study corroborates the research hypothesis, exploring empirical and theoretical implications. In so doing, the chapter treats issues of generalisation, calling for other holistic and interdisciplinary works exploring the proposed causal mechanism, with its underlying theoretical framework, in other African states.

Chapter 1

Literature Review

This chapter provides a review of the literature dealing with the arguments treated in the thesis. Starting by exploring works on post-9/11 US security policies and terrorism in Africa, it then focuses on the main subjects characterising the case study of this research: post-9/11 US security policies and dynamics of radicalisation in Kenya.

The chapter consists of four sections.

The first section reviews the literature on post-9/11 US security policies and terrorism in Africa. It starts by analysing how scholars have interpreted and assessed shifts in the US approach towards the continent in the era of global terrorism. Debates here focus on the role that African states have played in the international arena since the beginning of the war on terror, and the impact of US economic and security concerns on the allocation of Washington's assistance. Then, after having introduced the main features of post-9/11 US security policies in Africa, the section explores research examining the effects of US security assistance and investigating potential repercussions of US initiatives in the continent in terms of human rights and democratic governance. The section concludes by highlighting the presence of a gap in the literature for what concerns the study of the impact of US policies on the emergence of terrorism in African states.

The second and third sections of the chapter review studies focusing on post-9/11 US security policies and radicalisation in Kenya. The second section begins by examining how scholars have explained the increasing significance of East Africa in the war on terror and the geo-strategic role played by Kenya in the post-9/11 US security framework. Thereafter, it explores research on US security assistance to Nairobi during the last two decades, considering its effects in military, humanitarian and political terms. The section concludes by analysing studies on post-9/11 US-Kenya cooperation along with works investigating the implications of Washington's security concerns and demands in Kenya.

The third section explores the literature on terrorism and radicalisation in Kenya. The scholarship in this area is relatively recent, as most of the research has been published in the 2010s, during the escalation of Al-Shabaab's attacks in the country. The first part of the section focuses on the factors pointed out by scholars as the principal causes of radicalisation of Kenyans into terrorism. The second

part examines how studies have explained and assessed Al-Shabaab's operations and mobilisation strategies in the country.

Finally, a conclusive section summarises the main themes and debates reviewed in the chapter and discusses some implications.

Post-9/11 US security policies and terrorism in Africa

In 2000, during the electoral campaign, George W. Bush declared that, as far as he could see, Africa was not part of the US strategic interests (Walker and Seegers 2012). Two years later, the 2002 US National Security Strategy stated that American national interests and core values required the US to tackle state fragility and insecurity on the continent (White House 2002: 10). Since then, Washington has assumed a leading role in the promotion of security in many African states (Copson 2007; van de Walle 2009; Aldrich 2014; Westcott 2019). As authors note (Howell 2006; Owusu 2007; Piombo 2007; I. Taylor 2010), whereas the years after the end of the Cold War registered a marked decrease in the US engagement in African security, in the last two decades, assistance to several African governments has reached unprecedented levels. The US has enhanced regional and bilateral cooperation with key partners, intensifying the provision of counter-terrorism training and equipment to African forces while also implementing more development-oriented projects in vulnerable areas (Ellis 2004; Aning 2010; Pham 2014; Hagmann and Reyntjens 2016). Since 2007, such efforts have fallen under the authority of the newly established US Africa Command (AFRICOM).

Scholars have investigated why US perceptions changed so drastically in a such a short period of time. Most of the literature agrees that the challenge of instability in Africa came to prominence as intrinsically connected with the threat of international terrorism, reshaping the US foreign policy agenda (e.g., Mills 2004; Kraxberger 2005; Davis and Othieno 2007; Bachmann 2010; Kandel 2014). As the British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw argued with reference to the 9/11 attacks, "it is no longer necessary to prove a direct link between a troubled faraway country and the order of our own societies…Six months ago, no American could have proved a link between the chaos of Afghanistan and the safety of the thousands working in the World Trade Centre" (Straw 2002, quoted in Abrahamsen 2005: 65). According to this perspective, the 9/11 attacks demonstrated how major threats for international security could originate in territories where social, economic and political conditions facilitate the emergence and spread of violent extremism. Growing fluidity and interconnectedness characterising the global system were capable of amplifying considerably the magnitude of potential risks arising from insecurity and instability in the global South (Duffield 2001; Rotberg 2002). Along these lines, in a continent where Muslims represent approximately forty per cent of the total population, African fragile states started being regarded by Washington as potential

safe havens for Islamist terrorists, who could take advantage of porous borders, poor governance and weak security systems "to move men, weapons and money around the globe" (Mentan 2004: 2; see also Mills 2004; Kraxberger 2005; Mills and Herbst 2007; Newman 2007; Emerson 2008; Solomon 2013). At the same time, Africa's "*ungoverned territories*" and "*opaque areas of activity*", were believed to provide fertile ground for the emergence of new clandestine organisations, opening another front in the war on terror (Pham 2007: 47, emphasis in original).

Other studies, however, emphasise how the revival of US security policies in Africa in the post-9/11 period has gone hand in hand with the rise of American economic interests in the Western and the Sahel regions of the continent (Stevenson 2003; Barnes 2005; Obi 2006; Pham 2008). Volman (2003) and Carmody (2005, 2011), for instance, contend that the counter-terrorism measures implemented by the Bush administration in Africa were influenced considerably by the rise of US oil interests during the early 2000s and the consequent willingness to secure geo-strategic areas from the threat of instability. Keenan (2009, 2013) goes further, arguing that US counter-terrorism measures have followed a specific strategy aimed primarily at addressing the domestic energy crisis. The existence of a planned and premeditated US strategy for Africa has been questioned by scholars emphasising "the absence of an overarching strategic vision" (van de Walle 2009: 11) in the pursuing of Washington's initiatives in the continent, due to "the tension between the various agendas driving U.S. policy" (Branch 2011: 220; see also Olsen 2017). However, some works maintain that African people's perceptions of US counter-terrorism policies as the expression of a broader strategy to achieve US interests on the ground (along with their fear of an "Iraqisation" of the continent, see Esterhuyse 2008: 127), lie at the heart of AFRICOM's little success among local governments (e.g., Nathan 2009; Tella 2016).

The literature has provided different interpretations of the effects of post-9/11 US security policies in Africa. Studies note how a lack of funding and the prioritisation of short-term security measures by US policy makers have resulted in a "steady erosion of the civilian component of America's engagement", arguing that "AFRICOM has…reverted to its more traditional military roots away from using the softer edge of military power" (Emerson 2014: 49-53; see also Matisek 2018). Scholars warn against the 'militarisation' of the US Africa policy and the prominence of the Department of Defense (DOD) in the management of US activities (e.g., Menkhaus 2009a; Bachman 2010; Howell and Lind 2010; Wiley 2012; Abrahamsen 2016a). Such a trend, attested by the increasing role played by Special Operation Forces (SOF) and unmanned drones in the framework of US initiatives, is deemed to be unproductive in terms of security, marginalising longer-term and more targeted forms of engagement that could better achieve counter-terrorism objectives on the ground

while also fostering the political and economic development of the continent (Howell and Lind 2010; Ryan 2011; Solomon 2015a; Hagmann and Reyntjens 2016).

Other works, however, take a less critical approach, framing US initiatives and the rise of AFRICOM as the demonstration of "an ever-increasing commitment to helping Africans address the challenges of security on their continent" (Forest and Crispin 2009; see also e.g., Penn 2008). Scholars in this field tend to regard US security assistance and cooperation with African governments as a major opportunity for the achievement of local security, political and development goals. In this view, McFate (2008a: 10; see also 2008b) stresses how AFRICOM has the potential to become a major "post-Cold War experiment that radically rethinks security in the early 21st century based on peace-building lessons learned since the fall of the Berlin Wall". Specifically, authors maintain that US measures to build African states' military and police systems can play a crucial role in improving conditions on the ground, professionalising local forces (Jamieson 2009; Harkness 2015; see also Reveron 2010) and contributing to the eradication of terrorism in unstable contexts (Mills and Herbst 2007). Such developments are deemed to be of fundamental importance in light of the spread of militant groups in West and East Africa during the last decade, with the expansion of major organisations affiliated with Al-Qaeda and Daesh such as Boko Haram, Ansar Dine and Al-Shabaab. The strengthening of security partnerships between African states and the US, with the intensification of military-to-military training activities on the African soil, would help local actors tackle emerging threats, shaping "more robust and stable local military institutions and civil-military relations over the long-term" (Harkness 2015: 22).

There is a relatively young but rapidly growing body of scholarship exploring the effectiveness of US security cooperation and assistance, in the form of military aid, training and equipment. Some studies argue that US military aid "increases a recipient's political will to comply" and cooperate in counter-terrorism operations (Jadoon 2018: 780), noting how the provision of training to local forces is correlated with an increase in state stability on the ground (Childs 2019). Other works, however, contend that a rise in US security support is not necessarily associated with safer security conditions (e.g., Gries, Meierrieks and Redlin 2015; Savage and Caverley 2017), but instead can even lead to an increase in anti-American terrorism in recipient countries (Neumayer and Plümper 2011; Dimant, Krieger and Meierrieks 2017). Scholars in this field problematise the effectiveness of training and equipping programmes in fragile settings, arguing that, without addressing internal problems related to "legitimacy, authority, and control", US military initiatives risk having little or no positive effect, generating partner armies that resemble a "Fabergé egg": very expensive in terms of maintenance but "easy to break" in the face of organised enemies (Matisek 2018: 274, 277; see also Reno 2018). Furthermore, authors place the emphasis on the role of agency, questioning the extent to which the

security interests of the US and its partners in the war on terror can systematically overlap (e.g., Tankel 2018). Specifically, research adopting a principal-agent perspective highlights the frequency of a misalignment between the goals of the US and those of recipient states, also identifying major limitations as to Washington's ability to induce partners to act in furtherance of security objectives on the ground (e.g., Byman 2006; Berman et al. 2019; Powell 2019). As scholars stress, the promise of further aid (which is deemed necessary to motivate local actors to act) can easily disincentivise partners to eradicate external enemies (Biddle, Macdonald and Baker 2018), making "the business of fighting terrorists quite profitable" (Bapat 2011: 315). In this regard, Boutton notes how recipient states often tend to refrain from disarming terrorist groups when they necessitate increasing resources to cope with inter-state rivalry (Boutton 2014) and intra-state competition (Boutton 2016).

Exploring such challenges, Paul, Clarke et al. (2013) maintain that Washington's security policies are more effective when partner states present specific economic and political features, including a strong economic system and high standards of governance. A propensity for democracy among local leaders is identified as a critical factor also to improve stability in fragile countries (e.g., McNerney et al. 2014) and increase security and accountability in repressive settings (Jones et al. 2006). In cases in which democratic conditions are absent or poorly developed, works maintain that US policy makers should at least strive to identify common security objectives with partners, fostering mechanisms of risk assessment allowing Washington to detect potential challenges in advance and to better handle unexpected responses by recipient governments (Paul, Moroney et al. 2015; Watts 2015).

Building on a notion of local agency as a crucial determinant of the effects of US security policies, this research contends that the identification of common security objectives with African partners does not imply that the latter perceive the nature of such objectives in the same way that Washington does, nor that they cannot use different means to achieve them. Crucially, as will be discussed in the next chapter, by relying on African security institutions as the main instrument to achieve security goals in the continent 'remotely', US policy makers risk rendering much of their strategy vulnerable to the perceptions and preferences of local actors, losing control of the aid provided. This raises critical questions regarding the impact of Washington's initiatives in contexts where such perceptions and preferences converge towards the adoption of harsh security measures to deal with emerging threats.

In this regard, the literature expresses serious concerns about the indiscriminate allocation of security assistance in a continent plagued by authoritarian and illiberal regimes such as Africa (e.g., Keenan 2008; Bruton and Williams 2014; Allen 2018). As development studies show, despite the process of democratisation involving many states since the 1990s, aid towards African governments

has frequently fallen prey of dynamics of corruption (e.g., Moyo 2009; Asongu and Jellal 2013), even contributing to extending the regulatory and enforcement power of local authorities over civil society, with a consequent deterioration of fundamental rights and freedoms of African citizens (Howell and Lind 2009, 2010; Hagmann and Reyntjens 2016).

Several works criticise the Bush administration for having ensured increasing resources and military support to Africa's repressive governments while at the same time failing to take sanctions against partners in cases of human rights violations (Barnes 2005; Jourde 2007; Zeleza 2007; Keenan 2013). As scholars note (Pham 2014; van de Walle 2015), the Obama administration sought to give a new face to US security policies in the continent, placing the emphasis on the promotion of Africa's development. The war on terror was reframed as part of Overseas Contingency Operations, with a closer focus on preventive measures aimed at tackling violent extremism at its roots by improving local socio-political and economic conditions (Wiley 2012). Still, critics emphasise that, despite the use of a different rhetoric, "the 'kinetic' fight–the use of deadly force by the U.S. military and intelligence agencies–…continued unabated" (Stern 2015: 63), while US security assistance to some African illiberal democracies even increased significantly (Ryan 2011; van de Walle 2015; Burchard and Burgess 2018; Usiskin 2019). In this regard, Kandel (2014: 16-17) stresses how the 'light footprint approach' promoted by the Obama administration "favour[ed] (on paper) an integrated approach", but "in practice, U.S. foreign policy in Africa [was] based on a strategy of cooperation with African partner nations (almost all of the African states)" whose "primary objective [was] helping local armies build their capacities". Despite the limited amount of research exploring the Trump administration's approach to security in Africa, works highlight patterns of continuity with the previous administrations (e.g., Abrams 2017; Starr-Deelen 2017), raising concerns that the America-first policy promoted by the US president, along with his emphasis on great power competition, may set the ground for an even greater militarisation of the continent in the 2020s (Owusu, Reboredo and Carmody 2019).

According to some authors, the indiscriminate allocation of US assistance to African allies is caused by a poor knowledge of the African continent (e.g., Uvin 2010; Metelits 2016). As Menkhaus notes (2009a: 56), "some of America's closest African allies in the War on Terror are the principal source of insecurity to parts of their population, a fact which Africans understand much more keenly than the United States does". Matisek remarks the point (2020: 110), maintaining that the US approach to the continent has often neglected "the unique histories, contexts, and cultures that inform the way authority, legitimacy, and power are organized and exercised in each state". Solomon goes even further (2013: 438), arguing that the US has ignored "that the African state exists as a predatory vehicle of an elite political group generally belonging to a particular ethnic group".

Other studies, instead, place a greater emphasis on the tension between the promotion of human rights and democratic values, on the one hand, and US pressing need for security, on the other (e.g., Adebajo 2003; Carothers 2003; Menkhaus 2009a). Specifically, critics raise concerns that post-9/11 US security policies may be driven primarily by the "desire to safeguard the 'here' against the 'elsewhere'" (Abrahamsen 2016a: 34), that is, tackling threats undermining national interests regardless of humanitarian and political conditions in the African continent (Volman 2007; Besteman 2008; Callaway and Mattews 2008; Keenan 2008). Aning, Jaye and Atuobi endorse this view (2008: 614), arguing that "there is nothing altruistic about US involvement in Africa", and highlighting US military and economic goals, along with the US-China competition for resources and influence, as among the major concerns underlying US security policies. After having analysed Washington's use of sanctions against African partners in cases of human rights violations on the ground, Burchard and Burgess reach similar conclusions (2018: 362), noting that "in high security interest cases, security almost always wins over human rights".

However, some scholars argue that, despite humanitarian and political implications associated with post-9/11 US counter-terrorism support to and cooperation with illiberal partners, there are several arguments in favour of a continuation of such security relationships. As Byman maintains (2006: 114),

> although U.S. allies range from disappointing to abysmal, the jihadists they fight are typically far worse. The jihadists' ideals and practices are bloody and back-ward, and the United States can be said to be on the 'least worst' side. Second, the area regimes do not want to kill Americans, and the jihadists do. Sheer self-interest dictates recognition of this difference, however distasteful to the allies. Third, the United States can push reform on its allies…this is difficult and likely to suffer many problems, but it is not impossible.

As will be discussed in the next chapter, this research problematises such a perspective, contending that, in contexts characterised by the use of repressive means by local authorities, the provision of US support to African states can have serious effects, unintentionally contributing to exacerbating socio-political frictions and fuelling violent dynamics of interaction among local actors causing an increase in radicalisation. Without a deep knowledge of the socio-political environment of recipient countries, as well as their history, arming and training the "'least worst' side'" (Byman 2006: 114) to fight terrorism from a distance may generate blowback.

In this regard, some studies consider potential repercussions of US security efforts in Africa for what concerns the exacerbation of regional instabilities and the intensification of terrorism (Hills 2006; Tynes 2006; Keenan 2013; Bruton and Williams 2014; Solomon 2015a). For example, Klare

and Volman (2006: 625) argue that "by developing close military relationships with unstable and unpopular regimes, and becoming ever more deeply involved in African conflicts, the USA is fuelling an upsurge in anti-American sentiment in the region and promoting the growth of Salafists and other Islamic jihadist groups". Similarly, Keenan (2008: 19) stresses that, by militarising relations with African states, the US "will create more militants and hence unrest and insecurity, as we are seeing in most countries of North Africa and the Sahel". Along these lines, Solomon (2015a) concludes that Washington's approach to counter-terrorism in Africa risks turning sub-state terrorism in international terrorism, as in response to Washington's counter-terrorism measures, local groups such as Ansar Dine and Boko Haram seek assistance from transnational organisations such as Al-Qaeda and Daesh.

Still, although links between post-9/11 US security policies and terrorism in Africa have been mentioned by scholars, they have rarely, if ever, been investigated with reference to dynamics of radicalisation, exploring *how* US policies may have a detrimental impact on the rise of terrorism on the continent. As seen above, the literature on the US and terrorism in Africa has provided detailed explanations of the objectives underlying Washington's post-9/11 initiatives, shedding light on the architecture designed by US policy makers to address emerging threats on the ground, discussing its opportunities as well as the potential political and humanitarian consequences. Yet, paradoxically, these accounts have not intertwined with examinations of the dynamics through which local people actually mobilise into Islamist groups, analysing whether, and through which mechanism, American efforts may affect them negatively. On the other hand, as will be discussed in the next chapter, the research on terrorism and radicalisation has often concentrated on militants and their organisations, prioritising explanations based on religious ideology or cultural strain at the expense of context-related and political dynamics that, in the African continent, may turn US security assistance to local authorities into a counter-productive instrument. As recently argued by Brooks (2019: 393), more study has to be done on the way in which factors such as local civil-military relations affect the success of security efforts in recipient countries. Studies on contemporary warfare and counter-terrorism in distant theatres echo such a call for future research, stressing that it is "important to find and amplify the voices of the communities in states where…operations are conducted" to understand their effects on the ground (McKay 2021: 240). There is a high need for further studies providing a more comprehensive picture of how US security policies impact on the socio-political environment of African societies by exploring dynamics of radicalisation into terrorism. Focusing on post-9/11 US security policies in Kenya as a case study, that is the gap that this work is intended to fill.

Post-9/11 US security policies in Kenya

Within the post-9/11 security framework, East Africa has increasingly been perceived by Western powers as playing a crucial role (Abrahamsen 2004; Lyman and Morrison 2004; Woodward 2006). Scholars highlight several factors that have rendered the territory "a battleground for jihadists and their foes" (Kagwanja 2006: 75). Firstly, the geographical location of the Horn region, overlooking the Middle East, with which local communities have historically maintained solid bonds (Glickman 2003; De Waal 2004; Rotberg 2005). Such a proximity has often been regarded as facilitating the diffusion of radical ideologies and the transfer of weapons and militants (e.g., Kagwanja 2006). Furthermore, the 1991 collapse of the Barre's regime, which plunged Somalia into chaos, opening the door to the spread of violent extremism, with the emergence of armed militias and radical religious movements (Dagne 2002; Menkhaus 2004, 2005; Woodward 2013). The porosity of the borders between East African countries, exacerbated by the high levels of corruption among local police forces, has allowed militants to move easily within the region (Shinn 2004; Duncker 2007; Losey 2011). Finally, the presence of several Muslim communities associated with high levels of poverty and social exclusion is often mentioned as a factor facilitating the penetration of potential agitators and increasing the risk of terrorist recruitment (Kagwanja 2006; Otiso 2009).

Research studies generally date back the first appearance of Al-Qaeda in East Africa to the early 1990s, when the organisation established links with some local networks and began to conduct operations in the region (Haynes 2006; Watts, Shapiro and Brown 2007; S. J. Hansen 2013). In 1998, the group's operatives carried out the first major attack, bombing the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. Nairobi had already suffered from terrorism in the previous decades, being the theatre of a dramatic attack by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in 1980 (Ndzovu 2014). However, according to some authors (Mogire and Mkutu 2011), the vulnerability of the Kenyan security system to non-state actors remained underestimated by Western powers until the 1998 US embassy bombings due to the widespread perception that previous incidents were too isolated to denote an actual threat.

The 1998 attacks led to an increase in security cooperation between the US and Kenya (Aronson 2013). Yet, several works in the literature highlight how a major intensification of US security assistance policies in the country occurred only after the beginning of the war on terror (Muhula 2007; Ruteere and Ogada 2010; Prestholdt 2011; Bachman 2012). Such an intensification has been explained in relation to several factors determining Kenya's geo-strategic significance in the post-9/11 US security framework. Authors highlight how, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Kenya was one of the few East African countries not afflicted by domestic political conflicts (Aronson 2011) and was perceived by Washington as the most stable ally against terrorism "in a volatile and violent

subregion" (Barkan and Cooke 2001: 1). However, Kenya was also regarded as a weak state and a potential sanctuary for terrorists (Bachmann and Hönke 2009), lacking capacities and resources to secure its territory (Otiso 2009; Mabera 2016). Such considerations assumed further relevance in light of the proximity with Somalia, with which Kenya shares nearly 700 kilometres of poorly policed border, and of the emergence of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and Al-Shabaab during the mid- and late 2000s (S. Mair 2003; Rabasa 2009). According to scholars, the country has progressively represented a "bulwark" against the spread of terrorism in East Africa (Collier 2015: 38), as well as the "gateway to the Horn of Africa…for the…pursuit of terrorist masterminds" (Muhula 2007: 47). Finally, studies argue that Kenya has been perceived by the US as a crucial security partner in the post-9/11 period also because of the country's economy and transport network, which are of fundamental value for the economic development of neighbouring countries and the Horn region (Carson 2005: 174-175).

Since the early 2000s, the US has provided Kenya with security support, adding Nairobi to regional counter-terrorism initiatives (Whitaker 2010; Prestholdt 2011; Bachman 2012). A growing body of scholarship has investigated the effects US policies in the country. Some studies argue that high levels of American engagement have helped Kenyan security authorities develop a more solid counter-terrorism architecture, advancing security in the region (e.g., Losey 2011). As authors maintain (Watts, Jackson et al. 2018; Watts, Johnston et al. 2018), Kenyan troops benefiting from US counter-terrorism aid and military-to-military exchanges have shown increasing professionalism and have achieved considerable successes in the fight against Al-Shabaab, performing well even during complex operations.

Other works, however, are more sceptical regarding the effects of post-9/11 US security policies in the country. According to some analysts, despite contributing to strengthening local defence capabilities, increasing US investments in the Kenyan security sector have had major implications in terms of national security, attracting the reprisal of Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab (Muhula 2007; Otiso 2009; see also Bruton and Williams 2014). Critics also place the emphasis on the socio-economic and political dimensions characterising the war on terror in Kenya, highlighting the risk that Washington's counter-terrorism concerns in East Africa may overshadow major security problems of Kenyan people stemming from factors such as poverty and less than exceptional civil-military relations, consequently causing a "depreciation of human rights" on the ground (Ruteree and Ogada 2010: 227; see also Bachman and Hönke 2009; Lind and Howell 2010; Brown and Raddatz 2014). As scholars stress, while providing local forces with more sophisticated instruments to combat East African militants, US assistance has played a limited role in enhancing democracy and socio-economic conditions in Kenya (Hills 2006; Laugesen 2015). On the contrary, according to some studies, "U.S.

diplomatic pressure and promises of aid have encouraged Kenyan authorities to fight a sometimes spurious war, which paints dramatic pictures of authorities' efforts, but does less to address tangible security threats [to the Kenyan population]" (Prestholdt 2011: 5). In this view, rather than improving local governance, post-9/11 US security demands and counter-terrorism support have pushed the Kenyan government to tighten up security measures and attack "what it saw, or what was presented to it, as the root cause of radicalisation", increasing police control over mosques and madrassas and exacerbating tensions in the country (Mogire and Mkutu 2011: 481). Several works raise concerns with regard to the heavy-handed approach adopted by Nairobi to deal with security threats in the last two decades, noting how Kenyan counter-terrorism operations have frequently degenerated into widespread human rights violations against the Muslim population, especially ethnic Somali communities (e.g., Williams 2014; Lind, Mutahi and Oosterom 2015, 2017; Mogire, Mkutu and Alusa 2018).

However, in line with what was argued in the previous section, while considering humanitarian and political repercussions of US security initiatives in Kenya, the literature has tended to overlook potential implications in terms of radicalisation. Contextualising post-9/11 US policies in the country within a strategy of 'remote warfare', this study explores whether and how such policies may affect the process of mobilisation to violence, focusing on Kenya's socio-political environment as a major determinant for the effectiveness of Washington's military efforts as well as US 'softer' counter-terrorism measures.

As regards these latter measures, the scholarship on US security policies in Kenya highlights the increased use of US military-led development initiatives in the post-9/11 period as an instrument to tackle socio-economic problems in vulnerable areas, winning hearts and minds of local people and finding an "entry point into communities that are potentially hostile to the US and its interests" (Bradbury and Kleinman 2010: 4). Such initiatives have included infrastructural, educational and health-care projects implemented by personnel from the Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) in the north-eastern and coastal regions of Kenya, characterised by a high concentration of Muslims and ethnic Somalis (Bachmann 2017, 2018). Studies register mixed results of CJTF-HOA efforts, with some positive acceptance of US development projects by Muslims living in the Lamu area (Howell and Lind 2009). However, most of the literature is sceptical about the effectiveness of US 'soft' measures in the country, stressing that the increasing support to national authorities has contributed to providing a picture of US operatives as closely associated with Kenya's heavy-handed counter-terrorism policies, generating mistrusts among local communities (e.g., Seesemann 2007; Bachmann and Hönke 2009; Bradbury and Kleinman 2010; Ndzovu 2014).

Besides focusing on the implementation of security initiatives, the literature on US policies in Kenya has also examined Washington's diplomatic efforts and post-9/11 cooperation with Kenyan policy makers. In this respect, works note how the Suppression of Terrorism (SOT) Bill, adopted by the Kenyan government in 2003, has been widely perceived by Kenyans as Nairobi's response to US pressure concerning the drafting of anti-terror regulations (e.g., Kamau 2006; Whitaker 2007; Bachmann 2012; Mazrui, Njogu and Goldsmith 2018). The SOT Bill, which will be discussed in Chapter 4 of the thesis, provided a vague definition of terrorism and foresaw a major extension of police powers. However, growing opposition from Kenyan politicians and civil society forced the government to withdraw the document (Howell and Lind 2009). Authors show that, before the increase in Al-Shabaab's activities in the country during the early 2010s, most of Kenyans did not consider terrorism as a major concern (Krause and Otenyo 2005), while a considerable part of the population was disturbed by Washington's increasing interference in Kenyan politics (Whitaker 2008, 2010). As a consequence, some studies maintain that Nairobi found itself in the crossfire, trapped between US expectations regarding the enhancement of legal and political instruments to fight terrorism and the fear of losing internal political support by accommodating US demands (especially in light of the increasing political clout of Muslim communities in the Kenyan electoral system; see e.g., Watts, Shapiro and Brown 2007; Whitaker 2008).

Scholars regard such a tension between national and international pressures as contributing to generating major frictions in the US-Kenya security relationship, resulting in the maintenance of US travel advisories discouraging journeys to the country (e.g., Kamau 2006; Otiso 2009). In this respect, however, Whitaker (2008: 256) identifies Kenya as a "reluctant partner" in the US-led war on terror, arguing that, while domestic political pressures hampered Kenyan government's public compliance with US guidelines during the 2000s, security cooperation continued "behind the scenes". In this perspective, episodes such as Nairobi's refusal to sign a Bilateral Immunity Agreement (BIA) in the mid-2000s, exempting US military personnel from the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC), are not framed as deteriorating the partnership with Washington, but instead as attempts of Kenyan authorities to "gain popular support by resisting U.S. preferences", which, however, did not compromise joint counter-terrorism efforts out of the public eye (Whitaker 2008: 267). Such an unwillingness of Kenyan authorities to overtly align with the US would cease in the face of the escalation of Al-Shabaab's attacks in the country, when increasing security concerns led Nairobi to adopt a more responsive approach towards Washington's demands (Whitaker 2014).

The 'reluctant partner' thesis has fostered debate in the academic world, attracting consensus (e.g., Aronson 2011) as well as criticism. For instance, Fisher (2013) argues that, contrary to Whitaker's argument, Kenya's democratic pressures and domestic political constraints actually

hampered national authorities from projecting the image of a reliable and committed security partner to the eyes of US policy makers. Such a poor "image management" would have considerable effects on the allocation of US military and defence assistance, causing the suspension of some assistance programmes in the country and the provision of greater amounts of aid to other East African allies perceived as 'more reliable' (Fisher 2013: 2).

However, findings reported by several works challenge such a view, showing how, despite diplomatic setbacks, in the last two decades Kenya has remained Washington's major security partner in East Africa (e.g., Muhula 2007; Bachman 2012). As some authors emphasise, Nairobi has maintained a close relationship with the US, even allowing American forces to use the Kenyan territory to carry out counter-terrorism operations in Somalia (Mogire and Mkutu 2011; Mazrui, Njogu and Goldsmith 2018). Indeed, while Kenyan security units have continued to benefit from US counter-terrorism initiatives, increasing investments have turned Camp Simba (in Manda Bay, close to the Somali border) into a US military outpost on the Kenyan soil (Bachman and Hönke 2009; Prestholdt 2011; Turse 2015).

Along these lines, a more detailed picture of the post-9/11 US-Kenya relationship is provided by studies maintaining that, when confronted with national and international expectations, Nairobi has carried out a strategic management of US pressure and domestic criticism (Bachmann 2012), seeking to take advantage of Kenya's geo-strategic significance in the post-9/11 scenario "to maximize the material benefits derived from its partnership with the United States" while at the same time minimising the "accompanying costs" associated with public compliance (Watts, Shapiro and Brown 2007: 59; see also Hills 2006). In this way, as Bachman clarifies (2012: 126) "the Kenyan government [has] balance[d] what seem at first glance contradictory security agendas, ranging from following a responsibility to protect, to exercising economic self-interest, to executing international counterterrorism interests". As will be shown in Chapter 3 and 4, several pieces of evidence point to the actual existence of tensions between US policy makers and Kenyan authorities during the 2000s, due to Kenya's little counter-terrorism efforts. Still, in the last two decades, Kenyan authorities have managed to handle US discontent and frustration, being aware that Washington's counter-terrorism concerns in East Africa require the US not to disengage or take measures against non-compliance that may weaken a crucial security partner in the fight against Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab.

Radicalisation in Kenya

As seen in the previous section, while exploring diplomatic cooperation, development initiatives and the provision of counter-terrorism support to local forces, the scholarship on US security efforts in Kenya during the last decades has not addressed potential repercussions of Washington's policies on

the process of mobilisation into terrorism. Some authors have made reference to humanitarian and political implications of US activities in the country. Still, the literatures on US policies and radicalisation in Kenya have so far not intertwined to provide a full account of the mechanism through which such policies may impact on dynamics of interaction among social actors on the ground and, through them, on national security. This section complements the above one by reviewing works on terrorism and radicalisation in Kenya. As will be shown in the following pages, most of the studies have tended to overlook the way in which state-society relationships within the counter-terrorism framework may contribute to fuelling frictions in the country and generating a socio-political environment favouring the rise of terrorism. Such a state of affairs, which, as discussed in the next chapter, reflects broader trends in the research on terrorism, has contributed to hampering the study of US policies and radicalisation in Kenya, neglecting crucial drivers of mobilisation into terrorism that may be affected by Washington's intervention.

A considerable problem that emerges when exploring the scholarship on radicalisation in Kenya is that the term itself is rarely defined. Consequently, understanding whether authors refer to behavioural or cognitive processes is frequently a hard task. As illustrated in the next chapter, such a complication, stemming primarily from the absence of a universal definition of radicalisation, is not restricted to the research on terrorism in Kenya. A second difficulty concerns the estimation of the scope of radicalisation in relation to the Kenyan Muslim population (including ethnic Somalis), given that figures on the number of Muslims in Kenya are still debated. Scholars have provided different percentages, ranging from 5-10 per cent (e.g., Haynes 2006; Rabasa 2009) to 15-20 per cent (e.g., Oded 2002; Seesemann 2007; Whitaker 2008). The majority of recent studies identify Muslims as corresponding to around 10-11 per cent of the total population (e.g., Mwinyihaj and Wanyama 2017; Cannon and Ruto Pkalya 2019).

One of the most cited causal factors in the literature on radicalisation in Kenya is religious ideology. Works observe that, in the last decades, Wahhabism has increasingly spread across Kenyan Muslim communities, as a consequence of Saudi Arabia's efforts in financing the establishment of Islamic NGOs, charitable organisations, madrassas and mosques in the country (Møller 2006; Lind, Mutahi and Oosterom 2017; Mutahi and Kabala 2018). Scholars regard such doctrine as playing a crucial role in encouraging Kenyan Muslims to take up arms for the cause of Islam, pushing some of them into the arms of Somali terrorists (e.g., Amble and Meleagrou-Hitchens 2014). As Lind, Mutahi and Oosterom highlight (2017), in 2006, several Kenyan Muslims and Islamic preachers that received funds for studying in Arab countries crossed the border and went to Somalia to support the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). Along these lines, in her study on Kenyan women joining Al-Shabaab,

Badurdeen (2018a) identifies religious ideology, along with economic and sentimental reasons, as a fundamental aspect of voluntary recruitment.

Other authors, however, frame Kenya's liberal religious tradition, along with the preponderance of Sufism in the country, as a shield against the spread of radicalism among local Muslim communities (Haynes 2006; Vittori, Bremer and Vittori 2009). Writing in 2005, Rosenau holds that Kenya could not be considered a fertile ground for terrorism, since, despite presenting potential "agitators" and a certain degree of state weakness in the field of security, the country resisted the penetration of a "mobilizing belief" in the form of religious radicalism (Rosenau 2005: 5).

Mwakimako and Willis (2014: 9-10) take a different position, claiming that it would be too simplistic to associate Sufism with moderation and Salafism with political violence, as "race, ethnicity, and attitudes to devotion all cross-cut in unpredictable ways with ideas about the place of Islam in politics". Rather, the authors emphasise Kenyan government's exclusionary policies as a driver of instability, fuelling tensions between the state and the Muslim minority (Mwakimako and Willis 2014). Such a view has been shared by studies focusing on socio-economic marginalisation and inequality as major causes of radicalisation in the country (Nzes 2012; Hellsten 2016; Mazrui, Njogu and Goldsmith 2018).

In this respect, scholars argue that poverty, unemployment and lack of economic opportunities increase the effectiveness of terrorist recruitment strategies among Kenyan vulnerable groups (Nzes 2014; Mkutu and Opondo 2019). As stressed in the literature, Muslim and ethnic Somali communities living in the north-eastern and coastal areas have historically suffered from underdevelopment, being marginalised by national economic programmes (S. D. Mueller 2014; Lind, Mutahi and Oosterom 2015). The increase in social fragmentation and the consolidation of 'ungoverned spaces' (Mwangi 2017b) are regarded as having substantial implications for Kenya's security (Patterson 2015; Ruteere and Mutahi 2018). Studies maintain that the promise of financial gain has represented a crucial incentive for several youths recruited by Al-Shabaab in Mombasa and Garissa counties (Mkutu, Marani and Ruteere 2014) and in Lamu county (Mutahi and Kabala 2018). Speckhard and Shajkovci (2019) put forward a similar argument, identifying economic needs as one of the major causes of recruitment pointed out by former Al-Shabaab's Kenyan militants.

Authors underline that the worsening of Kenyan Muslims' living conditions has been directly proportional to the spread of ideologies portraying the Islamic world as under attack by Western forces, as well as to the strengthening of a sense of belonging to the global Ummah (Seesemann 2007; see also Badurdeen 2012; Nalugala 2017). This also because, as some works contend (e.g., Carson 2005), in the absence of careful political institutions, Kenyan religious leaders and Islamic organisations have progressively replaced the state in addressing Muslims' grievances. Along these

lines, exploring the personal background of Kenyan people recruited into Al-Shabaab, Botha (2014a, 2015) adopts a political socialisation perspective to explain the formation of religious identities underlying the radicalisation process in the country. Religious identification, rather than religious ideology per se, is also highlighted by Rink and Sharma (2016) as a determinant of radicalisation in Nairobi's Eastleigh District.

Some authors frame the increasing media coverage of Kenyan Muslims in the war on terror as a major opportunity for such communities to abandon their historically peripheral status in the country, contributing to their socio-political integration at national level (Mwinyihaj and Wanyama 2017). This argument, however, is in sharp contrast with the findings of research studies investigating the impact of Kenyan government's security policy among the Muslim and ethnic Somali population (Burbidge 2015; Whittaker 2015; Mazrui, Njogu and Goldsmith 2018). In this regard, according to Lind, Mutahi and Oosterom (2017: 119), Nairobi's response to terrorism can be compared to "killing a mosquito with a hammer", in the sense that, instead of acknowledging socio-economic problems and inequality as a critical component of Kenya's vulnerability, national security authorities have contributed to worsening the living conditions of marginalised communities, cracking down on Muslims and ethnic Somalis. Some studies argue that growing violence in the counter-terrorism framework may have serious implications, as human rights violations risk generating dangerous tensions among social groups, undermining national security (Mkutu, Marani and Ruteere 2014; Mwakimako and Willis 2014; Anderson and McKnight 2015a; Mwangi 2017a). However, scholars have rarely provided detailed accounts of the way in which such processes may affect radicalisation, exploring whether, and above all how, violent dynamics of interaction within the counter-terrorism framework could fuel mobilisation into terrorism among the Kenyan communities involved, favouring the activities of Al-Shabaab in the country.

As regards the latter, the literature provides several explanations for the intensification of Al-Shabaab's operations in Kenya during recent years. One of the main arguments is that the launch of the 2011 Operation Linda Nchi by the Kenyan Defence Forces (KDF) played a crucial role. The operation, which involved approximately two thousand military personnel crossing the border with Somalia (Olsen 2018), was a major attempt by Kenya to dismantle the terrorist group by attacking its strongholds in the southern areas of the country. Despite KDF being formally integrated within the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in 2012, many scholars identify Linda Nchi as a major factor triggering Al-Shabaab's retaliation (e.g., Anderson and McKnight 2015a; Halakhe 2020). Others, however, criticise such an explanation, stressing Al-Shabaab's long-standing ambition to expand its activities in Kenya due to factors such as "international status and visibility, the presence of the region's mostly-free media, a highly developed and lucrative tourist sector" (Cannon and Ruto

Pkalya 2019: 837). Another hypothesis, which has already been mentioned in the previous section, focuses on Kenya's close relation with Western countries such as the US (or even the UK and Israel), that is regarded as attracting Somali terrorism (Muhula 2007; Otiso 2009; Mogire, Mkutu and Alusa 2018). Studies also point to widespread corruption and lack of accountability among Kenyan forces in the border area with Somalia as crucial incentives for militants to target the country (e.g., Wise 2011; Hope 2018; Mogire, Mkutu and Alusa 2018).

A final reason for the increase in Al-Shabaab's activities in Kenya, which will be further explored in Chapter 3, places the emphasis on militants' survival strategies. While recognising that the fight against the KDF and AMISOM troops has considerably damaged Al-Shabaab (Kfir 2017), and that the organisation has entered the "beginning of its political end-game" in Somalia (Williams 2014: 922), some studies underline the "resilience" (Anzalone 2016a) and "reinvention" (D. Anderson 2014a; Bryden 2014; Williams 2014) of Al-Shabaab. According to this perspective, the group has succeeded in adapting to the changing regional scenario and can hardly be defeated by relying just on military interventions (N. Anderson 2016; J. C. Mueller 2018). As works note (Bryden 2014; Anderson and McKnight 2015a; Bryden 2015), such an adaptation, which began in the early 2010s, led militants to shift from a tactic based primarily on territorial control to a more volatile approach. In Somalia, the new Al-Shabaab has actually withdrawn from several strongholds, turning to rural guerrilla warfare (Meservey 2013; Bryden 2015). In the meantime, however, the group has relied heavily on networks and connections with foreign cells in East Africa to extend its radius of action while, at the same time, gaining new resources and support (Gatsiounis 2013; Bryden 2014; Williams 2014).

Kenya has been among the main targets (S. J. Hansen 2013; Williams 2014; Glazzard et al. 2018). As noted in the literature, besides intensifying attacks in the country, in the last decade Al-Shabaab has also stepped up recruitment activities. The rise of an affiliated clandestine organisation in Kenya, Al-Hijra, has contributed to the group's operations, disseminating the terrorist message (Anzalone 2012; Nzes 2014; Anderson and McKnight 2015a). In this respect, works show that, whether Al-Shabaab's propaganda initially focused primarily on ethnic Somali people, since the late 2000s the group has leaned towards a more internationalist agenda, broadening its potential support base beyond the boundaries of Somali ethnicity (Gartenstein-Ross 2009; Vidino, Pantucci and Kohlmann 2010; Meleagrou-Hitchens, Maher and Shaheen 2012; S. J. Hansen 2013; Kfir 2017). An increasing number of Kenyan Muslims other than ethnic Somalis have responded to the call, embarking on a journey to Somalia or committing themselves to fight jihad in their home country (Chonka 2016; Torbjörnsson and Jonsson 2016).

Exploring such a rise in Kenyan recruits, some studies empty Al-Shabaab's mobilisation strategies of all political substance, maintaining that the group's "messaging formulated for Kenyan Muslims is based primarily on appealing to the global Salafi-jihadist narrative rather than on local issues" (Amble and Meleagrou-Hitchens 2014: 528 emphasis in original). Others, however, highlight a more strategic use of messages and declarations to achieve recruitment of Kenyan Muslims (e.g., S. J. Hansen 2013; Menkhaus 2014a, 2014b; D. Mair 2017). According to this view, militants have sought to exploit local grievances, using a religious rhetoric to delegitimise national authorities and isolate potential supporters from the state (Anzalone 2012; Anderson and McKnight 2015a, 2015b; Anzalone 2016; Glazzard et al. 2018). As discussed in Chapter 5, this research aligns with such a perspective, arguing that, by capitalising on local dynamics of violent interaction between Kenyan counter-terrorism forces and suspect groups, Al-Shabaab has gained increasing appeal among potential supporters, fostering connections with the Muslim minority.

Conclusions

This chapter has reviewed the main themes and debates in the literature on post-9/11 US security policies and terrorism in Africa, post-9/11 US security policies in Kenya and radicalisation in Kenya. As shown, the research highlights how, since the beginning of the war on terror, the US has enhanced security cooperation with key partners in Africa, setting up a major security architecture to catalyse increasing efforts in the continent. However, studies provide different explanations with regard to the drivers of US policies, with some scholars prioritising Washington's economic interests on the ground as the major cause for involvement in African security affairs. In the case of US policies in Kenya, most of the works stress Nairobi's geo-strategic significance in the fight against terrorism in East Africa as a crucial factor causing the increase in US security assistance in the post-9/11 period. While representing a natural barrier against the spread of instability from Somalia, Kenya is also framed as a vulnerable target for terrorists, having suffered a dramatic escalation of attacks in the last decade.

The research also presents contrasting views with regard to the effects of post-9/11 US security policies. According to some scholars, US military and defence assistance to African countries has contributed to increasing security on the ground and shaping better social conditions, professionalising local forces and improving civil-military relations. Other authors, however, are more sceptical with regard to the impact of US security efforts, raising concerns that the 'militarisation' of US aid may overshadow development goals and worsen living conditions in recipient countries. Similar debates can be found in the literature on post-9/11 US security policies in Kenya. In this respect, while some works emphasise how US security aid has improved Kenya's counter-terrorism capabilities in the fight against Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab, others contend that

Washington's increasing support has a potentially dangerous impact, increasing social tensions in the country or even triggering the reprisal of East African terrorist cells.

As argued in the first section of the chapter, existing research lacks an account of the way in which post-9/11 US security policies in Africa intertwine and interact with the socio-political environment in which they are implemented, affecting radicalisation. Particularly, the scholarship lacks a thorough analysis of the mechanism through which, by relying on indirect support to fight threats in distant theatres, post-9/11 US policies may unintentionally contribute to setting in motion dynamics fuelling violence on the ground and increasing mobilisation into terrorism. This is especially true in the case of Kenya, where the literatures on US security efforts and radicalisation have so far remained largely unconnected. As shown, although some authors highlight potentially negative repercussions of Kenya's heavy-handed counter-terrorism measures, studies on radicalisation have generally concentrated on religious identity, ideology and socio-economic grievances as the major causes of mobilisation into terrorism. In so doing, political drivers of radicalisation, which may be sensitive to US indirect interventions through security cooperation and assistance, have been overlooked. Such a state of affairs is partly a consequence of the ambiguity of the very term 'radicalisation'. As noted above, most of the research on terrorism in Kenya does not provide a definition of radicalisation, complicating the study of external forces which may impinge on the process through which it unfolds. More than that, however, works have tended to abstract terrorism from the socio-political context in which it emerges, treating radicalisation in isolation from counter-terrorism efforts and, more broadly, the relational dynamics among social actors on the ground.

To address such complexity surrounding the study of radicalisation and terrorism, the next chapter provides clarity regarding the definitions adopted in this research, setting out its conceptual basis and introducing the proposed theoretical framework.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

This chapter outlines the conceptual and theoretical framework of the research, providing an insight into the causal mechanism hypothesised to connect post-9/11 US security policies and radicalisation in Africa.

The chapter is composed of five sections.

The first section conceptualises radicalisation and terrorism, exploring the main debates on their meaning and providing the definitions adopted by this research. In so doing, the section discusses some of the elements characterising a critical theory-inspired orientation towards the study of (counter-)terrorism, examining two conceptual issues: the search for the 'terrorist profile' and the existence of a 'new' kind of terrorism in the form of transnational Islamist terrorism.

The second section goes into more depth as regards the role played by Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) as the research orientation of this study. It explains how deepening and broadening the analysis of (counter-)terrorism helps uncover crucial dynamics affecting the impact of US security policies on radicalisation on the African continent, ultimately contributing to the construction of the proposed causal mechanism.

The third and fourth sections of the chapter examine in detail the theoretical foundation on which the causal mechanism is built, also discussing the three case-specific predictions that have been formulated in relation to the case study of the thesis: post-9/11 US security policies in Kenya. The third section explores the research on remote warfare and security assistance upon which the first two steps of the mechanism (A → q → r) draw. The fourth section of the chapter details the Social Movement Theory (SMT) approach to radicalisation that underlies Step 3 of the causal mechanism (r → B).

Finally, the last section of the chapter summarises the main features of the proposed framework and discusses some of its implications.

Conceptualising radicalisation and terrorism

In recent years, the term 'radicalisation' has gained increasing currency in the academic literature, as well as in public and media debates. The meaning of the term has changed considerably throughout history, from early conceptualisations of 'radicals' in the nineteenth century (Schmid 2013;

Lindekilde 2016) to its connotation in research on social movements and the emergence of political violence during the 1970s and the 1980s (della Porta and LaFree 2012). Today, radicalisation is commonly associated with terrorism. Such a link was accentuated after the 9/11 attacks and the beginning of the war on terror, as part of a new effort by the research community to explore the pathways towards Islamist militancy (Silke and Brown 2016). The post-9/11 period has witnessed a marked rise in the number of studies on terrorism, with the creation of specialised journals (Githens-Mazer and Lambert 2010; Sedgwick 2010; Silke and Schmidt-Petersen 2015).

However, despite the proliferation of works addressing radicalisation, there is still a lack of clarity regarding the meaning of the concept. Such a state of affairs is primarily due to the absence of a universal definition; a fact that complicates substantially the study of the factors triggering the process, as well as the interchange between academia and the political world. To address such a problem, during the last two decades, scholars and government agencies have proposed a considerable number of definitions. Several of these focus on psychological processes that may increase individual propensity to violence. For example, Doosje et al. (2016: 79) regard radicalisation as "a process through which people become increasingly motivated to use violent means against members of an out-group or symbolic targets to achieve behavioral change and political goals". Similarly, the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) defines radicalisation as "the process of adopting an extremist belief system, including the willingness to use, support, or facilitate violence, as a method to effect social change" (Homeland Security Institute 2006: 2, 12 quoted in Schmid 2013: 12).

Other definitions, however, place a greater emphasis on the violent component of radicalisation. In this regard, Olesen (2009: 8) concentrates on "the process through which individuals and organizations adopt violent strategies – or threaten to do so – in order to achieve political goals", while della Porta and LaFree (2012: 5) regard radicalisation as "a process leading towards the increased use of political violence".

On the whole, it is possible to identify two different connotations of radicalisation. The first one, generally called "cognitive" (Neumann 2013: 873; Hafez and Mullins 2015: 961; Sageman 2016: 90) or "non-violent" (Bartlett and Miller 2012: 2) radicalisation, denotes a change "towards more 'radical' political beliefs or demands" (Malthaner 2017: 371), culminating with the acquisition of a radical mindset that although may facilitate involvement in violence in certain contexts, does not necessarily lead to it.

The second type of radicalisation, termed "behavioural" (Vidino 2010: 5; Neumann 2013: 873) or "violent" (Bartlett and Miller 2012: 2), focuses on dynamics culminating with involvement in violence. This study concentrates on such a type of radicalisation, investigating the process through which people *mobilise into terrorism*, joining a terrorist group. In a way, this understanding of

radicalisation makes the concept resemble that of terrorist recruitment. However, while the latter places more emphasis on the role of the terrorist group in gaining new adherents (who 'are recruited'), 'mobilisation' shifts the focus to (mobilising) people, better capturing the dynamics that lead them to engage in terrorism.

Conceiving radicalisation as mobilisation into terrorism requires a definition of the latter term. However, as Tilly reminds us (2005: 18), "no one owns the definitions of terror, terrorism, or terrorists". Indeed, as well as for radicalisation, there is not a universal definition and, according to some authors, "it is unlikely that any definition will ever be generally agreed upon" (Shafritz, Gibbons and Scott 1991, quoted in Silke 1998: 54). Scholars and governments have proposed several interpretations of the concept, examining its core elements from different angles and theoretical perspectives. In the Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research, Easson and Schmid (2011: 99-158) list more than 250 definitions. Still, political, theoretical and ethical constraints have hampered agreements on what constitutes terrorism.

Such an elusive nature of terrorism has been explained by studies with reference to the different connotations that the term has had in previous centuries. According to this view, the meaning of the act of terrorism, as well as the political profile of its perpetrators, has changed considerably since the establishment of the Reign of Terror during the French revolution (Hoffman 2006), leading some authors to distinguish various 'waves' of terrorism (Rapoport 2001) and to differentiate between old and 'new' terrorism (Laqueur 1999; Neumann 2009; Bolanos 2012). Nonetheless, it is possible to identify some crucial points around which the debate on the definition of terrorism has revolved. Among these, there is the target of the terrorist act.

Several works regard the targeting of civilians or non-combatants as a necessary element in the definition of terrorism (Reilly 1994; Coady 2004; Kapitan 2004; Richardson 2006). Ganor (2002: 294), for example, identifies terrorism as "the intentional use of, or threat to use, violence against civilians or against civilian targets, in order to attain political aims". Such a view, however, has not been immune from criticism, due to frequent difficulties in distinguishing military targets from non-military ones (Jackson 2011; Shanahan 2016) and to governments' wide margin of discretion in deciding what a civilian target is (Bryan 2012).

The symbolic and communicative component of terrorism has been another important point of discussion. According to some scholars, the generation of fear and 'terror' with the aim of achieving a political objective represents one of the distinctive characteristics of the act of terrorism (Pape 2003; English 2009; A. Richards 2014). Therefore, rather than being circumscribed to its immediate effects, the meaning of terrorism would be based on the "political message" that terrorists seek to spread (Neumann and Smith 2005: 575). Other studies, however, reject the classification of terrorism as a

separate mode of contention, stressing that any action of political violence is characterised by a communicative element through which the perpetrator transmits a message to the targets and/or an audience (Bryan, Kelly and Templer 2011). Seeking to find a middle ground, Jackson (2011: 120) maintains that it is "the instrumentalization of the victims as a means of communicating with an audience" that distinguishes terrorism from other forms of violence.

A final debate has concerned the perpetrator of the terrorist act. While most of the definitions of terrorism have focused on violence committed by non-state entities (Crenshaw 1981; Simpson 2004; Wight 2009), in recent years, a growing number of scholars adopting a critical theory-inspired approach have called for a broadening of the concept of terrorism so as to include state violence (Blakeley 2007, 2009; Breen-Smyth 2007; Jackson, Breen-Smyth and Gunning 2009a). Stohl (2006a), for instance, emphasises how, despite the little attention paid by the academia and the media, state terrorism has historically outstripped non-state terrorism in the number of victims.

However, such a view on the inclusion of states among the potential perpetrators of terrorism has been challenged. In his seminal book on terrorism, Hoffman (2006: 28) contends that, whereas state crimes during wars are sanctionable on the basis of specific laws, terrorist groups refuse the enforcement of legislation on conflict. Accordingly, while exempting the state from terrorism is a "reflection of terrorism's broadest and most customary usage", equating state crimes with non-state terrorist activity "plays into the hands of terrorists and their apologists" (Hoffman 2006: 26, 40).

Yet, focusing primarily on war crimes, Hoffman seems to overlook that what could fall under the rubric of state terrorism is characterised, to a considerable extent, by acts of state repression during peacetime, including torture, extrajudicial execution and enforced disappearance. Even though such acts may be regarded as already covered by regulations, there is no reasons why they could not be "both acts of 'terrorism' and 'human rights abuses' at the same time" (Jackson 2011: 126). Such a label would put a far greater emphasis on the extent (and the implications) of the offence. Most of the crimes perpetrated by authoritarian and illiberal regimes worldwide remain unpunished. There is no war on terror to deal with them.

Along these lines, this thesis supports the inclusion of state terrorism into the definition of terrorism. Still, despite acknowledging that many instances of state repression could and should fall under the label of terrorism, the thesis focuses on mobilisation into non-state terrorism. Therefore, for the purposes of this research, the term terrorism will only indicate acts committed by non-state groups against an established political regime and its population.

In line with Sageman (2017: 12), this study defines terrorism as a "categorization of out-group political violence during domestic peacetime" (Sageman 2017: 12), whereas the term 'political violence' denotes "the deliberate attempt to use force against people or objects for political reasons"

(Sageman 2017: 14). Such a definition stresses the centrality of political objectives underlying the act of violence. Relying on violence as a mode of contention to achieve a political goal is a decision that responds to specific strategical choices. In this sense, terrorism is a strategy that develops during dynamics of contention (Tilly 2004). Accordingly, "a terrorist is…somebody who uses such acts [of violence] as a strategy – a means – to further political ends" (Booth 2008: 65). These ends may not necessarily be perceived (or even shared) by all individuals mobilising into a terrorist group, some of which may engage for different and unrelated reasons (such as economic incentives). Nonetheless, they define the essence of terrorism, determining its trajectories and horizons.

Sageman's definition of terrorism also includes the implications associated with the use of the concept, emphasising *categorisation* as a crucial element characterising terrorism. Acknowledging such a component does not mean simply recognising that 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter', but rather that, in the end, terrorism is "a man-made construct and as such tends to reflect the interests of those doing the defining" (Schmid 2011: 40). This perspective thus places the emphasis on the role of representation and social construction in the identification of terrorist violence (see Jackson et al. 2011; Jarvis 2016, 2019). Going further, one might argue that the absence of a universal definition of 'terrorism' as a separate mode of contention is not the consequence of the failure to find an agreement regarding its core elements, but rather, the cause. Indeed, "the word *terrorists* refers only to our enemies, not our friends" (Sageman 2017: 13, emphasis in original). Yet, arguing this does not mean "playing into the hands of terrorists and their apologists", to borrow Hoffman's phrase (2006: 26). None of the acts labelled as 'terrorism' is justifiable: the illegitimate recourse to violence must be punished according to the law. Instead, a critical reflection on the meaning of terrorism can help de-exceptionalise terrorist violence, highlighting the "human faces of terror" (Booth 2008: 74) hiding behind the veil of exceptionalism. Many governments have exploited the vagueness of the concept of terrorism, stretching its boundaries so as to include opponent groups and critical voices (e.g., Sedgwick 2010; Richards 2014). Furthermore, in several circumstances the label 'terrorist' has proved to be extremely volatile, with former 'terrorists' such as Nelson Mandela later being awarded with the Nobel Peace prize (Jackson 2007a). Time and context have frequently made the difference in determining what is terrorism and who is a terrorist.

Questioning how terrorism and radicalisation are conceptualised and represented does not translate into rejecting their "systemic nature" (Zulaika 2016: 42) or reducing their analysis to an ontological debate (Toros and Gunning 2009). As Sageman notes (2017: 13), "the self-reflexive definition of terrorism does not mean that the notions of political violence and its perpetrators are arbitrary and relative, or that the study of terrorism is just a semantic game". Still, framing terrorism as a strategy involving the perpetration of violence with the aim of achieving a political objective –

and radicalisation as the process of mobilisation into terrorism – helps to overcome two oversimplifications frequently characterising the research on (counter-)terrorism and contributing to shifting its focus away from the dynamics of contention underlying the act of violence.

The first one concerns the search for the 'terrorist profile'. The study of (counter-)terrorism has long been characterised by the endeavour to identify specific predispositions towards violence or distinctive characteristics in the personality of terrorists. Early works pointed to forms of mental disorder as underlying causes of involvement in terrorism (Hacker 1976; M. Taylor 1988; Pearlstein 1991), identifying militants as affected by "*a paranoid and narcissistic pathology*" (Johnson and Feldmann 1992, quoted in Silke 1998: 55, emphasis in original). However, even post-9/11 research has emphasised mental illness or psychological damage as having crucial effects on the emergence of violence (DeMause 2002; Lachkar 2002, 2006). For example, DeMause (2002: 340, 346-347) maintains that "the roots of [Islamist] terrorism lie…in the extremely abusive families of the terrorists", concluding that "like serial killers – who are also sexually and physically abused as children – terrorists grow up filled with a rage that must be inflicted upon others".

Such a view on terrorism as a "condition" (Borum 2011: 15) or even a "syndrome" (Kruglanski and Fishman 2006: 194) has not been corroborated by empirical evidence (Silke 1998; Victoroff 2005; Horgan 2008; King and Taylor 2011). Most of the recent studies underline how terrorists do not present signs of mental disease and do not generally differ from the rest of the population in terms of personality traits (e.g., Pape 2003; Hassan 2006; Post 2006; Silke 2008). In line with such a view, the approach proposed by this research emphasises that "radicalization is not something that happens only to others – the mentally ill person or the evil character" (McCauley and Moskalenko 2011: 4). Rather, mobilisation into terrorism is conceived as a rational strategic choice taken during conflicts that are also characterised by the use of non-violent means of political struggle (Hafez 2003; Wiktorowicz 2004b; Tilly 2005; della Porta 2013). This perspective implies a removal of conceptual and analytical barriers separating "normal" violence from "pathological" terrorism, up to the point of regarding the latter as an expression of socio-political frictions that is often aimed at gaining popular support rather than just instilling fear (della Porta 2004: 209).

The second oversimplification regards the conception of terrorism as a "creed" (Tilly 2004: 11) or an "ideology or form of politics in itself" (Jackson 2007a: 248).

The relationship between religious ideology and propensity to violence has been a prominent theme in research on terrorism during recent years, due to the increasing threat posed by Islamist terrorism. The focus on religious terrorism, however, pre-dates the 9/11 attacks and the beginning of the war on terror (Rapoport 1984; Ranstorp 1996; Laqueur 1999). Several scholars draw a line between secular and religious terrorism, emphasising how the latter is indiscriminate, more violent

and characterised by a lack of morality (Ranstorp 1996; Hoffman 1995; Lesser et al. 1999; Juergensmeyer 2006, 2017). In this regard, Hoffman (2006: 85) argues that "where violence is regarded by its practitioners as a divine duty or sacramental act, embraces markedly different means of legitimation and justification than that committed by secular terrorists, and these distinguishing features lead, in turn, to yet greater bloodshed and destruction". Other studies focus on the divisions and the growing tensions between the Western and the Muslim worlds (see Huntington 1996), framing the rise of Islamist terrorism as the consequence of causes such as the failure of modernisation within the Muslim world (B. Lewis 2002) or as "fractured globalisation" (Munroe and Moghaddam 2012: 122), generating perceptions of Islamic values and beliefs as under threat and turning religion into a catalyst for violent reaction.

The picture emerging from these works is that of an unprecedented global threat embodied by groups predicating the enforcement of religious (Islamic) law (Cook 2003; Laqueur 2004) through widespread violence and devastation (Hoffman 1995; Stern 2003; Sageman 2004). Specifically, distinguishing the 'new' kind of terrorism is a notion of violence as an apolitical action. Such a notion makes reconciliation and mediation hardly conceivable. In so doing, it contributes to providing legitimacy to heavy-handed security policies by state authorities as an inevitable response in complex environments. Several studies released in the last two decades frames repressive measures as an effective instrument to counter the spread of terrorism (for a review see Hafez and Hatfield 2006; Davenport and Inman 2012; Piazza 2017).

Conceiving terrorism as violence aimed at achieving a political goal, this research problematises the distinction between secular and religious terrorism, maintaining that, although religious narratives and beliefs may compose the dialectical and symbolic repertoire of Islamist propaganda, religion alone cannot explain mobilisation into terrorism. As discussed in the following section, a more thorough approach is provided by works adopting a critical theory-inspired research orientation. Such a scholarship rejects the conceptualisation of a 'new' form of terrorist violence "driven by hatred, fanaticism and extremism" (Jackson 2007b: 408; see also e.g., Stohl 2008), showing that the study of jihadism has tended to be conducted through the lens of a European political tradition treating the role of religion in the political realm as that of an irrational and illogical component (Toros and Gunning 2009; Gunning and Jackson 2011). Furthermore, it stresses how studies on radicalisation have often been influenced by the political direction and the "ideological assumptions" (Kundnani 2012: 8) of the institutional environments supporting the research (Burnett and Whyte 2005; Raphael 2009). Such an attitude has led to the shaping of an approach to radicalisation that has frequently scratched the surface of mobilisation processes, overlooking their historical roots and contextual specificities in favour of a de-politicised picture of militancy (e.g., Gunning 2007b; Jackson, Breen-

Smyth and Gunning 2009a; Gunning and Jackson 2011; Poynting and Whyte 2012). The latter, in turn, has reinforced the mainstream narrative about an irreconcilable conflict between the democratic world and religious fanaticism and intolerance (Jackson 2009; Tellidis 2016; Jarvis 2019). The consequence, as one author puts it, "is a systematic failure to address the reality of the political conflicts that radicalisation scholars claim they want to understand" (Kundnani 2012: 8).

Radicalisation in the Muslim world does not present specific features distinguishing it from radicalisation in non-Muslim societies. More specifically, "the *dynamics, process, and organization* of Islamic activism can be understood as important elements of contention that transcend the specificity of 'Islam' as a system of meaning, identity, and basis of collective action" (Wiktorowicz 2004b: 3, emphasis in original). Along these lines, this research conceives Islamist terrorism just as the "appropriation of Islamic concepts" on the part of "individuals, groups and organisations that pursue political objectives" relying on violence as a method of contention (Chome 2020: 8). Such a perspective has major consequences, implying that, to understand the emergence of jihadist violence it is necessary to overcome the centrality of religious ideology as a driver of mobilisation, shifting the focus from militants and their organisations to the wider historical and socio-political background in which radicalisation unfolds.

A critical perspective on terrorism and counter-terrorism

The way in which a phenomenon is interpreted and conceptualised determines the way in which social actors approach it and defines the range of strategies they rely on when seeking to counter it. This holds true for social, economic or political phenomena, including the rise of Islamist terrorism. Dominant conceptions of terrorism and its root causes shape the counter-terrorism approaches implemented by governments (see Crelinsten 2009). The provision of logistical support to local allies, the deployment of military divisions on the ground or the implementation of development-oriented initiatives are the direct expression of specific considerations on the nature of terrorism. Such considerations may lead to the adoption of different measures coexisting under the same approach. Still, the underlying principles and assumptions on which they are built respond to basic questions concerning the origins of terrorist violence and its primary objectives.

In the early 2000s, narratives on the new terrorism and the 'clash of civilizations' (Huntington 1996) gained increasing influence in mainstream debates on radicalisation. A Manichean outlook of the world resonated throughout the Bush presidency, envisaging a "fight…against 'the Monster of Terrorism'…involv[ing] engaging with a 'demonic enemy'…'defined by hate', driven by 'mad intent', and drew on 'monstrous evil'" (quoted in Booth and Dunne 2011: 62). The dominant paradigm, in the words of a former Director of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), was that

"today's terrorists don't want a seat at the table, they want to destroy the table and everyone sitting at it" (National Commission on Terrorism 2000: 2, quoted in Tellidis 2016: 138). Two major elements characterising such a viewpoint need to be highlighted.

The first one, as stressed above, is the propensity to de-contextualise and de-historicise the process of mobilisation. Tactical and strategic repertoires of action adopted by militants come to be interpreted as the main raison d'être of terrorist groups (Stampnitzky 2016), with the consequence that "the Palestinian intifada, the Chechen resistance, and various armed groups in Afghanistan and Iraq...[are]…understood as part of the same threat to order" (Poynting and Whyte 2012: 5-6). In other words, rather than the product of socio-political dynamics, violence becomes an end in itself, whose logic has to be tracked down in light of the terrorists' ideological commitment.

The second element regards the prioritisation of the state as the main provider of security against the terrorist threat, associated with a tendency not to question the role played by states as potential drivers of instabilities and insecurities facilitating the emergence of political violence (Gunning 2007b; Jackson 2007a).

Despite a progressive refocusing and a moderation of the general discourse on terrorism, many of the implications stemming from a de-historicised, de-contextualised and state-centric perspective on (counter-)terrorism have continued to influence the academic debate and inform the Western security response (for a critique, see e.g., Poynting and Whyte 2012; Jarvis and Lister 2015; Lindahl 2016). Specifically, the critical literature on terrorism points to the prominence of a problem-solving approach concerned primarily with technical and logistical evaluations aimed at restoring national stability rather than with a thorough investigation of the sources of destabilisation lying at the heart of the 'status quo' (Jackson, Breen-Smyth and Gunning 2009a; Lindahl 2016). "Taki[ing] the world as it finds it" (Cox 1981: 128-129), such an approach has frequently prioritised military and police initiatives as the main instrument against the spread of terrorism in distant theatres. States with scarce financial, tactical and operational resources to tackle emerging threats have increasingly been perceived as unable to secure their borders and provided with massive amounts of support in the attempt to strengthen the local security architecture. In the African continent, this has translated into the allocation of security assistance, including counter-terrorism training and equipment, to governments in vulnerable regions (e.g., Solomon 2015b).

Security aid can contribute to improving the military and defence capabilities of African recipient countries, enabling local actors to access more resources and sophisticated instruments to increase state security. As such, it can represent an important tool against terrorism. Still, policy makers relying on such a tool as a one-size-fits-all response risk underestimating the extent to which, in some circumstances, state security may not coincide, or may even conflict, with the individual security of

the citizens, as well as the implications stemming from such a misalignment (Krause and Williams 1997a). Particularly, there is the risk that, understating the political nature of terrorist violence, policy makers overlook crucial dynamics of interaction between recipient states and their population that can exacerbate social frictions and fuel processes of mobilisation to violence. This might generate a dilemma, as "in the process of providing various forms of security, insecurities are also reproduced, often in ways that either actually undermine the initial production of security or that merely perpetuate the problems to which they are supposedly providing solutions" (Dalby 1997: 12-13).

Yet, as discussed in the previous chapter, the literature on US security policies in Africa has often been reluctant to acknowledge such relational processes and their repercussions. Rather than exploring the impact of US policies in terms of radicalisation, authors have prioritised the study of the security architecture set out by Washington in the post-9/11 period, as well as the objectives underlying the US involvement in the continent. At the same time, the previous section has highlighted how the research on radicalisation has often tended to empty terrorist violence of all political substance, regarding it as an "aberration" of the system (Toros 2016: 72) produced by ideological fanaticism or by cultural and psychological strain. In so doing, the focus of analysis has increasingly been restricted to terrorists and their groups, while the political drivers of mobilisation, which in the African continent may be affected by the provision of US support to local authorities, have fallen off the radar of the research. Schmid (2013: 37) makes the point using a simple analogy: "if a reporter described a tennis match only in terms of what happens on one side of the net, we would rightfully complain that we got only half the story. When it comes to terrorism, such a one-sided discourse is, however, still widely accepted". To get the whole story, some "key moves" (Toros and Gunning 2009: 89) are necessary.

To make such moves, this research draws on guidelines provided by Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS). Building on the work of Ken Booth in the framework of Critical Security Studies (CSS) (Booth 1997, 2007), CTS highlights 'deepening' and 'broadening' as crucial operations for approaching (counter-)terrorism as a research topic (e.g., Jackson, Breen-Smyth and Gunning 2009b; Toros 2016). 'Deepening' refers to the identification and highlighting of the political interests and assumptions underlying the concept of terrorism and guiding both the academic investigation and the measures implemented by policy-makers (Toros and Gunning 2009). As seen in the previous section, this means acknowledging that terrorism is "a historically variable" notion (Booth 1997: 36), whose related "discourses and practices…deriv[e] from particular sets of political assumptions…[that]…are not objective reactions to the world 'out there', the so called real world, but rather are *from* somewhere, *for* someone, and *for* some purpose" (Booth 2007: 150, emphasis in original). Uncovering such assumptions requires providing historical depth to the analysis and replacing

abstracted and universal classifications of terrorist violence with a closer focus on its formative conditions. This leads us to the second move: broadening.

'Broadening' denotes the de-exceptionalisation of terrorism in favour of a historicised and contextualised examination of violence that emphasises the political, social and cultural dimensions in which counter-terrorism and radicalisation take place (Jackson, Breen-Smyth and Gunning 2009b; Toros and Gunning 2009). As Booth and Dunne highlight (2011: 75), "terrorists are made in society, not born in evil". Broadening the subject of analysis, therefore, involves investigating mobilisation into terrorism as a rational and interactive process, analysing the "landscape of meaning" (Bryan 2012: 24) in which it takes place. Rather than approaching Islamist terrorism as a form of violence adopted overnight, or as the mere consequence of ideological indoctrination, such a move puts "the temporal back into violence", exploring the longer (context-related) processes of contention preceding and shaping radicalisation (Gunning 2009: 163). Within this framework, the nature and character of the actions implemented by state authorities are questioned as potential sources of tensions and frictions underlying mobilisation. Along these lines, "violent counterterrorism…[is]…no longer *necessarily*…viewed as a legitimate response to the violence of an *inevitably* illegitimate opposition" (Toros and Gunning 2009: 94, emphasis in original), but rather as capable of fuelling the vicious circle of violence, creating and recreating the evil it aims to eradicate (see Stohl 2006b; Zulakia 2009; Lindahl 2016).

Deepening and broadening the analysis of radicalisation and counter-terrorism brings major benefits for the study of post-9/11 US security efforts in Africa, pointing to local politics as the link between US initiatives and dynamics of radicalisation on the continent. African states play a crucial role within the post-9/11 US security framework, translating US policies into actual measures. Indeed, being the main reference on the ground for US policy makers, African states determine the concrete character and configuration that Washington's military resources and support assume when integrated into local counter-terrorism activities. At the same time, however, African states are social actors whose performance can have major implications for the rise of terrorism. As CTS scholars stress, choices related to mobilisation are not taken in a vacuum (e.g., Jackson, Breen-Smyth and Gunning 2009a). Nor are they the mere result of structural factors or global ideological forces. Rather, as further discussed in the fourth section of this chapter, mobilisation often emerges from a "dynamic of interaction, adaptation, intended and united consequences" (Hafez 2003: 21) among social actors in which the state plays a major role. The measures implemented by US African allies can profoundly affect the perceptions of local people regarding 'what is to be done', setting in motion processes fuelling dissent and resulting in an increase in political violence.

Hence, capturing the effects of US policies on radicalisation on the continent requires a focus on the impact of agency, in terms of the reactions of US African allies and the effects that such reactions have among local populations. CTS offers a wide margin of manoeuvre to set up a framework of analysis enabling appreciation of such dynamics. Indeed, being committed to "disciplinary and intellectual pluralism" (Jackson, Breen-Smyth and Gunning 2009b: 222), CTS allows researchers to eclectically engage in deductive theorising by incorporating analytical elements from multiple theoretical traditions to capture connections between the subjects of study. Such traditions do not have to belong exclusively to the 'critical' field. On the contrary, scholars highlight how CTS is willing to integrate knowledge from the so-called 'orthodox' or 'mainstream' research on terrorism to catch the full spectrum of dynamics of mobilisation and formulate hypothesis regarding their cause (Jackson, Breen-Smyth and Gunning 2009a). Despite manifesting a preference for "perspectives that have been considered outside of the mainstream of the discipline" (Krause and Williams 1997b: x-xi, quoted in Gunning 2007: 389), CTS simply provides a direction of research rather than setting out the theoretical instruments to follow it.

Along these lines, this study places local politics at the heart of the analysis, setting up an interdisciplinary framework for investigating the effects of post-9/11 US security policies on radicalisation in African states. Combining analytical elements from the research on remote warfare, security assistance and social movements, such a framework is built around a causal mechanism composed of three steps (Figure 6).

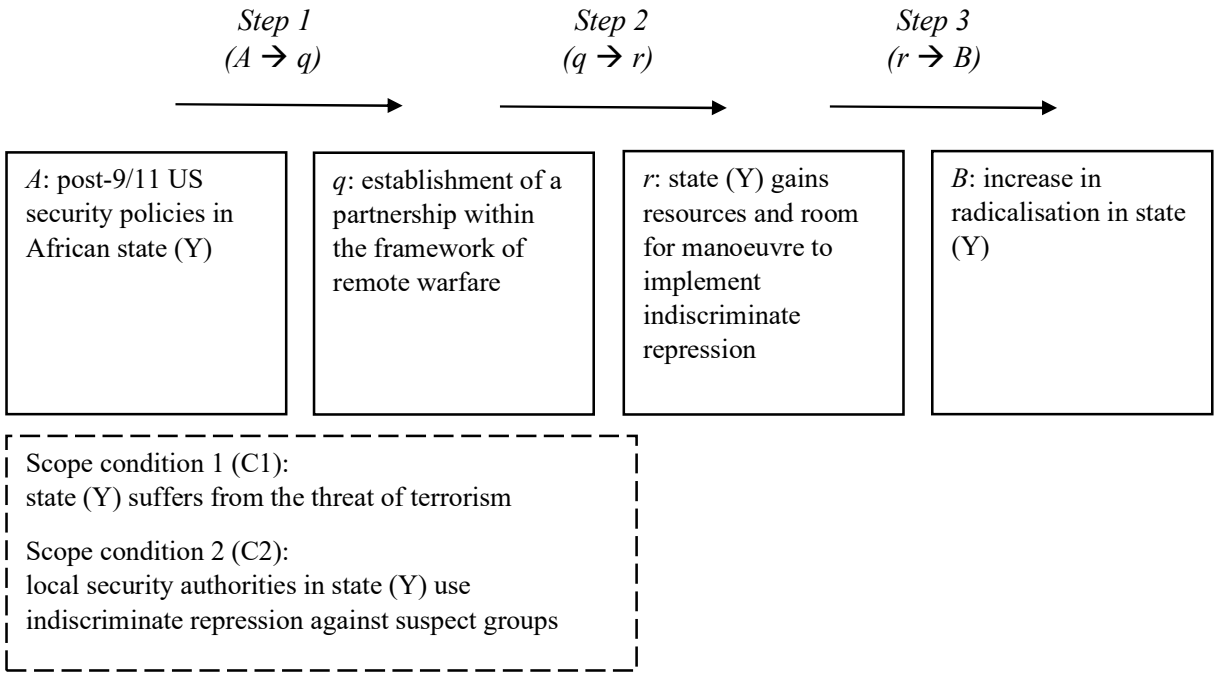


Figure 6. Block diagram of the causal mechanism

Incorporating insights from multiple theoretical traditions that have so far remained largely unconnected, the proposed causal mechanism enables analysis of causal links between US security policies and the rise of terrorism in Africa, allowing for a holistic study of how such policies impact on the social fabric of African societies. In harmony with the CTS agenda, the mechanism contributes to "bringing politics back into counterterrorism" (Lindahl 2016: 219), postulating that US initiatives that underestimate the political drivers of radicalisation, framing the war on terror in the continent primarily through a problem-solving perspective that prioritises military cooperation with local actors, risk having unintentional repercussions undermining the achievement of their very objectives on the ground. In so doing, the mechanism de-exceptionalises the process of mobilisation, contextualising dynamics of radicalisation within the socio-political environment from which they originate by identifying practices of indiscriminate repression on the part of US African allies as favouring the spread of political violence on the ground.

The next sections explore in detail each of the steps of the causal mechanism, providing an in-depth overview on their theoretical foundation. In so doing, the sections discuss the observable manifestations that such steps are predicted to have if the mechanism is present in the case under study: post-9/11 US security policies in Kenya. To provide more clarity to the analytical procedure and place a greater emphasis on the causal forces at play, Step 1 and 2 of the mechanism are examined together.

Step 1 and 2 of the causal mechanism: African states are not passive partners in the war on terror

The theoretical propositions underpinning Step 1 and 2 of the hypothesised causal mechanism (A → q → r) build on research on remote warfare (Watts and Biegon 2017; Knowles and Watson 2018a, 2018b, 2018c; J. Richards 2018; Walpole and Karlshoej-Pedersen 2019; Biegon and Watts 2020a; Knowles 2020; McKay, Watson and Karlshoej-Pedersen 2021), and on research on security assistance and the role of agency (Cochran 2010; Schroeder 2010; Albrecht and Stepputat 2015; Biddle 2017; Abrahamsen and Sandor 2018; Matisek and Reno 2019; Knowles and Matisek 2019). The steps hypothesise that post-9/11 US security policies in African states suffering from the threat of terrorism lead to the establishment of a partnership relationship within the framework of remote warfare, characterised by the provision of indirect support to a surrogate with the aim of fighting an enemy in a distant theatre. However, rather than being passive partners in the war on terror, African states can take advantage of such a relationship to gain support to deal with local threats while reducing foreign interference in domestic affairs. In contexts characterised by harsh security measures

based on indiscriminate repression against suspect groups, these dynamics are hypothesised to result in the acquisition of resources and room for manoeuvre by local authorities to implement such measures.

The idea of remote warfare as a concept capturing recent evolutions in military interventionism has been developed by the Oxford Research Group (ORG) (e.g., Watts and Biegon 2017, 2019; Knowles and Watson 2018a, 2018b), although other studies have highlighted similar trends in contemporary forms of conflict (for a discussion, see Knowles 2020; Watson and Mckay 2021), making reference to concepts such as proxy warfare (Mumford 2013), partnered warfare (Droege and Tuck 2017), liquid warfare (Demmers and Gould 2018), surrogate warfare (Krieg and Rickli 2019) or vicarious warfare (Waldman 2021). Remote warfare is a "strategy of countering threats at a distance, without the deployment of large military forces" (Watts and Biegon 2017: 1; see also Biegon and Watts 2020a). Such a strategy can involve a wide variety of activities normally forming part of different programmes and approaches, ranging from direct intervention through the use of unmanned drones to the provision of indirect support to local actors. Distinguishing remote warfare is the objective underlying such activities, that is, fighting an enemy (Knowles and Watson 2018a). Security support to local forces can fluctuate in and out of the spectrum of remote warfare, as, for example, pre-existing programmes aimed at developing a country's security sector are aligned to or embedded in efforts to counter an emerging threat (Knowles and Watson 2018b). Such a fluctuation implies the existence of a "grey zone" blurring the boundaries between remote warfare and other forms of engagement aimed at achieving longer-term goals on the ground (Knowles and Watson 2018b: 4).

This research hypothesises that, in cases where an African state (Y) suffers from the threat of terrorism (scope condition 1 [C1]), A → q occurs, meaning that the US establishes a partnership relationship with state (Y), engaging in cooperation and providing indirect support to fight such a threat remotely. Here, the presence of a terrorist threat in the local theatre implies that there is (at least) a terrorist organisation operating in state (Y) and/or in the region in which state (Y) is located. The rationale behind C1 is that, in line with what discussed above, security policies reflecting a strategy of remote warfare must be aimed at defeating a local adversary on the ground. In cases in which C1 is absent, the provision of US indirect support is not classifiable as part of remote warfare and the hypothesised mechanism is not set in motion. Indeed, as will be outlined later in this section, without a terrorist threat, local authorities could hardly manage to gain continuous support while implementing harsh security measures.

If C1 is present in the case of post-9/11 US security policies in Kenya, meaning that Kenya suffers from the threat posed by Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab, the research expects to identify manifestations of A → q. Specifically, it expects to find evidence of the US providing security

assistance, that is, military and defence aid and resources, including specialised training and equipment to Kenyan forces, to fight local terrorism while keeping a low military presence on the ground. As discussed in the methodological section of the introductory chapter, such evidence would provide a strong inferential test corroborating A → q, being characterised by a high degree of certainty (in its absence there could be no partnership relationship within the remote warfare framework) and uniqueness (it could hardly have causes other than the establishment of the partnership).

The establishment of partnership relationships by the US to counter emerging threats in the African continent can be framed as the expression of a problem-solving perspective on the war on terror. Indeed, rather than being questioned as potential sources of friction underlying dynamics of mobilisation, existing security institutions in Africa are systematically treated as "the given framework for action" (Cox 1981: 128-129), turning into surrogates through which Washington can project its power on the ground. The term 'surrogate' here simply denotes an actor that "acts on…behalf or in support of" a policy of another actor [the benefactor], "in pursuance of shared though not necessarily identical goals and in circumstances that otherwise might require…[the benefactor]…to assume higher costs and/or risks" (Rubenstein 1988: 168, quoted in Cochran 2010: 113). Such costs and risks concern the military, political and economic aspects of contemporary warfare. Recent experiences of conflict have shown how, despite a massive deployment of combat troops on the ground, organised violence in unconventional theatres can result in a large number of casualties and a protraction of hostilities, causing a substantial economic burden on the societies of the intervening countries. The increasing media coverage of international politics exacerbates the impact of direct military interventions, producing socio-political tensions due to public antagonism towards war and its violence (Waldman 2018, 2019a; Krieg and Rickli 2019). Relying on surrogates, benefactor states aim to counter threats without paying a high price in terms of human and financial resources, exploiting the "local knowledge" of indigenous forces during conflicts (Waldman 2019b: 170) while keeping "military interventions (and their lived realities)…hidden from…[their]…publics", or at least "mak[ing] it hard to trace lines of responsibility and underlying power constellations" (Demmers and Gould 2018: 365). Emerging partnership relationships, generally sustained by ad hoc institutional and military architectures, condense the efforts of the benefactor in encouraging local actors to achieve security goals on the ground. Although within the post-9/11 US security framework the turn to such efforts is frequently discussed in relation to the negative impact of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq in the 2000s (e.g., Kümmel and Giegerich 2013; Biegon and Watts 2020a), the next chapter will show how, in the African continent, they can be conceived as an evolution of earlier trends.

Surrogates, however, are not merely 'used' by the benefactor. On the contrary, the link between such actors is based on a "perceived mutual benefit" (Mumford 2013: 17). That is, surrogates have considerable incentives to welcome the benefactor's indirect engagement and be at the forefront in fighting terrorism. Such incentives relate to the fact that "becoming an intervener state can unlock multiple opportunities to acquire material and symbolic resources, as well as the chance to meet several practical interests tied to governing a state" (Abrahamsen and Sandor 2018: 392). In Africa, the US strategy to counter enemies at a distance is not only consistent with Washington's objectives, but also with those of African leaders regarding the achievement of 'African solutions to African problems', reducing foreign interference in African domestic affairs while gaining increasing resources and room for manoeuvre to tackle perceived threats (Duffield 2007; Olsen 2014; Fisher and Anderson 2015; Hagmann and Reyntjens 2016). This is because of two factors characterising remote warfare that impose considerable limitations to US policy makers while allowing African partners to use indirect support with fewer restrictions.

Firstly, the lack of information on the security performances of surrogates on the part of the benefactor (Biddle 2017; Krieg and Rickli 2019; Ucko 2019). The political and physical 'remoteness' between the US and African partner forces makes the access of US policy makers to reliable information rather difficult, complicating oversight. Information can sometimes even be deliberately distorted by local actors in the attempt to provide a picture of security efforts on the ground that encourages further engagement and support (see Byman 2006).

Secondly, and more importantly, the generation of a moral hazard in that, by exploiting their geo-strategic role within the post-9/11 US security framework and the reluctance of Washington to get directly involved in local conflicts, African surrogates can take advantage of the remote warfare strategy to gain leverage and negotiating power while evading US pressure regarding the use of indirect support (see Abrahamsen and Sandor 2018). The tension between the achievement of counter-terrorism imperatives in the continent and the avoidance of risks associated with the deployment of troops on the ground generates major constraints and dilemmas for US policy makers as, even when indirect support risks being partially derailed from its original purpose, "withdrawal of support could tempt terrorist actors to exploit the state's loss of backing" (Mezzell 2019: 142).

The above factors have considerable implications, highlighting how the effects of remote warfare are highly dependent on the socio-political environment in which US policies are implemented. This raises serious concerns. Indeed, although US policy makers and surrogates "might share basic counter-terrorist operational objectives, the underlying conception of national security may be different, and sometimes dangerously so" (J. Richards 2018: 3). Surrogates may also have different perceptions regarding the extent and the nature of the terrorist threat and, consequently, the measures

that are necessary to counter it. Engaging indirectly in local conflicts, the US places much of its security strategy into the hands of its partners, assuming that "resources, in terms of advisors provided and hostnation [sic] troops trained and equipped, will generate the desired product" (Matisek and Reno 2019: 68). Still, depending on the context, such a strategy may fall victim to perceptions and interests that diverge considerably from those of the supplier (see Schroeder 2010; Richmond 2011; Johnson 2014; Knowles and Matisek 2019; Walpole and Karlshoej-Pedersen 2019). Specifically, in fragmented, illiberal and corrupted systems, US indirect support risks being abused by security authorities using repressive means to tackle perceived sources of insecurity (Larsdotter 2015; Abrahamsen 2016a; Matisek and Reno 2019; Knowles 2020) or even exploiting the war on terror as "a licence to criminalise the opposition and clamp down on civil society" (Howell et al. 2008: 86). This risk is of critical importance in the African continent, where many of the US partners in counter-terrorism have an appalling record on human rights and democracy (see Williams 2007; Solomon 2015a; Hagmann and Reyntjens 2016). In such a socio-political environment, without targeted measures addressing underlying sources of inequality, a strategy relying primarily on local forces as surrogates may end up supporting security units involved in human rights violations or political elites carrying out discriminatory policies. Along these lines, US indirect support would turn into an "unintentional 'kingmaker'" (Knowles and Matisek 2019: 15), contributing to strengthening the power of illiberal regimes and jeopardising individual security of their citizens.

This research hypothesises that, when an African state (Y) relies on harsh security measures based on indiscriminate repression against suspect groups (scope condition 2 [C2]), the establishment of the partnership relationship with the US means that local authorities gain resources and room for manoeuvre to implement such measures.

As discussed in the methodological section of the introductory chapter, if C2 is present in the case study, the research expects to identify observable manifestations of the above step of the mechanism (q → r). Specifically, it expects to see Kenyan authorities managing to use US security assistance to carry out indiscriminate repression against Muslim and ethnic Somali communities. As for the first step of the mechanism, due to the high level of uniqueness and certainty, the predicted evidence would provide a powerful test for causal inference, substantiating q → r.

What the first two steps of the causal mechanism (A → q → r) imply is that, without "a comprehensive study of each country and…region" in which security policies are implemented, including a considerable "effort to understand the dynamics and the aspirations of the [local] people" (Johnson 2014: 649), countering emerging threats in Africa by delegating the fighting (and the consequent risks) to local security institutions could have serious repercussions on the ground. Indeed, it could set in motion, or fuel, a mechanism by which "what is being secured is the power of the

[surrogate] state to intervene in a variety of social arenas, but the personal health and security of the individuals…is not improved"; on the contrary, it deteriorates (Dalby 1997: 15). The effects such a mechanism would seriously undermine the achievement of development goals and exacerbate political conditions on the continent. In so doing, they would conflict with the emancipatory objectives highlighted by critical studies on security and terrorism, which remark how security is a "*means"* whose primary goal is "*the securing of people from those oppressions that stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do, compatible with the freedom of others"* (Booth 2007: 112, 115, emphasis in original).

However, besides humanitarian and political repercussions, there could be further implications, paradoxically undermining state security and stability on the ground. Such "unintended consequences" (Daase and Friesendorf 2010: 5), or blowbacks, relate to long-term counter-productive effects. Specifically, security policies providing indirect support to fragmented and illiberal systems risk underestimating the political nature of terrorism and the effects that an increase in repressive measures on the ground may have on radicalisation among targeted communities. These effects are discussed in the next section, which focuses on the third step of the causal mechanism (r → B).

Step 3 of the causal mechanism: a Social Movement Theory approach to radicalisation

Step 3 of the causal mechanism (r → B) builds on research on social movements and political violence; particularly on social movement studies exploring the impact of state policies on mobilisation to violence (e.g., McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Hafez 2003; Wiktorowicz 2004a; Davenport, Johnston and Mueller 2005; della Porta 2008; 2013; 2018; Alimi and Meyer 2011; Bosi, Demetriou and Malthaner 2014a; Klandermans 2014). Here, it is hypothesised that indiscriminate repression implemented by African state (Y) has counter-productive effects on national security, fuelling radicalisation among targeted groups.

Social Movement Theory (SMT) is a corpus of different theoretical frameworks providing analytical tools for the study of social movements, that is, "networks of individuals and organizations, with common identities and conflictual aims, that use unconventional means" (della Porta 2018: 463), and the environment in which they act. Historically, research on social movements has prioritised the study of non-violent movements in Western democracies, such as human rights movements using civil disobedience as a method of protest, over mobilisation processes in authoritarian and illiberal settings. Still, in recent years, an increasing number of social movement scholars have turned their attention to dynamics of contention in non-democratic states, exploring processes leading to the

emergence of political violence (e.g., McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Hafez 2003; Kurzman 2004; Wiktorowicz 2004a; Alimi, Bosi and Demetriou 2015).

SMT provides a significant contribution to the study of terrorism (see Dalgaard-Nielsen 2008; Beck 2015; Bosi and Malthaner 2015). Firstly, it places the emphasis on dynamics of interaction as a crucial dimension affecting people's interpretative processes and the selection of the repertoires of action. As social relations shape the way in which the external reality and the self are conceived and constructed by social actors (see Melucci 1995), interactions can cause significant changes in people's preferences and perceptions, including "interpretations, expectations, and perceptions of the 'enemy'" (Malthaner 2017: 374). Social movement scholars maintain that the existence of grievances is not sufficient to explain radical behaviour (e.g., McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Tilly 2005). Rather, "pre-existing motivations, values and norms as well as dispositions are…shaped by, and even transformed during contention" (Alimi, Bosi and Demetriou 2015: 9). According to this view, encounters with the state can play a major role in triggering mobilisation to violence, contributing to defining the 'political opportunities' perceived by people in a given context (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; della Porta 2018). Research shows how the closing down of such opportunities through adoption of exclusive policies by national institutions has tended to fuel distrust and disillusionment towards the political system among social actors, increasing the likelihood of violent forms of opposition (e.g., Kriesi et al. 1995; della Porta 2008). As Alimi and Meyer point out (2011: 476), "when authorities foreclose institutional means of redress, extra-institutional action appears to be the most promising route to influence".

Secondly, SMT stresses the role of resources as a pre-requisite for mobilisation and engagement in violent contention. As social movement scholars posit, without appropriate resources sustaining opponents' efforts, social discontent can hardy translate into collective action (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tarrow 1998). The resources in question can be of different types, including "material" resources (e.g., money, supplies), "moral" resources (e.g., perceived legitimacy), "cultural" resources (e.g., operational knowledge), and "human" resources (e.g., leadership, manpower) (Edwards and McCarthy 2004: 125-128).

Finally, rather than conceiving militants just as passive agents involved in the reproduction of coherent and pre-existing ideologies, SMT conceptualises them as active actors shaping and adapting interpretative orientations about specific events and circumstances with the aim of getting support from targeted audiences (Snow and Byrd 2007; see also Benford and Snow 2000; Snow 2004). By engaging in 'framing' activities, militants contribute to the construction of meaning, capitalising on socio-political dynamics to gain resonance among potential supporters and achieve their mobilisation.

Focusing on the three dimensions above, SMT approaches to radicalisation and terrorism have often been regarded as particularly suitable for a CTS research orientation. In the first place, SMT contributes to 'broadening' the area of study by contextualising terrorism within the social and political dynamics characterising its generative environment (Gunning 2009). Rather than concentrating on individual predispositions, cultural strain or global ideological forces as the major causes of radicalisation, a SMT approach shifts the emphasis to the arena of interaction and meaning construction where individuals, organisations and institutional actors operate. Such a perspective, therefore, departs from accounts of Islamist terrorism as the outcome of fanaticism and religious intolerance, in favour of a politicised and historicised investigation that includes a focus on the state and the effects of its policies. Specifically, a SMT approach implies a view of terrorist groups as "movements with political claims" (Beck 2008: 1566), whose violence represents "one of several forms of confrontation within a wider *repertoire of actions and strategies*" (Bosi, Demetriou and Malthaner 2014b: 2, emphasis in original) rather than "a static, individual disposition prior to movement participation" (Gunning 2009: 161).

SMT, therefore, re-frames the process of radicalisation into Islamist terrorism within categories that can be examined by relying on analytical tools used for the study of political violence and even non-violent forms of Western activism (see della Porta 1988, 2013). Such an operation contributes to 'deepening' the field, overcoming 'orientalist' assumptions by identifying jihadists as rational actors involved in strategic calculations over the costs and benefits of their actions and in constant interplay with other actors in the system (Wiktorowicz and Kaltenthaler 2006; Gunning 2009).

Drawing from the analytical toolkit provided by SMT, the approach that this research proposes to the study of radicalisation in African states concentrates on indiscriminate repression as a determinant of mobilisation into terrorism. Such an approach does not aim at providing an all-encompassing theory of radicalisation. Several studies highlight how dynamics of mobilisation into terrorism can involve a multiplicity of forces that can hardly be captured by any single theoretical explanation (e.g., McCauley and Moskalenko 2011; Schmid 2013; Hafez and Mullins 2015; Lindekilde 2016). As McCauley and Moskalenko stress (2008: 429), "it seems unlikely that any single theory can integrate all the influences that bring individuals to radical political action". Rather, by shifting the focus to politics, the aim of this research is to investigate whether and how violent forms of interaction in the counter-terrorism framework may have detrimental effects in African states, undermining national security by increasing radicalisation. In light of what discussed in the previous section, such a trend would have substantial implications for post-9/11 US security policies in the continent. Indeed, it would suggest that, depending on the socio-political context, US policies risk adding fuel to, or even lighting, the fire of instability and violence.

State repression can be used as a "barometer" for (della Porta 2013: 35) or a "measure" of (Earl 2011: 263) the available opportunities for social actors in a given context, denoting any action by the state authorities that "raises the contender's cost of collective action" (Tilly 1978: 100). Following Osa and Schock (2007: 133), such actions can be divided into four main categories, encompassing the different nuances that repressive policies may assume: "negative sanctions, violence, coercion, and violence by proxy". As they clarify,

> negative sanctions include actions such as curtailing political and civil liberties, imposing martial law, censoring public or private media, impeding the flow of information or the movement of people, banning political organizations and meetings, engaging in discriminatory legal practices, infiltrating movements, using agents provocateurs, spying, psychological warfare, harassment, imposing fines, and confiscating resources. Force entails the use of physical violence against human beings, such as imprisonment, beatings, rape, torture, disappearances, assassinations, executions, bombings, armed attacks, air strikes, and physical retaliation against colleagues or relatives. Coercion involves intimidation or the threatened use of violence. A fourth form of repression occurs when authorities overlook or encourage third parties who implement violence or coercion against the regime's political challengers. In this situation, vigilante groups, lynch mobs, death squads, paramilitary forces, and the like carry out the government's 'dirty work' by proxy (Osa and Schock 2007: 133).

Unlike selective repression, targeting militants and individuals directly involved in clandestine activities, indiscriminate repression extends also to suspect citizens and potential sympathisers (Hafez 2003). The logic behind such an extension is based on the assumption that, fearing repercussions associated with state violence, people would desist from cooperating with clandestine organisations, also pressuring militants and their supporters to change their course of action (Kalyvas 2006). As such, indiscriminate repression mainly characterises conflicts in which challengers can hardly be identified by state authorities and tend to hide among the population. In the counter-terrorism framework, indiscriminate repression has generally been implemented against 'suspect groups', targeting entire communities whose members are suspected of being involved in terrorist activities.

However, by causing dynamics of violent interaction between the state and a segment of its population, security policies based on indiscriminate repression risk having negative repercussions on national security. Indeed, by removing a distinction in the treatment between so-called 'terrorists' and ordinary citizens, indiscriminate repression "erases the relationship between crime and punishment, thus abolishing the concept of transgression" in the eyes of bystanders (Kalyvas 2004:

104). The unpredictability of punitive measures adopted by national authorities means that even members of suspect groups distancing themselves from terrorism cannot be confident that "only 'troublemakers' will be punished" (Hafez and Hatfield 2006: 363). This "widens the cleavage between groups" (Klandermans 2014: 18), politicising the collective identity of targeted communities by demarcating rigid boundaries distinguishing and isolating them from the rest of the population. The progressive strengthening of a sense of 'we-ness' produces solidarity among victims, facilitating the spread of interpretative orientations identifying their condition as unfair (Fireman et al. 1979; Simon and Klandermans 2001). A growing climate of collective fear, alienation and insecurity increases costs associated with inaction, fuelling a desire for revenge against the state (Hafez 2003; della Porta 2013).

In contexts characterised by the presence of terrorist groups operating on the ground, as are the African states in which the causal mechanism is hypothesised to work (due to scope condition 1 [C1]), the emergence of such a climate has major implications. Indeed, on the one hand, it favours terrorist propaganda, increasing the effectiveness of militants' framing activities seeking to forge an "oppositional consciousness" (Morris and Braine 2001: 27) encouraging collective action against the state. As della Porta emphasises (2013: 68), harsh repression has "cognitive effects" favouring the resonance of radical interpretative orientations among targeted people. On the other hand, by causing a disconnect between the state and suspect groups, it weakens state monitoring capacities at the margins of society, providing militants with room for manoeuvre to penetrate the "social space" (Campana and Ducol 2011: 403) of such groups and establish connections with locals. The progressive consolidation of such connections, especially if of transnational nature, increases considerably the capability of local would-be militants to mobilise, "lowering the power discrepancies between challengers and the state" (Osa and Schock 2007: 130). Indeed, it allows aspiring recruits to circumvent "repression and blockage at home" (Sikkink 2005: 154; see also Adamson 2005) by gaining access to a relatively safe space outside the radar of national authorities where to take refuge and acquire "*resources for violence*" (della Porta 2009: 19, emphasis in original) in the form of leadership, supplies, organisational and tactical skills to engage in collective action against the state.

Along these lines, indiscriminate repression has two main consequences for dynamics of radicalisation in African states. Firstly, it increases a motivation to mobilise among targeted groups, culminating in the generation of a reservoir of potential recruits for terrorist movements promoting collective action against the state. At the same time, it contributes to removing barriers for would-be militants to concretise their propensity for radicalisation, shaping socio-political conditions enabling mobilisation.

This research expects to find evidence of Step 3 (r → B) in the case under study. Specifically, it expects to see Kenyan Muslim and ethnic Somali communities becoming prone to mobilising into Al-Shabaab, and managing to do so, in the face of indiscriminate repression. As discussed in the methodological section of the introductory chapter, such a prediction has a high degree of uniqueness and certainty. Indeed, due to its very specific character, it could hardly have causes other than r → B and is necessary for r → B to occur. As such, if found, predicted evidence would provide a powerful inferential test corroborating r → B.

Conclusions

This chapter has outlined the theoretical and conceptual basis of the research. After having provided the definitions of 'radicalisation' and 'terrorism', it has examined the role of CTS as the research orientation, shedding light on how such an orientation contributes to the construction of the three-step causal mechanism hypothesised to link post-9/11 US security policies and radicalisation in Africa. Then, the chapter has offered greater insights into the theoretical framework underlying the mechanism. Historicising and contextualising (counter-)terrorism, such a framework places local politics at the heart of the analysis, conceiving the socio-political environment in which US policies are implemented as a crucial variable affecting their outcome. In so doing, the framework emphasises the political nature of terrorism, pointing to dynamics of violent interaction between African states and their population as a major dimension of radicalisation.

Drawing upon research on remote warfare, Step 1 of the causal mechanism (A → q) hypothesises that, in African states suffering from the threat of terrorism (scope condition 1 [C1]), post-9/11 US security policies lead to the establishment of a partnership relationship within the framework of remote warfare, characterised by the provision of indirect support to a surrogate state with the aim of fighting terrorism on the ground remotely.

Step 2 (q → r) builds on research on security assistance and the role of agency, hypothesising that, in African states carrying out harsh security measures based on indiscriminate repression against suspect groups (scope condition 2 [C2]), the establishment of the partnership relationship means that local security authorities gain resources and room for manoeuvre to implement such measures.

Relying on a Social Movement Theory (SMT) approach to radicalisation, Step 3 (r → B) hypothesises that indiscriminate repression implemented by US African partners increases radicalisation among targeted groups.

The theoretical framework of the research suggests that, being driven by a problem-solving perspective on the war on terror in Africa, US policies overlook crucial dynamics affecting the emergence of radicalisation. The engagement in remote warfare, with the consequent provision of

indirect support to surrogates on the continent, can improve the capability of African forces to localise and dismantle terrorist networks. Still, if such forces rely on repressive practices against their own population, US policies risk jeopardising security objectives on the ground, contributing to fuelling mobilisation into terrorism.

Following the procedure of operationalisation described in the methodological section of the introductory chapter, each step of the causal mechanism has been translated into a case-specific prediction of the observable manifestations that such a step is expected to have if present in the case of post-9/11 US policies in Kenya. Given the high degree of uniqueness and certainty characterising the predictions formulated, the hypothesised mechanism (with its underlying theoretical framework) is validated in the case study if evidence of the following dynamics is found:

1. *The US providing security assistance to Kenya to fight Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab while keeping a low military presence on the ground* (to substantiate Step 1 of the mechanism, scope condition 1 [C1] must apply to the case study, meaning that Kenya suffers from the threat posed by Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab).

2. *Kenya managing to use US security assistance to implement indiscriminate repression against Muslim and ethnic Somali communities* (to substantiate Step 2 of the mechanism, scope condition 2 [C2] must apply to the case study, meaning that Kenyan security authorities use indiscriminate repression against Muslim and ethnic Somali communities).

3. *Kenyan Muslim and ethnic Somali communities becoming prone to mobilising into Al-Shabaab, and managing to do so, in the face of indiscriminate repression*.

The next three chapters focus on each of these predictions, providing evidence in support of the causal mechanism.

Chapter 3

Causal Mechanism: Step 1

Post-9/11 US security policies in Kenya

This chapter deals with Step 1 of the causal mechanism (A → q), according to which, in African states characterised by the threat of terrorism (scope condition 1 [C1]), post-9/11 US security policies lead to the establishment of a partnership relationship within the framework of remote warfare. The chapter tests the validity of A → q in the case of post-9/11 US security policies in Kenya by looking for case-specific manifestations of the step. After having assessed the presence of C1 in Kenya, the chapter seeks to find evidence of the US providing security assistance to Kenyan authorities to fight local terrorism while keeping a low military presence on the ground.

The chapter is composed of four sections.

The first section provides a brief overview on US security assistance in Africa. It shows how events in the 1990s played a role in reorienting US security initiatives in the continent, exploring the evolution of US policies under the Bush, Obama and Trump administrations. A crucial aim of the section is to introduce the paraphernalia used by US policy makers when promoting security on the ground, shedding light on the structure of post-9/11 US security assistance programmes and counter-terrorism initiatives to then facilitate their examination in the Kenyan context.

The second section of the chapter attests the presence of C1 in the case study. The section traces the history of terrorism in East Africa, from the penetration of Al-Qaeda during the 1990s up to the emergence of Al-Shabaab in Somalia and its progressive expansion into the neighbouring countries. In so doing, the section shows how, in the last two decades, Kenya has become a major theatre in the war on terror, turning into one of the main areas of operation for East Africa's militants.

The third section focuses on post-9/11 US security policies in Kenya, exploring how Washington has responded to the terrorist threat. The section provides strong evidence in support of the case-specific prediction formulated when operationalising A → q, showing that, since the beginning of the war on terror, the US has provided Kenyan authorities with significant amounts of security assistance, training and equipping Kenyan forces while seeking to improve the country's logistical and military resources with the aim of countering local terrorism. Despite experiencing different levels of cooperation with Kenyan authorities, the Bush, Obama and Trump administrations sought to foster security efforts in the country, supporting local actors to fight Al-Qaeda in East Africa (AQEA), Al-

Shabaab and its local affiliates while limiting the US military presence on the ground to a few dozen soldiers.

Finally, the last section explains why the evidence reported in the chapter provides a powerful inferential test corroborating A → q, pointing to the prominence of a strategy of remote warfare aimed at achieving counter-terrorism objectives by relying on Kenya as a surrogate to project US military force. In so doing, the section summarises the main features of A → q and introduces some of the implications that will be explored in the next chapter.

A brief overview on US security assistance in Africa

During September 1993, US Black Hawk helicopters were flying over the skies of Mogadishu, scouring potential hotspots where General Aideed and the members of his militia might hide. The Task Force Ranger conducting the raids had been deployed by Washington in support of the UN operation on the ground, UNOSOM II, seeking to enforce a peace process in Somalia by disarming armed factions and neutralising the warlords that guided them. Such warlords had taken control of the Somali territory after the overthrown of Siad Barre's regime in 1991, giving rise to an internal conflict that, added to a severe drought in the region, had generated a humanitarian emergency. After having suspended assistance to Barre's regime in 1989, the US was seeking to further cooperative security efforts in the country, putting into practice the principles of 'new world order' and 'assertive multilateralism' set out respectively by Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton (Patman 2015). However, peace enforcement in Somalia proved to be harder than expected.

On October 3, US Rangers were caught in an ambush by Aideed's militia. The latter shot three helicopters down and engaged American forces in a fight that lasted until late into the night. At the end, the 'Battle of Mogadishu' cost the lives of 18 US soldiers, while 78 others were wounded. Such an episode had a substantial impact both in military and political terms for the US. Indeed, on the one hand it signalled (again) the limits of American technological and logistical supremacy in unconventional theatres, where local forces could exploit their familiarity with the "urban jungle" and disappear into the crowd of non-combatants (Bacevich 2002: 147). On the other hand, it fuelled aversion, both within the public and the government, towards US direct involvement in remote conflicts regarded as having minor potential repercussions for national security (Clarke and Herbst 1997; Aning 2001). The wide media coverage of the violence in Somalia and the footage of the corpses of US soldiers generated considerable criticism among the American public. The US administration realised how ground combat could easily result in a relatively high number of casualties as well as a dramatic loss of support, generating a political backlash. On October 6, three

days after the so-called 'Black Hawk Down incident', President Clinton announced the withdrawal of US forces from Somalia within six months. The country would remain ungoverned for a long time.

The experience in Somalia in the 1990s marked an important moment in the history of US security policies in the post-Cold War era. If not a turning point, Mogadishu represented a critical juncture in the process of the evolution of Washington's policy in the African continent and, more broadly, the global South. October 1993 increased US policy makers' alienation from forms of warfare involving open confrontation among forces on the ground. Specifically, it consolidated a tendency towards the avoidance of risks, particularly for what concerns possible US casualties, stemming from direct interventions in conflicts (Patman 2015). As shown in the following pages, such a tendency affected the political line of the Clinton administration in the aftermath of the battle of Mogadishu and continued to reverberate throughout the policies of the Bush, Obama and Trump administrations during the war on terror. The launch of the military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq in the 2000s, characterised by a massive deployment of US troops, represented a notable exception to such a trend. Still, both the campaigns contributed to increasing consensus among US policy makers toward the prioritisation of an already emerging approach based on limiting US boots on the ground.

In contrast with the attitude showed in the first months of his presidency, after the events in Somalia President Clinton set out strict rules regulating US involvement in UN missions. As the 1994 Presidential Decision Directive 25 (PDD-25) clarified, the US would support UN peace operations when "UN involvement represents the best means to advance U.S. interests" (White House 1994: 2), providing troops only if (among other conditions) "both the unique and general risks to American personnel have been weighed and are considered acceptable"; "an end point for U.S. participation can be identified"; and "there is domestic political and Congressional support for U.S. participation, or such support can be marshalled" (White House 1994: Annex II).

Furthermore, besides imposing restrictions to participation in peace operations, the US started refining a new policy for the use of military force, placing increasing emphasis on the role of air strikes and local armies (Bacevich 2002).

During the course of its mandate, the Clinton administration relied extensively on missiles to project US force in distant theatres (e.g., Bacevich 2002; Badey 2006). Cruise missiles, for example, were the main tool used by the US to respond to the 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, striking Al-Qaeda's bases in Afghanistan and a pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum accused of producing chemical weapons for the terrorist group.

In parallel, the Clinton administration intensified the provision of security assistance to local actors in Africa to increase their capacity (and political willingness) to participate in peace operations.

In this regard, fearing that increasing ethnic tensions in Burundi could open a crisis in the country, the US promoted the creation of an African Crisis Response Force (ACRF) in 1996. Despite the failure of the initiative, the US managed to set in motion the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI) a year later, shifting the focus from the creation of a standing force to the provision of training to African states' militaries to conduct peacekeeping missions (Berman 2003). Similarly, in 2000, the US implemented Operation Focus Relief, training forces from Ghana, Senegal and Nigeria to fight the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone (Bacevich 2002: 158-159). While investing in the African military potential and incentivising African-led peace initiatives, such projects were instrumental to the alleviation of the burden weighing on the shoulders of the world's superpower, allowing it to tackle humanitarian problems on the continent while avoiding risks associated with direct military intervention. Despite being driven by a different motivation, and supported by much greater resources, post-9/11 US security policies have responded to a comparable logic. Establishing ties with African governments, cemented by intense diplomatic efforts and increasing military and logistical aid, Washington has sought to tackle threats on the ground without paying a high economic, military and political price. The politico-military architecture fabricated around those ties, as well as the "political, legal, and ethical landscapes" in which they have been elaborated (Knowles and Watson 2018b: 2), has represented a departure from the "reactive, largely ad hoc approach to Soviet-inspired crises" characterising US initiatives during the Cold War period, "to a more strategic and proactive approach focusing on resolving regional conflicts and reinforcing regional stability" (Nigro and Lovelace 2013: 268; see also Shapiro 2012; N. D. Allen 2018). Such an approach has been centred on African security institutions as the primary referent and the main beneficiary of US efforts, seeking to build military and political support among local actors to achieve "aligned US strategic objectives" on the ground (DOD 2017: V, quoted in Watts and Biegon 2017: 3).

The 9/11 attacks and the subsequent beginning of the war on terror led to a substantial shift in the relationship between the US and Africa. Identifying major threats to national security as stemming from the world's poorest and politically fragile regions, US policy makers started intensifying security cooperation with countries regarded as crucial allies in the fight against terrorism. The George W. Bush administration highlighted the significant role played by US partners in combating terrorism in local theatres, announcing the provision of increasing amounts of security assistance. Indeed, as the new war required the US to engage "on many fronts against a particularly elusive enemy" (White House 2002: 5), the 2003 US National Strategy for Combating Terrorism clarified that

> an essential element of our strategy remains working with others to reorient existing partnerships and create new mechanisms for cooperation among the willing and able states around the world.
>
> We will review funding for international counterterrorism training and assistance programs and ensure adequate resources are available to strengthen the capabilities of key states (White House 2003: 20).

Despite the relatively limited focus devoted by US policy makers to Africa during the 2000s, especially if compared to regions such as the Middle East and Central Asia, the political line implemented by the Bush administration translated into the creation of a major security structure catalysing the intensification of cooperation with key states on the continent. In 2002, the US created the Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA), turning Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti into a permanent military base from which to enhance partners' security capacities and tackle terrorism in East Africa through an "'indirect' approach" (Ploch 2010: 26). In the same year, the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI) was launched, providing counter-terrorism training and assistance to Mali, Niger, Chad, and Mauritania. Both the CJTF-HOA and the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), which succeeded PSI in 2004, were integrated into the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) in 2008, along with other US initiatives in the continent such as the East Africa Counterterrorism Initiative (EACTI, discussed in the third section of this chapter) and the Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA, which succeeded ACRI in 2002).

AFRICOM, whose headquarters has remained stationed in Stuttgart (Germany), was designed in 2007 as the expression of the new strategic significance of Africa in the post-9/11 US security framework, coordinating US military operations as well as non-military programmes aimed at tackling instability and assisting African states in the promotion of African security. As AFRICOM Commander General William E. Ward argued in 2009, "by strengthening our partners' security capacity, we will deny terrorists freedom of action and access to resources, while diminishing the conditions that foster violent extremism" (AFRICOM 2009). Such objectives were deemed to be of critical importance for US national interests, allowing Washington to unlock the potential of local actors to preserve regional stability "while at the same time alleviating some of the demands on U.S. forces" (Shapiro 2012: 24). Hence, in the words of the former Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, Ryan Henry, AFRICOM would have been successful if it had "[kept] American troops *out* of Africa for the next 50 years" (quoted in Ploch 2011: 6, emphasis in original).

To sustain major security initiatives in Africa and throughout the world, in the 2000s the US started setting up an intricate web of security assistance programmes, which have multiplied over the years. In the pre-9/11 period Washington accounted for 57 security aid programmes. Yet, their

number had reached 107 in 2017 (Isacson and Kinosian 2017: 3). Through these programmes the US has provided "defense articles, military training, and other defense-related services by grant, loan, credit, cash sales, or lease, in furtherance of national policies and objectives" (McInnis and Lucas 2015: 8). The Department of Defense (DOD) has run many of the security assistance funds, frequently in cooperation with the Department of State (DOS) through its Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. Such a prominent role played by the Pentagon in the management of US foreign assistance has constituted a departure from the provisions set out by the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act, which identified the DOS as the main actor involved in the provision of training and military resources to third states while looking after US broader interests (Isacson and Kinosian 2017: 6).

Among the security assistance programmes enacted during the Bush administration, "Section 1206 Train and Equip Authority", established by the 2006 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), has represented a major vehicle through which the DOD, with an increasing involvement of the DOS, has sought to strengthen partners' security capabilities, training and equipping foreign forces to conduct counterterrorism operations. In the same year in which Section 1206 was launched, the DOD Quadrennial Defense Review Report highlighted how "operational experiences – in Afghanistan and Iraq…[had] provided important lessons and principles that the Department [had] already begun to apply" (DOD 2006: 16), maintaining that "the employment of surrogates will be a necessary method for achieving many goals" (DOD 2006: 23) and that the DOD would seek to "expand the authorities of the Departments of State and Defense to train and equip foreign security forces best suited to internal counterterrorism and counter-insurgency operations" (DOD 2006: 90). Supporting local forces to take the lead in security operations was increasingly conceived by US policy makers as capable of improving the effectiveness of US counter-terrorism efforts by maximising the degree of familiarity and perceived legitimacy of security forces within the concerned socio-political environment (DOD 2006: 23). This was also consistent with the US plan for Iraq outlined by President Bush in 2005 during a speech at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, foreseeing a greater role played by local actors in the achievement of security goals on the ground: "our strategy can be summed up this way: As the Iraqis stand up, we will stand down" (Bush 2005). In 2007, the second year from its creation, Section 1206 accounted for 44 per cent of US$93 million provided by the DOD to Sub-Saharan Africa (SAM 2021a). The Pentagon's assistance to the region increased significantly in the subsequent decade, reaching a peak of US$797 million in 2016 (SAM 2021a).

Despite the temporary nature of Section 1206 foreseen in its original formulation, the programme was maintained during the 2010s, being expanded and added to section 333 of Title 10 of US Code by the 2017 NDAA, which renamed it 'Section 333 Building Partner Capacity'. The very term 'building partner capacity', firstly mentioned in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report, has

increasingly been used by US policy makers during the last decade to describe a wide range of "missions, programs, activities, and authorities intended to improve the ability of other nations to achieve those security oriented goals they share with the United States" (McInnis and Lucas 2015: 1).

The DOD has also implemented security assistance programmes directed by the DOS. The major ones have been the International Military Education and Training (IMET) programme and the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) programme. Created in 1976, IMET has been used to professionalise foreign militaries, promoting human rights and democratic governance, as well as to foster cooperative relationships between the US and its allies. Through FMF, instead, the DOD has provided grant funding to partner nations to purchase US arms and defence equipment via the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme. Besides fostering the military capacities of key allies in the war on terror, such programmes have played a substantial role in helping the US "secure geographical and political-technical access" to recipient states (Biegon and Watts 2021: 157), strengthening diplomatic ties and increasing US political leverage in distant regions of the world. As the former Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs Andrew J. Shapiro clarified with respect to the provision of defence equipment,

> when the U.S. transfers a weapon system, it is not just providing a country with military hardware, it is both reinforcing diplomatic relations and establishing a long-term security partnership. The complex and technical nature of advanced defense systems frequently requires collaboration and interaction between countries. This may include training and support in the use of the system, assistance in maintenance, and help to update and modernize the system throughout its life-cycle. This engagement helps build bilateral ties and creates strong incentives for recipient countries to maintain good relations with the United States. Security assistance therefore helps undergird these diplomatic relationships (Shapiro 2012: 29).

In the last two decades, as a consequence of intensifying politico-military relationships with several African governments, the US has gained access to an increasing number of facilities on the continent, often known as "cooperative security locations" (or 'lily pads'), to sustain counter-terrorism efforts (Ploch 2011: 9).

Lastly, the DOS has managed some security assistance programmes with minor involvement from the DOD. For example, through the Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining and Related Programs (NADR) account, the DOS has financed the Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) programme, conceived as a "part of the first line of America's defense, working to stop terrorists before they reach U.S. shores" by "making U.S. partners better able to detect and thwart terrorists" (DOS 2004a: 142).

ATA assistance to the African continent increased significantly during the 2000s, shifting from US$3.5 million to approximately US$25 million between 2000 and 2010 (Ploch 2010: 33). Still, the major fund administered by the DOS has been the Peacekeeping Operation (PKO) account. Through the PKO, the DOS has provided training and military assistance to partnered forces involved in peace and stability operations. Over the last decade, the majority of the POK fund has been directed to Africa, supporting initiatives such as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). POK has also contributed to sustaining counter-terrorism activities in the continent, financing the TSCTP as well as the Partnership for East Africa Counterterrorism (PREACT) implemented in 2009 (Ploch 2015: 8; PREACT will be explored in detail in the third section of this chapter). Between 2009 and 2020, the average annual amount of PKO assistance directed to Africa was approximately US$359 million, with levels increasing substantially during the second term of the Obama presidency (SAM 2021b).

Indeed, US efforts to assist allied forces intensified during the Obama administration, being incorporated into a wider approach aimed at achieving national security objectives through a 'light footprint', prioritising cooperation with local actors (and air strikes, e.g., Luján 2013; Kandel 2014; Goldenberg et al. 2016). Despite a minor increase between the end of the 2000s and the beginning of the 2010s, the number of US active-duty military personnel deployed overseas, which had started decreasing after the end of the Cold War, dipped below two hundred thousand for the first time in sixty years during 2016 (Bialik 2017). Such a line of action emerged as a result of further evidence showing counter-productive repercussions, in political, military and economic terms, stemming from large-scale interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan. In this regard, while the 2012 DOD document "Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense" highlighted that "*U.S. forces will no longer be sized to conduct large-scale, prolonged stability operations*" (DOD 2012: 6, emphasis in original), the 2010 DOD Quadrennial Review Report remarked the significance of security assistance in allowing the US to tackle the threat of terrorism while minimising risks connected to a deployment of combat troops on the ground:

> although security assistance is not new, what has fundamentally changed is the role that such assistance can play in providing security in today's environment.
>
> …enabling our partners to respond to security challenges may reduce risk to U.S. forces and extends security to areas we cannot reach alone (DOD 2010: 73).

President Obama himself made the point during a speech at West Point, New York, in 2014, arguing that

> some of our most costly mistakes came not from our restraint, but from our willingness to rush into military adventures without thinking through the consequences – without building international support and legitimacy for our action; without leveling with the American people about the sacrifices required.
>
> …a strategy that involves invading every country that harbors terrorist networks is naïve and unsustainable. I believe we must shift our counterterrorism strategy – drawing on the successes and shortcomings of our experience in Iraq and Afghanistan – to more effectively partner with countries where terrorist networks seek a foothold (White House 2014a).

During the speech at West Point, Obama announced the creation of the Counterterrorism Partnership Fund (CTPF), requesting US$5 billion to implement several initiatives, including providing support to AMISOM in Somalia and to allied forces in Libya. In the same year, the US intensified the provision of support to African states, increasing the role of US Special Operation Forces (SOF) involved in security force assistance (SFA) in the continent by training, advising and equipping local forces on the ground. Between 2014 and 2015, training activities for militaries in Sub-Saharan countries increased by nearly 90% (SAM 2017). Furthermore, the Obama administration sought to promote programmes improving the effectiveness and the reliability of African partners' security and military institutions. In this regard, in 2014 the US president launched the Security Governance Initiative (SGI), dedicating US$65 million (from the NADR account) to "reinforce democratic security sector governance", promote human rights and improve the military capacities of six African countries: Mali, Kenya, Tunisia, Niger, Ghana and Nigeria (White House 2014b).

Several documents and statements released by the Trump administration envisaged a break with the Africa policy of the previous administrations, foreseeing major cuts in the provision of security assistance and a greater focus paid by Washington on protecting the homeland by investing in the US security potential. The 2017 National Security Strategy, for example, highlighted how the US would "encourage partners to work independently of U.S. assistance" (White House 2017a: 11). Along these lines, while introducing the 2018 US Africa Strategy, the US National Security Advisor Ambassador, John R. Bolton, stressed the "need to make adjustments to address the pressing challenge of great power competition, and to correct past mistakes in structuring our funding" so as to "move recipient states toward self-reliance, and prevent long-term dependency" while "ensur[ing] that U.S. taxpayer

dollars for aid are used efficiently and effectively" (Bolton 2018). Trump himself underlined this point during several speeches, blaming the past administrations for having "failed to insist that…often very wealthy allies pay their fair share for defense, putting a massive and unfair burden on the U.S. taxpayer and…[the] U.S. military" (White House 2017b).

However, the major changes promised by the Trump administration have failed to materialise. US initiatives in the continent "continued…on auto-pilot" (Westcott 2019: 8; see also Biegon and Watts 2020b), even registering some increases in the total amount of assistance provided. Indeed, whether the DOD average annual expenditure for security assistance in Africa during the eight years of the Obama administration was approximately US$328 million, during the first three years of the Trump presidency it increased to US$430 million (SAM 2021c).[2] Particularly, the average annual expenditure for Section 1206/333 increased from US$146 million to nearly US$174 million (SAM 2021c). In the same way, despite considerable cuts to the ATA programme at global level (SAM 2019), the DOS average annual expenditure for security assistance in the African continent was subjected to a slight increase during the Trump presidency, reaching almost US$1.9 billion (SAM 2021b).

Distinguishing the Trump administration's security policies from those of the Bush and Obama administrations was not a new strategy guiding the war on terror in Africa, nor a decrease in the total amount of assistance provided by Washington, but rather a decrease in the number of recipient countries benefiting from US security support. Between 2017 and 2020, the DOD increasingly prioritised partners in the fight against terror at the expense of other countries where the US was promoting more long-term projects, re-channelling US security assistance towards key states in North Africa (mainly Tunisia and Morocco), West Africa and the Sahel (Nigeria, Niger, Mali and Chad), and East Africa (Somalia, Uganda and Kenya) (see SAM 2021d).

The prominence of security cooperation as a "military strategy" (Ross 2016: 92) to intervene in the African continent was reiterated in 2018 by AFRICOM commander General Thomas D. Waldhauser:

> security operations are executed almost exclusively *by* the partnered security forces. U.S. Africa Command works *with* partnered security forces based on their operational needs. The vital objectives of the U.S. and the partnered nation are achieved *through* a cooperative relationship in which U.S. Africa Command plays a supporting role (AFRICOM 2018, emphasis added).

[2] As of August 2021, complete data on DOD expenditures for security assistance in Africa in the last year of the Trump administration (2020) are yet to be publicised.

Despite being placed in the wider context of great-power competition, and being infused with the president's 'America First' rhetoric, the US Africa policy during the Trump presidency followed the main pattern drawn by previous US governments, relying on local actors as the main vehicle through which to fight emerging threats on the ground. Although a nationalist and isolationist agenda continued to reverberate throughout several of the president's statements, the Trump White House progressively acknowledged the "importance of strong partnerships in sustaining [US] counterterrorism efforts" (White House 2018a: II), conceding that "America First does not mean America alone" (White House 2018a: I).

The terrorist threat in Kenya and East Africa

Exploring the evolution of US security efforts in Africa during the last decades, the previous section has shed light on the structure and rationale of US assistance programmes and counter-terrorism initiatives in the continent. Before examining how such programmes and initiatives have been used in the case study and testing the validity of A → q, this section attests the presence of scope condition 1 (C1) in Kenya. To do so, the section traces the history of Islamist terrorism in East Africa, showing how Kenya has progressively turned into a major target for Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab while, at the same time, providing a fertile ground for terrorist networks to flourish.

In the last few decades, East Africa has played a significant role in the development of Islamist terrorism, harbouring Al-Qaeda's leadership during the 1990s and subsequently giving rise to some of the most dangerous clandestine organisations. Since the late 1990s, and especially after 9/11, the region has turned into a crucial arena in the US war against terrorism. American security concerns, originally focused on the penetration of Al-Qaeda's operatives, have intensified in the last fifteen years as a consequence of the emergence and rapid diffusion of Al-Shabaab. The Somali organisation has increasingly been regarded by Washington as posing a major threat, to the extent that in 2011, while Somalia was ranked third among the countries considered most dangerous for the US (GAO 2011), the National Strategy for Counterterrorism classified East Africa as one of the main "areas of focus" for US counter-terrorism policies (White House 2011: 14). As shown in the following section, such a focus on the region has remained steady up to the present day.

The first appearance of Al-Qaeda in East Africa dates back to 1992, when Osama bin Laden and his cohort relocated to Sudan, forging ties with local groups (including the militia of General Aideed) and laying the foundations of what progressively became Al-Qaeda in East Africa (AQEA) (Bryden and Bahra 2019). Among the organisations supported by bin Laden in those years was the Somali Al-Itihaad Al-Islaami (AIAI), founded during the 1980s, whose agenda revolved around fighting Barre's regime, countering Western influence and regaining the territories comprising the 'Greater Somalia',

lost with the advent of colonialism (Watts, Shapiro and Brown 2007). Al-Qaeda sought to create a convergence of interests with Somali militants, providing incentives to channel their efforts into the framework of global jihad. The organisation trained and supported logistically AIAI fighters, cooperating during operations in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia (Shinn 2007). However, despite bin Laden's attempts to open a new front in the country, Al-Qaeda struggled to align with the local cultural tradition and penetrate the decentralised structure of the Somali society, often centred more on clan affiliation than religious identity (Watts, Shapiro and Brown 2007). In parallel, the 1996 Ethiopian intervention against AIAI, along with its decreasing allure among potential supporters within and beyond Somali borders (ICG 2005), had a crucial impact on the group, which entered a phase of dissolution towards the end of the decade.

Besides assisting local militias, during the early 1990s Al-Qaeda started organising small teams to conduct operations and engage in recruitment in East Africa, taking advantage of the porosity of regional borders, as well as of the high levels of corruption, to gain room for manoeuvre. Kenya was soon identified as a target. According to the 9/11 Commission Report, the US was aware of the emergence of an Al-Qaeda cell in Nairobi controlled a close collaborator of bin Laden, Wadih al-Hage (9/11 Commission 2004: 68-69). Cooperating with Kenyan police forces, the CIA sought to track down al-Hage and dismantle its network during 1997 (Coll 2004: 404-405). Still, even when al-Hage left the scene, the cell in Kenya remained alive.

Two years had passed since Al-Qaeda's leadership had departed from Sudan to settle in Afghanistan when the sleeper cell in Kenya became active. On 7 August 1998, truck bombs exploded in front of the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, causing 224 casualties and thousands of wounded. One of the masterminds behind the 1998 attacks, Fazul Abdullah Muhammad, was later involved in the planning of another operation with the complicity of affiliates in the Kenyan territory. In November 2002, Kenyan actors used two surface-to-air missiles to shoot down an Israeli airliner departing from Mombasa (Ploch 2010: 6). The missiles missed the target. However, a simultaneous attack against the Paradise Hotel, an Israeli-owned hotel in Kikambala (near Mombasa), cost the lives of fourteen people.

Despite not leading to the establishment of a major jihadist presence on the ground, Al-Qaeda's penetration in East Africa during the 1990s contributed to setting in motion loose networks of operatives throughout the region, also strengthening local groups of sympathisers. In the following years, such a milieu would constitute a crucial component of the fabric with which Al-Shabaab would weave its web.

In the aftermath of the 2002 attack in Kenya, Fazul Abdullah Muhammad and other AQEA operatives moved to Somalia, where they reunited with AIAI militants within the nascent Islamic

Courts Union (ICU) (Watts, Shapiro and Brown 2007; Bryden and Bahra 2019). The ICU emerged as an umbrella organisation catalysing social discontent against the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG, created in 2004), perceived as the political expression of a small group of Somali clans, subjected to Ethiopian influence, and prone to anti-Islamic policies (Menkhaus 2009b). Tensions between the TFG and religious groups escalated into a civil conflict in 2006, which saw the ICU rapidly taking control of Mogadishu and the south-central regions of Somalia. Such a rapid advance of ICU forces frightened Somalia's neighbour Ethiopia, leading to an armed invasion in December 2006. The US backed Ethiopian efforts, also providing air support against AQEA militants in Somalia (TBIJ 2017a).

In the midst of the fight between the ICU and Ethiopian forces, Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahidin (HSM) came to prominence as the main actor in Somalia. Al-Shabaab ('The Youth'), which arose during the early 2000s as an armed militia of Islamic courts, succeeded where previous Islamist groups had failed, overcoming clan divisions while promoting itself as a catalyst for a national Islamic resistance against foreign invaders (Marchal 2009). The narrative promoted by the group, based on the external threat and the acquiescence/complicity of the TFG, along with the dramatic intensity of the conflict in Somalia, devastating a stateless society that was also struggling with a severe drought, increased militants' appeal among Somali people (and the Somali diaspora community) (Menkhaus 2009b: 8). The retreat of the ICU leadership during the hostilities consolidated Al-Shabaab's primacy and political autonomy, channelling the war against Ethiopia within the group's ranks.

In 2008, the year in which the US designated Al-Shabaab as a terrorist organisation, the group had already gained control of many territories in the south of Somalia. Reports released by the UN during that period highlight the existence of close ties between Al-Shabaab's militants and Al-Qaeda (UN 2008: 19-20). Despite some attempts by Al-Shabaab's leadership to gain Al-Qaeda's official endorsement since the late 2000s (e.g., Childress 2010; DOS 2011), a formal affiliation was announced only in February 2012. Even before that moment, however, Al-Shabaab had already started to retrace Al-Qaeda's routes in East Africa, seeking to penetrate the social fabric of East African societies and extend its influence in the region.

Reports show how, since the early years of the conflict against the TFG, Al-Shabaab could rely on a militia of between 200-500 East African fighters, most of which were Kenyan ethnic Somali and non-ethnic Somali Muslims stationed in the "Majimmo sector" in the south of Somalia (UN 2011: 144; IGAD 2016: 22-23). In 2010, militants of Ugandan and Kenyan origins were involved in Al-Shabaab's attacks in Kampala during the World Cup, which was the first major operation carried out by the organisation beyond Somali boundaries (Biryabarema 2016). Over time, Al-Shabaab increased its reliance on non-Somali Muslims, deepening ties with networks of supporters in Kenya. One of the

most important gravitated around the Muslim Youth Center (MYC), founded in 2008 at the Pumwani Riyadha Mosque in Nairobi (Anzalone 2012a). Defined by its constitution as a "community-based organisation" promoting Islamic values, Muslim integration and human rights (UN 2011: 140), the MYC progressively represented an operating base and a mobilising tool for Al-Shabaab in the Kenyan territory, disseminating the movement's propaganda, providing logistical support and facilitating travels of new recruits to Somalia. The merger between the MYC and Al-Shabaab was made public in early 2012. During the same period, the MYC changed its name in Al-Hijra (UN 2012: 16), committing itself to "take the war to Kenya" (Anderson and McKnght 2015b: 546; see also Anzalone 2012a; Maruf and Joseph 2018).

While fostering stronger connections with sympathetic groups in East Africa, between the end of the 2000s and the beginning of the 2010s Al-Shabaab started facing increasing strategic challenges. The advance of the troops of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), along with the opening of a new front in the south of the country, as a consequence of the 2011 launch of Operation Linda Nchi ('Protect the Country') by the Kenyan Defence Forces (KDF), caused several military setbacks to militants. Furthermore, Al-Shabaab was suffering a progressive loss of support in Somalia. The 2009 withdrawal of Ethiopian troops deprived the group of its main raison d'être in the eyes of many potential supporters, who started perceiving Al-Shabaab more as the latest of the military militias than as the expression of a national resistance against an external enemy (Menkhaus 2009b: 9). Militants' strict application of Sharia law in the territories under control, clashing with the more moderate Sufi practices of Somali people, contributed to their loss of popularity in the homeland (Menkhaus 2014b; Solomon 2014).

Such dynamics intertwined with increasing tensions and factionalism within Al-Shabaab, culminating in the seizure of power by Ahmed Abdi Godane in 2013. After having taken full control of the group through a bloody campaign of internal purge (see Hansen 2014), Godane sought to address operational difficulties by intensifying a process of decentralisation, transforming Al-Shabaab from a territorial-based organisation into a less tangible entity spreading throughout the region (Bryden 2014; Williams 2014; Anderson and McKnight 2015a, 2015b; Bryden 2015; ICG 2015a; Anzalone 2016a). Under Godane's guidance, militants relied increasingly on taxation and extortion of business owners as instruments to overcome the decrease in income caused by the loss of strongholds such as the port city of Kismayu (UN 2015: 29). Furthermore, Godane diversified Al-Shabaab's structure, seeking to improve the group's operability in neighbouring countries. By the end of 2013, some of Al-Shabaab's commanders in Somalia had already been assigned to regions in the Kenyan territory while two new paramilitary units had been created with the aim of extending activities in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Ethiopia (IGAD 2016: 20). One of these two units, which

was called 'Jaysh Ayman' and was composed primarily by Kenyan recruits (see Chome 2017; West 2018), moved towards the border with Kenya, using the Boni Forest as a refuge from which to strike in the country (Bocha 2017; Kazungu and Bocha 2017). To sustain the group's transnational agenda, Godane sought to further broaden Al-Shabaab's potential support base beyond Somali ethnic boundaries, intensifying efforts to increase the group's appeal among Muslims in East Africa (Chonka 2016; Kfir 2017; see also Vidino, Pantucci and Kohlmann 2010).

Godane's death in a US drone strike in 2014 did not lead to substantial alterations for what concerns the strategic line followed by Al-Shabaab. The group's new leader, Ahmad Umar, has continued on the path of his predecessor, regionalising militants' operations and promoting an even greater reliance on local operatives (Bryden 2015; ICG 2018; Bryden and Bahra 2019). Despite some attempts of a wing of Al-Shabaab to establish links with Daesh during 2015, the organisation, which now consists of between 7000 and 9000 fighters (e.g., BBC 2017; Mogire, Mkutu and Alusa 2018; Cannon and Ruto Pkalya 2019; CFR 2020b), has remained loyal to Al-Qaeda, seeking to marginalise destabilising factions (IGAD 2016; Kfir 2017).

The changes set in motion by Al-Shabaab's leadership since 2013 have resulted in a significant expansion of the group's radius of action in East Africa. In October 2013, Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for a bomb blast in a district of Addis Ababa's that housed embassies and residences of diplomats (Fortin 2013). A few months later, a suicide attack targeted a popular restaurant in Djibouti (Reuters 2014). In parallel, militants started intensifying recruitment efforts in Tanzania, seeking to forge links with local groups and open a new front in East Africa (Bryden 2015; ICG 2018). However, so far, most of Al-Shabaab's activities outside Somalia have concentrated in Kenya. The porosity of the nearly 700 kilometres of border that the country shares with southern Somalia, where Al-Shabaab has maintained its main areas of operation, along with the presence of a supporting environment for militants, have rendered Kenya a primary target both in terms of attacks and recruitment.

In 2011, Al-Shabaab started increasing raids in Kenya as part of its claimed 'retaliation' against the Kenyan government for the implementation of Operation Linda Nchi (see e.g., Anderson and McKnight 2015a). By 2012, when the annual number of attacks carried out by the group reached over 200, nearly one out of four attacks was directed against targets in the country (Miller 2013: 1). Still, militants did not conduct major actions in Kenya before the advent of Godane's leadership. The first of the group's large operations occurred on 21 September 2013, when Al-Shabaab's militants attacked the upmarket Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, killing 67 civilians and injuring more than 175 (Onuoha 2013). The Westgate attack marked the beginning of a new season of violence in Kenya, characterised by a massive refocusing of Al-Shabaab's paramilitary efforts southwards. Less than a

year later, Jaysh Ayman was unleashed on the streets of Mpeketoni Town (Lamu County) causing dozens of casualties (IGAD 2016: 24). Yet, the most devastating attack took place on April 2015, when militants assaulted the Garissa University College (Garissa County) causing 147 deaths (BBC 2015). In the following period, despite some fluctuation, Al-Shabaab's incursions in the country maintained a steady trend, registering a peak between 2017 and 2018, when Kenya suffered more than 60 incidents (START 2019). By the end of 2018, the total number of attacks well exceeded 300 (START 2019)

Two of the last major operations conducted by Al-Shabaab in Kenya were the 2019 DusitD2 complex attack (Nairobi) and the 2020 attack in Camp Simba (Manda Bay, Lamu County), a military base used by the US since 2004. The latter, which was the first attack against US forces in the country, caused the death of two DOD contractors and one US soldier stationed in the base, also damaging aircrafts and military vehicles (Al Jazeera 2020; BBC 2020; Martinez and McLaughlin 2020). The DusitD2 complex attack occurred almost a year before, in January 2019, when gunmen entered the DusitD2 hotel complex in the suburb of Westlands, Nairobi, opening fire against people in the compound and leaving 21 victims on the ground (BBC 2019b). The incident, which was caused by young Kenyans of non-ethnic Somali origins (some of whom even recently converted to Islam, see Achuka and Muthoni 2019; Daily Nation 2019; The Star 2019), showed the complexity of the terrorist threat in the country, representing the melting point between Al-Shabaab's regional tentacles and the domestic problem of radicalisation (see Bryden and Bahra 2019). The consolidation of links between Somali militants and local networks of sympathisers has played a substantial role in furthering the penetration Al-Shabaab, contributing to turning Kenya into a new major theatre of the war on terror in East Africa.

The US intervention in Kenya

Having confirmed the presence of a terrorist threat in Kenya (C1) by shedding light on Al-Qaeda's and Al-Shabaab's activities in the country and East Africa, the chapter now turns its focus to the observable manifestations of the first step of the causal mechanism (A → q). This section provides strong evidence in support of the case-specific prediction formulated when operationalising the mechanism, showing that the US has provided security assistance to Kenyan authorities to fight Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab while keeping a low military presence on the ground. The section explores how Washington has used its assistance programmes and counter-terrorism initiatives to promote Kenya's security during the last two decades, presenting some of the local units benefiting from US aid and introducing the Kenyan counter-terrorism system. In so doing, the section provides a history of the war on terror in East Africa from the perspective of US policy makers, shedding light on the

military and diplomatic efforts through which the US has sought to build support for the achievement of security goals on the ground.

In the last two decades, the US has relied on a diversified set of instruments to tackle terrorism in East Africa. Some of these have maintained a 'soft' character, being focused on the socio-economic conditions that militants are believed to exploit to gain recruits and room for manoeuvre in the region. For example, US soldiers of the CJTF-HOA have been involved in non-military operations such as development projects in areas regarded as vulnerable to terrorism, seeking to gain access to and win hearts and minds of local populations (e.g., Bradbury and Kleinman 2010; Ploch 2010). However, most of US security resources and efforts have concentrated on more 'hard' measures against Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab. Specifically, Washington has relied on two major forms of intervention in East Africa: air strikes against militants in Somalia and security assistance to local forces in the region.

Whereas in the early 2000s American forces conducted a limited number of ground raids in Somalia, the US started intensifying air strikes during the second term of the Bush presidency, when Ethiopian forces invaded the country to fight the ICU (Bergen, Sterman and Salyk-Virk 2020). Since then, facing the emergence of Al-Shabaab as a major threat, the US has increased the use of aircrafts and unmanned drones. During the Obama presidency, the US conducted more than 30 air strikes in Somalia (leading to the death of Godane in 2014) (TBIJ 2017b). Such figures were largely exceeded by the Trump administration, which carried out around 200 strikes (Bergen, Sterman and Salyk-Virk 2020; see also AI 2019a).

Even more than through air strikes, however, the US has sought to fight terrorism in East Africa through indirect interventions, providing assistance to local security forces. Since 2001 and the beginning of the war on terror, countries in the region have received US$3.9 billion under the DOS NADR, FMF and PKO funds (SAM 2021e). The DOD started playing a prominent role in the provision of security assistance to East Africa in the period following the rise of the ICU in Somalia and the establishment of Section 1206. Since 2007, the Pentagon has provided nearly US$1.8 billion to the region, accounting for nearly 44 per cent of all DOD assistance delivered to the African continent in the same timeframe (SAM 2021d).

Kenya has been a major target of US security policies aimed at countering terrorism in East Africa. The increasing threat of Islamist terrorism in the country, whose first major manifestations, as seen in the previous section, date back to Al-Qaeda's first ventures in the region, along with the strategic role that Kenya has played as a natural barrier against the spread of Al-Shabaab, have meant that Nairobi has been perceived as a crucial ally by the US (see Bachmann and Hönke 2009). In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, Kenya was soon identified by Washington as a frontline state in the war

on terror and as an "anchor" country, that is, a key security partner for an effective engagement in East Africa (White House 2002: 11). Such a view was reiterated by the 2010 National Security Strategy, framing Kenya as one of the "essential subregional linchpins" in Africa (White House 2010: 45). Over time, the country has turned into the main recipient of DOD Section 1206/333 in the whole continent, receiving US$359 million (Uganda, which ranks second, has received US$123 million less than Kenya) (SAM 2021f, 2021g). Part of such an amount has been used by US Special Operations Forces (SOF) to help develop and assist Kenyan military and Ranger units countering the penetration of militants from Somalia (Wikileaks 2010; OSF 2013a). Indeed, as detailed below in this section, both the DOS and the DOD have used their funds to set up and sustain a web of regional and bilateral programmes aimed at helping "Kenyan security forces to deal with…very specific counterterrorism threats" (White House 2015a). Still, such an intensification of security efforts in Kenya has not translated into an increased American military presence in the country. On the contrary, in line with the case-specific prediction related to A → q, while providing local actors with increasing security assistance to fight Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab, Washington has limited US boots on the ground. Between September 2001 and September 2019, the average number of US active-duty military personnel in Kenya was approximately 65, fluctuating between a maximum of 208 (September 2017) and a minimum of 23 (September 2008, September 2010) (DMDC 2019).[3] As of September 2020, their number was 52 (DMDC 2021).

Kenya already benefited from US military support during the last two decades of the Cold War (USAID 2019), when tensions in the Horn of Africa and the Persian Gulf turned the country into an important ally in the region. The end of the superpower rivalry, along with the poor political and humanitarian record of the President Moi administration in Kenya, led to a considerable decrease in security assistance during the 1990s, when, freed from the constraints of the Cold War, the US became increasingly careful to foster good governance and human rights practices among potential recipients (Ploch 2013). Security cooperation between Kenyan forces and the US was strengthened after the 1998 embassy bombings, with Kenya being added to the ATA programme. Still, an attempt to build strong security ties occurred only in the post-9/11 period, with the beginning of the global war on terror and the end of the Moi government. In 2002, when the US created the CJTF-HOA in Djibouti and the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), guided by Mwai Kibaki, won national elections in Kenya, the AQEA attack against the Paradise Hotel in Kikambala contributed to drawing Kenya and East Africa definitely into the "post-9/11 theatre of US operations" (Usiskin 2019: 66).

[3] Data from the years 2006 and 2007 are excluded as they are not reported in the archives of the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC).

One year after the Kikambala attack, the Bush administration launched the East Africa Counterterrorism Initiative (EACTI), seeking to foster counter-terrorism efforts against AQEA by providing security assistance to Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti, Uganda, Eritrea and Tanzania. Being financed by DOS funds such as FMF, PKO and NADR, EACTI focused mainly on police training and equipping, border and coastal security, and counter-terrorism intelligence, also using part of its resources to implement development projects such as educational programmes targeting disadvantaged Muslim communities (DOS 2005a: 29; Ploch 2010: 23). Kenya, which was the main beneficiary of EACTI US$100 million provided for the years 2003-2004, used the assistance to strengthen its counter-terrorism architecture, creating the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU) in 2003, the National Counter-Terrorism Centre and the National Security Advisory Committee in 2004, along with the embryo of a Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) which, however, was dismantled soon after its creation (Whittaker 2008; Prestholdt 2011; Burchard and Burgess 2018). EACTI was later substituted by the East African Regional Strategic Initiative (EARSI), which integrated many of the EACTI programmes, providing training and equipment to Kenyan counter-terrorism forces (Ploch 2010).

However, despite US efforts to support and encourage Kenya's security forces in the fight against terrorism, and the dramatic incidents occurring on Kenyan soil in 1998 and 2002, the Kenyan government did not manifest a concrete willingness to follow American advice during the 2000s. Several documents released by the US in that period express frustration with respect to the stagnation of security sector in the country. Indeed, while praising Nairobi for having signed UN conventions on terrorism (DOS 2005a: 28) and for "continu[ing] to cooperate with the United States in identifying terrorist groups operating within Kenya" (DOS 2006: 50), Washington highlighted how the country "registered little to no progress toward the overall strengthening of its capabilities to combat terrorism, prosecute terror suspects, or respond to emergencies" (DOS 2006: 50), also "lack[ing] the counterterrorism legislation necessary to comply with the UN conventions it has signed" (DOS 2009a: 20; see also DOS 2008: 19). As will be shown in the next chapter, the Suppression of Terrorism (SOT) Bill, introduced by the Kenyan government in 2003, was withdrawn after serious criticism from civil society and human rights groups. A new attempt to pass anti-terror regulations three years later was blocked again by the opposition. Besides concerns related to human rights violations, a large proportion of Kenyan citizens and politicians did not see terrorism as a real menace to the country, perceiving the proposed counter-terrorism legislations as mere responses to US pressures that would not address more concrete problems faced by Kenyan people (Watts, Shapiro and Brown 2007; Whitaker 2014). Fearing negative repercussions at the national elections, the Kibaki

administration was disinclined to force the issue. Leaked US embassy cables provide a picture of the situation in the country as seen through the eyes of American diplomats:

> lack of political will remains a major stumbling block to our CT initiatives with the government (Wikileaks 2005a)

> In the current political climate, we will not gain much traction pushing policy objectives that are not directly seen as election-winning issues. Unfortunately, and despite repeated terrorist attacks in Kenya, CT is not one of those issues.

> A secondary problem is the inability of various ministries to work together. Currently, there is little or no coordination among police, prosecutors and other relevant government ministries that deal with terrorism issues.

> Despite all this, Post continues to push forward with existing CT programs, albeit on a more localized scale (Wikileaks 2006a).

Indeed, faced with difficulties undermining the achievement of counter-terrorism objectives in the country, including increasing corruption scandals and the 2007-2008 Kenyan 'crisis of governance', causing hundreds of deaths and thousands of displaced people after contested national elections in 2007 (HRW 2008a), the US sought to carry on the fight against AQEA by intensifying support to specific security units (see Wikileaks 2006a). The aforementioned ATPU was one of the main beneficiaries of US security policies. Created as a unit working within the Kenyan National Police Service, ATPU has been a major counter-terrorism force in the country, tasked with responsibilities including "interdict[ing] terrorist activities within the country", "investigat[ing] all terrorism related cases" and "lead[ing] other agencies at all scenes of terrorist related incidents" (DCI 2019). Through the DOS ATA programme, the US started training and equipping ATPU in 2003, when US$10 million were provided within the framework of EACTI (DOS 2004b). In 2005, despite suspending some initiatives at national level due to Kenya's small security commitment and Nairobi's refusal to sign a Bilateral Immunity Agreement (BIA) with the US (Wikileaks 2005b; Mazzetti 2006), Washington requested US$4 million for additional counter-terrorism training through ATA, with the aim of "giv[ing] this critical front line state [i.e. Kenya] a greatly enhanced capability to locate and confront terrorist networks" (DOS 2004a: 145; see also DOS 2005b). US assistance to ATPU continued in the following years (Wikileaks 2007a, 2009a; HRW 2008b, 2014), with DOS documents underlining how ATA-trained ATPU members were involved in operations to track down AQEA

members, including Fazul Abdullah Muhammad (DOS 2009b: 77). Indeed, over time, Kenya turned into one of the main beneficiaries of the ATA programme worldwide, receiving nearly US$50 million between 2003 and 2011 (OSF 2013a; see also Ploch 2010, 2013), as well as the second major recipient country of the NADR fund (financing the ATA programme) in Africa, with US$98 million received since the beginning of the war on terror (SAM 2021h).

In 2009, when Al-Shabaab was consolidating its role inside Somalia, also establishing ties with supportive networks in neighbouring countries, the Partnership for East Africa Counterterrorism (PREACT) superseded EARSI as the new major US initiative in the region, providing military and development support to Somalia, Kenya, Burundi, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Uganda, Comoros, South Sudan, Seychelles, Sudan, Tanzania, and Rwanda. Building on the strategic framework of its predecessor, PREACT was designed as an instrument for a greater engagement in East Africa, building the security capacity of East African governments to combat local terrorism while addressing deeper sources of vulnerability in the region. One of the main objectives of the initiative in the last decade has been to "improve the institutional and operational capacity of militaries to participate in regional counterterrorism operations", using PKO funds to finance AFRICOM activities providing logistical and technical support to East African forces (GAO 2014: 10). Furthermore, PREACT has aimed at strengthening the capacity of local law enforcement and military units to intercept and dismantle terrorist networks throughout the region.

Kenya was allocated US$20 million through PREACT between 2009 and 2013, turning into its major recipient (GAO 2014: 20). During the same period, the progressive intensification of Al-Shabaab's activities in the country, along with the emergence of the MYC/Al-Hijra as Al-Shabaab's official affiliate, meant that Kenyan authorities became more and more receptive to counter-terrorism needs (see Whitaker 2014). US documents released in that period illustrate Kenya's changing perceptions with regard to terrorism and (in)security during the late Kibaki administration, and the consequent shift in the approach pursued by the Kenyan government:

> whereas Kenyans have traditionally perceived terrorism as primarily a 'foreign' problem, during the past year an increasing number of Kenyan citizens and government officials came to recognize that their own country and society were threatened by violent extremists (DOS 2010: 21)

> The Kenyan government demonstrated increased political will to secure its borders, apprehend suspected terrorists, and cooperate with regional allies and the international community to counter terrorism (DOS 2012: 16)

To be sure, the rhetoric of Kenyan authorities with respect to terrorism has continued to be centred on the "external stress" argument (Lind, Mutahi and Oosterom 2017: 120), denying internal problems generating radicalisation while framing security threats as merely stemming from circumstances and/or occurrences originating outside of Kenyan borders (e.g., Wikileaks 2005a). As President Uhuru Kenyatta underlined during Obama's official visit to Kenya in 2015,

> the battle that we're fighting is not a Kenyan war. Kenya just happens to be the frontier of it, being a neighbor to a country that for a long time has not had any kind of formal government (White House 2015a).

Still, during the early 2010s, Kenyan leaders progressively came to realise that Al-Shabaab's militants moving southwards were finding, at least, a fertile ground in which to penetrate and gain recruits, and that, to counter such activities, the country required a greater commitment. In 2012, when KDF participating in Operation Linda Nchi in Somalia where integrated into AMISOM, Kenya adopted an official counter-terrorism legislation, promulgating the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The increase in Kenya's security effort coincided with the fostering of US security assistance policies in East Africa under the light footprint approach of the Obama administration. While maintaining a limited military presence in the region, the US was increasingly framing the fight against Al-Shabaab's expansion as a primary task, intensifying training programmes, as well as the provision of logistical support and counter-terrorism equipment, to East African forces. In 2015, when the number of US military trainees worldwide reached a peak, East Africa was the sub-region with the highest figures in Sub-Saharan Africa, which, in turn, was one of the two regions registering the highest figures at global level (the other being Latin America and the Caribbean) (SAM 2017). Along these lines, the 2016 DOD request for CTPF in East Africa, corresponding to US$669 million, was the highest in the world (DOD 2015: 1).

Despite Washington's reluctance to pledge full security support to the Kenyan government, due to the controversies regarding the 2007 elections and the international criminal charges against President Kenyatta (elected in 2013) for the post-election violence, US policy makers soon realised that they had "little choice but to work hand-in-hand with Kenyan officials on counter-terrorism efforts in the region" (Whitaker 2014: 98). The 2013 Westgate attack, along with the dramatic increase in Al-Shabaab's violence in the country, contributed to putting aside US reluctancy. In 2014, after having stressed the role played by Kenya as a "frontline state in the war against al-Shabaab", the US ambassador to Kenya reassured local people:

> …we are working to expand our co-operation. Be assured: you are not alone. The United States stands with Kenya in the fight against terrorism and insecurity (Godec 2014).

The inclusion of KDF into AMISOM in June 2012 led to a significant increase in US security assistance to Kenyan military forces fighting Al-Shabaab. In July 2012, one month after the inclusion, the US provided the Kenyan contingent in Somalia with security equipment (drones) worth US$7 million (OSF 2013a: 42). In the following years, Kenya became a beneficiary of DOS peace-keeping assistance to AMISOM (under the PKO fund), receiving approximately US$22 million between 2014 and 2017 (SAM 2021i). During the same period, facing the regionalisation of Al-Shabaab's strategy under Godane and Ahmad Umar, US counter-terrorism support to Nairobi through DOD-administered funds intensified substantially. Whereas the US allocated US$141 million to Kenya between 2010 and 2014, in 2015 the Obama administration announced a 163 per cent increase over aid provided in 2014, delivering US$100 million in security assistance (SAM 2015). The majority of such an assistance was provided by the DOD Section 1206 and Counterterrorism Partnership Fund (CTPF) to train, equip and support logistically Kenyan military personnel participating in AMISOM as well as Kenyan forces countering the penetration of Somali militants such as the Kenyan Ranger Regiment (Nkala 2015; SAM 2015; GAO 2016). One year later, in 2016, US security assistance provided to Kenya through DOD Section 1206 reached a peak of nearly US$102 million (mainly used to improve the country's areal response to security threats) (DOD 2018; SAM 2021j).

Despite raising levels of US aid to the Kenyan military during the mid-2010s, there was a decrease in US security assistance directed towards Kenyan police, although the latter still figured among the police forces receiving the highest levels of US counter-terrorism support in Sub-Saharan Africa (SAM 2015).

In line with the trends illustrated in the first section of this chapter, the US continued to provide considerable security support to East Africa under the Trump presidency, with Section 1206/333 aid levels shifting from an average annual amount of US$63 million allocated between 2007 and 2016 to nearly 89 between 2017 and 2019 (SAM 2021e). Despite playing a marginal role within the US president's media campaign, East Africa remained in the spotlight of US foreign policy. Indeed, in the first year of the Trump presidency, the White House authorised a DOD proposal for stepping up US efforts in the fight against Al-Shabaab (McLeary 2017), identifying part of the Somali territory as an "area of active hostilities" (Nissenbaum 2017). Such a directive led to a considerable intensification of drone strikes in the country, which, as shown in the beginning of this section, reached unprecedented levels, also increasing the number of American soldiers training and

equipping forces in Somalia (Al Jazeera 2017; Crilly 2017). In the words of the Chief of Staff of the International Crisis Group (ICG), the US war in Somalia seemed to continue "on autopilot" (quoted in Schmitt and Savage 2019). So too did US security policies in Kenya, which continued to figure among the African countries receiving the highest amounts of assistance to counter terrorism (Goodman and Arabia 2018: 19). Washington kept on supporting local authorities in the fight against Al-Shabaab while maintaining a distance from the theatres of violence. As AFRICOM commander General Stephen Townsend underlined in the aftermath of the 2020 attack in Camp Simba, such enduring efforts were meant to "enabl[e] enhanced security and stability in the region and for America" (quoted in Browne and Callahan 2020).

Facing another increase in Al-Shabaab's activities in Kenya during the first year of its mandate, the Trump administration sought to provide Kenyan authorities with enhanced military and logistical means to combat the group while maintaining levels of NADR-funded antiterrorism assistance to the Kenyan police comparable to those of the previous two US administrations (SAM 2021k). In 2017, when Kenya became the major recipient of US arms sales offers in Sub-Saharan Africa (Hartung 2018: 10), Nairobi received nearly US$20 million in counter-terrorism artillery under the CTPF (SAM 2018). A year later, along with Somalia, Uganda and Rwanda, Kenya experienced the higher increase in US counter-terrorism aid in Sub-Saharan Africa, with Section 333 reaching a peak of nearly US$69 million (mainly used to provide drone assistance and counter-terrorism equipment, as well as to support the Kenyan Rural Border Patrol Unit) (SAM 2019, 2021j). During the same period, Uhuru Kenyatta became the second African president to have an official meeting with Trump at the White House. The presidents established a Strategic Partnership, reaffirming their shared commitment to "enhance counterterrorism, defense, and maritime surveillance security cooperation through intelligence sharing and capacity building" (DOS 2019a). As President Trump argued after the meeting,

> we do a lot of defense and security. And we're working very much on security right now (White House 2018b).

This view on the progress of the US-Kenya partnership was reiterated in 2019 by the US ambassador to Kenya, maintaining that the US had committed itself to foster counter-terrorism support (McCarter 2019). To contribute to the fulfilment of such commitment, in early 2020 the US announced the creation of the Kenyan Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF-K): a US$2.5 million initiative aimed at fostering counter-terrorism investigations on the ground through the provision of

training and advise to local forces by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism (K. Allen 2020; FBI 2020).

As seen in the first section of the chapter, while increasing US security aid directed to the African continent, the Trump administration cut assistance to several states, re-channelling US support towards key allies against terrorism. The centrality of security assistance policies in Kenya during the Trump era provides further evidence of the extent to which, in the last two decades, the country has continued to be regarded by US policy makers as a crucial partner in East Africa. In line with the case-specific prediction related to A → q, despite experiencing different reactions by Kenyan authorities, US policy makers have continued to provide local actors in the country with high levels of military and defence aid to fight Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab, intensifying diplomatic efforts while containing the number of US soldiers on the ground.

Conclusions

This chapter has focused on Step 1 (A → q) of the causal mechanism discussed in the previous chapter, according to which post-9/11 US security policies in African states suffering from the threat of terrorism (scope condition 1 [C1]) fall within the realm of remote warfare. The chapter has tested A → q in the case study by seeking evidence of the US providing security assistance to Kenyan authorities to fight local terrorism while containing boots on the ground.

During the last two decades US policy makers have sought to consolidate ties with key states in Africa, elaborating a sophisticated and unprecedented politico-military architecture to counter emerging threats while relieving economic, political and military pressures. Within such a framework, Kenya has increasingly played a crucial role. As shown, the country has suffered from the threat posed by Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab, confirming the presence of C1 in the case study. Whether Kenya was an important area of operations for Al-Qaeda in East Africa (AQEA) between the late 1990s and the early 2000s, the rise of Al-Shabaab in Somalia in the mid-2000s and its increasing regionalisation during the 2010s have turned it into a critical arena in the fight against Islamist terrorism in Africa. Besides experiencing a dramatic escalation of terrorist incidents, in the last decade Kenya has progressively become one of the main sources of recruits for Somali militants, also giving rise to a local affiliated group, Al-Hijra. The presence of a supportive environment, along with the high porosity of the border with Somalia, have facilitated the penetration of Al-Shabaab, which maintains an active presence in the country.

US policy makers have provided Kenyan authorities with increasing aid and resources to fight local terrorism. Kenya has been one of the main beneficiaries of EACTI, EARSI and PREACT. Since the inclusion of Kenyan forces within AMISOM, Nairobi has also benefited from US

peacekeeping support to the armed contingent in Somalia. Furthermore, Kenya has been a major target of the DOS-funded ATA programme and one of the key recipients of DOD Section 1206/333 and CTPF, receiving technical and logistical aid, as well as counter-terrorism training and equipment.

While supporting and encouraging Kenyan authorities in the fight against terrorism, Washington has limited US military personnel in the country to a few dozen tasked primarily with assisting the Kenyan military and police. Despite facing reluctance by the national government in the fulfilment of counter-terrorism tasks during the 2000s, US policy makers have continued to rely on local forces as the main instrument to counter AQEA and Al-Shabaab, seeking to overcome the impasse at national level while refocusing US security policies on specific security and military units. Such efforts in keeping the security relationship with Kenya alive and strong have continued up to the present day. Despite political turbulence, the post-2007 elections crisis, and the criminal charges against President Kenyatta, Kenya was one of the main African recipients of US counter-terrorism support during the Obama administration. Along these lines, despite a reduction in the number of African states benefiting from US security assistance, and Trump's political rhetoric stressing the need to recalibrate US security policies in the global South, the Trump administration continued to foster cooperation with Kenya, providing local forces with enhanced instruments to combat terrorism.

The above trends, which have remained steady during the last two decades of US security policies in Kenya, constitute a strong evidence in support of the case-specific prediction formulated when operationalising Step 1 of the causal mechanism (A → q). In line with what was argued in the previous chapter and in the methodological section of the thesis, such evidence provides a powerful inferential test substantiating A → q. Indeed, the repeated observation of the US encouraging and providing security assistance to Kenyan forces to counter Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab while maintaining a low military presence on the ground could hardly have causes other than the establishment of a partnership relationship within the framework of remote warfare, in which a benefactor country relies on a local actor to fight enemies and achieve security goals from a distance (high degree of uniqueness). At the same time, A → q could not exist without such a repeated observation (high degree of certainty), as the provision of indirect support and the maintenance of a low military presence on the ground constitute key elements denoting the establishment of the partnership relationship within the framework of remote warfare.

The security policies implemented by the US in Kenya in the post-9/11 period reflect the key elements of a remote warfare strategy relying on local forces as a surrogate to achieve counter-terrorism objectives while maintaining a strategic distance from the theatre of violence. As discussed

in the previous chapter, although such a strategy can bring benefits, it can also entail considerable risks. Indeed, treating African security institutions as the main referent in the fight against terror, it turns the local socio-political environment into a critical variable for its effectiveness. Without appropriate precautions, the delivery of US security assistance towards fragmented and corrupted systems risks having unintentional repercussions, altering fragile balances or even leaving more room for manoeuvre to local elites for the achievement of security objectives diverging from those of US policy makers. This could exacerbate socio-political conditions causing instability, even setting in motion spirals of violence culminating in a serious deterioration of human rights. The next chapter will explore these dynamics in Kenya, focusing on Step 2 of the hypothesised casual mechanism (q → r).

Chapter 4

Causal Mechanism: Step 2

Kenya's reaction to post-9/11 US security policies

This chapter deals with Step 2 (q → r) of the causal mechanism discussed in Chapter 2, according to which, in African states relying on security measures based on indiscriminate repression against suspect groups (scope condition 2 [C2]), the establishment of the partnership relationship with the US means that local authorities gain resources and room for manoeuvre to implement such measures. The chapter tests the validity of q → r in the case of post-9/11 US security policies in Kenya by looking for its observable manifestations. To do so, after having attested the presence of C2 in the case study, the chapter seeks evidence of Kenyan authorities managing to use US security assistance to implement indiscriminate repression against Muslim and ethnic Somali communities.

The chapter is composed of four sections.

The first two sections deal with the Kenyan socio-political context, confirming the presence of C2 in the case study by complementing the US-centric analysis of the war on terror in the country provided in the previous chapter with a local perspective on security and counter-terrorism. The first section provides a historical account of the emergence of socio-political fractures between the Kenyan state and its Muslim and ethnic Somali population. As shown, while having their roots in the colonial era, such fractures cemented after Kenya's independence, generating perceptions of Kenyan Muslims and ethnic Somalis as 'foreigners' and as a potential threat to national stability and security.

The second section of the chapter illustrates how the beginning of the war on terror and the increase in terrorist attacks in Kenya have escalated the impact of historical fractures, heightening tensions in the country and increasing suspicions towards Muslim and ethnic Somali communities. It details how the effects of such dynamics have intertwined with those of endemic corruption and impunity within the Kenyan security system, resulting in a dramatic intensification of state violence. Facing the rise of Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab in East Africa, Kenyan forces have increasingly relied on indiscriminate repression against Muslims and ethnic Somalis to identify militants and punish potential supporters.

The third section of the chapter explores how Kenya's history and counter-terrorism measures have intertwined with the US strategy of remote warfare. It provides extensive evidence in support of the case-specific prediction formulated when operationalising q → r, showing that Kenyan

authorities have managed to use US security assistance to carry out repression against Muslim and ethnic Somali communities. Despite US attempts to redirect Kenyan security measures toward a greater respect for human rights and the rule of law, US limited oversight capabilities in the country, along with the exploitation of Washington's counter-terrorism imperatives in East Africa by Kenyan security authorities, have allowed Nairobi to evade pressures and avoid major sanctions while abusing US policies.

Finally, the last section explains why the evidence reported in this chapter constitutes a strong inferential test to confirm q → r, summarising the main features of such a step of the causal mechanism and introducing some of the implications that will be explored in the next chapter.

Through the lens of history: identity and conflict in Kenya

Kenya has a long history of inequality and repression, whose signs are traceable throughout the course of the twentieth century. Still, to provide a clear picture of such phenomena, clarifying their implications for Kenya's post-9/11 counter-terrorism measures and the way in which Kenyan security authorities have used US security support, it is necessary to shift the focus back to the early years of the colonial rule.

In 1888, the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) began to administrate the East Africa territories, subsequently placed under the authority of British government, which in 1920 announced the entrance of Kenya, as a colony, into the British Empire. As in other cases characterising the colonial period in Africa, boundaries delimiting the British administration were drawn regardless of the historical and cultural legacies of the territories concerned and the populations inhabiting them. In 1908, the British reached an agreement for the establishment of the border between Kenya and Ethiopia. The border with Somalia was defined in 1925, when the Jubaland Province became part of the Italian colony. The result was the formation of the Northern Frontier District (NFD) in Kenya, a buffer zone separating British settlers from the Ethiopian and Italian territories, comprising many ethnic Somali communities (Castagno 1964). Despite not constituting a nation in political terms, such communities "possessed a cultural nationalism founded on common ethnic origin, a virtually homogeneous culture and way of life, and a single language and religion (Islam)" (I. M. Lewis 1963: 50).

Facing increasing episodes of Somali irredentism, the colonial government sought to secure the NFD by restricting the freedom of movement and setting up a rigid model of military administration, often based on collective punishment (KHRC 2015a; Whittaker 2015). Still, NFD communities took forward the battle for secessionism and Somali nationalism, supported by organisations operating in Somalia (TJRC 2013).

In the aftermath of the 1960 independence of Somalia, NFD secessionist parties intensified their activities, opposing the incorporation of the district into an independent Kenya. As activists maintained, whereas a future government of Kenya "would be both foreign and hostile…[NFD] religious convictions and cultural opinions, contrary to all geographical or political facts, [would] lead it almost naturally to join the Somali Republic" (Okonga 1961: 101-102, quoted in Castagno 1964: 176). Indeed, the NFD, along with the British Somaliland, the Italian Somaliland, the Ogaden region in Ethiopia and the French Somaliland (Djibouti), was one of the five spikes forming the star of the Somali flag, representing the territories historically inhabited by Somalis in East Africa (the 'Greater Somalia').

The 1962 Lancaster House Conference, dealing with Kenya's independence, was regarded by NFD ethnic Somalis as a crucial opportunity to assert their claims in front of the representatives of Kenya's main parties, KANU and KADU, and of British authorities. However, as the latter were unprepared to handle a reconfiguration of Kenyan territories immediately prior to independence, and needed to promote stable relations with the future government of Kenya (unwilling to cede the NFD), they just recommended a reconfiguration of the Kenyan administrative structure (Otunnu 1992). As a result, the NFD was integrated into the newly formed state of Kenya and most of the ethnic Somali communities became part of the North Eastern Province (NEP).

Soon after independence, clashes between Kenyan forces and NEP inhabitants marked a breaking point between Nairobi and ethnic Somali separatists, with the beginning of a national conflict that became known as the 'Shifta War' (1963-1967). On 28 December 1963, sixteen days after the end of the colonial rule, President Jomo Kenyatta declared the state of emergency, governing the NEP through emergency laws; a condition that lasted until the early 1990s, when the process of democratisation began.

Besides frictions in the NFD, in the years preceding the Lancaster Conference, British forces were confronted with increasing tensions in the coastal area of the country, where Arab and Swahili communities demanded autonomy from the future state of Kenya. Claims of coastal activists were based on a concept of "autochthony" (Prestholdt 2014: 252) and leveraged a treaty signed by the British authorities and the Sultan of Zanzibar in 1895. Such a treaty sanctioned the British administration on a ten-mile strip of land running along the Kenyan coast. Still, differently from the other areas of Kenya, that territory was kept under the privileged status of Protectorate, where the Sultan maintained a symbolic sovereignty (Brennan 2008). The 1895 treaty became the emblem of coastal exceptionalism, concerned with the preservation of Islamic religious traditions within a Christian country and, most of all, with a systematic control of immigration of African people from the hinterland, generating a conflict over land.

At the end, the coastal territories passed under the direct administration of the Kenyan government. In the early 1960s, when the discourse of identity converged around de-colonisation and African nationalism, separatist claims were regarded as capable of undermining a pacific transition toward independence. This was also enshrined in the Charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), calling for "respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each State" (OAU 1963: 4), and remarked during the 1964 OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, which adopted a resolution urging member states "to respect the borders existing on the achievement of national independence" (Zacher 2001: 222). African leaders wanted to avoid the spread of political turmoil and instability that might jeopardise cooperative efforts, as well as the political and economic development of the continent.

However, along with the conflict in the north-eastern area of the country, tensions in the coast help shed light on the development of popular perceptions of coastal Muslim people as "not fully Kenyan" (Prestholdt 2011: 7) and of ethnic Somalis as "second-class" (Abdullahi 2014) or "ambiguous" (Scharrer 2018: 496) citizens, considered "'hostile' to the interests of the state" (Whittaker 2015: 643). Such perceptions reverberated throughout the history of Kenya in the twentieth century, exacerbating socio-political frictions in the country and consolidating mutual mistrust between the government and the concerned minority groups. Critically, as shown in the next section, they have had a profound impact on Kenyan security measures in the post-9/11 period.

Divisions between Nairobi and the periphery of the country cemented over the last decades of the twentieth century. Despite the end of the Shifta War, the NEP remained in a condition of underdevelopment, subjected to special rules such as the 1970 Indemnity Act, which exempted security authorities operating in the region from accountability and legal investigations (TJRC 2013: 186; see also KHRC 2015a). The maintenance of many of the colonial practices of collective punishment by Kenyan authorities resulted in a dramatic increase in large-scale state violence during the 1980s, such as in the case of Bulla Karatasi (Garissa county, 1980) and Wagalla (Wajir county, 1984), when security operations degenerated into massacres (see e.g., TJRC 2013; D. M. Anderson 2014b).

Besides facing episodes of state violence, NEP inhabitants continued to experience major difficulties in accessing basic rights, especially those stemming from the recognition of Kenyan citizenship. In 1989, screening exercises were conducted by Kenyan authorities using "state machinery and extra-legal processes to interrogate Somalis in Kenya on their right to citizenship" (Lochery 2012: 616; see also HRW 1990). Inspections persisted after the country's democratic opening in 1992, exacerbated by the crisis in Somalia during the early 1990s and the consequent wave of asylum seekers directed southward. Kenyan ethnic Somalis were often labelled as refugees or as

mere illegal migrants, being denied the right to Kenyan documents (KNCHR 2007; KHRC 2015a). As an ethnic Somali member of the Kenyan parliament recounted in 1993, the justification of the Principal Immigration officer for denying access to ID cards to ethnic Somali people was that "a Somali, whether from Somalia or from Kenya, is a Somali because mtoto wa nyoka ni nyoka [The child of a snake is a snake]" (quoted in Scharrer 2018: 507). Despite the process of devolution launched with the adoption of the 2010 Constitution of Kenya, dividing the country's provinces into forty-seven counties and ensuring greater power and autonomy to local authorities, problems related to the obtainment of Kenyan ID have persisted up to the present day (see e.g., Nyabola 2014; Usiskin 2019; Dahir 2020), with ethnic Somali communities in the north-east even facing the closure of the major passport office in the region (ICG 2015b).

In the coastal area, the decades after the achievement of Kenya's independence were marked by the spread of a sense of discrimination and injustice among native communities, feeling deprived of land and resources by the government in favour of upcountry people (Lind, Mutahi and Oosterom 2015). Such feelings were exacerbated by the absence of a political agenda dealing with the Kenyan Muslim population. Indeed, between the 1960s and the 1990s, "there was almost no public Muslim politics" (Mwakimako and Willis 2014: 12). The Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM), an umbrella organisation created in 1973, was the only representative body for Muslim people legitimised by the national institutions. However, studies report how the SUPKEM was perceived by several Muslims as being too close to the KANU administration, often "succumb[ing] to government pressure" (Lynch 2011: 27; see also Oded 2002; Vittori, Bremer and Vittori 2009; Patterson 2015; Bryden and Preemdeep 2019).

The 1992 democratic opening contributed to politicising Muslims' grievances. Soon after the introduction of the multi-party system, the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK) was formed. As several analysts argue (e.g., Prestholdt 2011; Willis and Gona 2012; Chome 2019), despite appealing to a Muslim social identity, most of the claims of the IPK concerned social problems of coastal people such as inequality and access to citizenship. However, the presence of a small faction promoting more aggressive propaganda, along with the religious character of the party, which was contrary to the Kenyan constitution, provided the rationale for the banning of the IPK; a decision that led to demonstrations and clashes in the coastal territories where it had acquired large support (Bryden and Preemdeep 2019).

Since the 1990s, in light of the Kenyan Muslim political classes frequently being criticised for doing "little to inspire political awareness in their communities or to initiate projects that would socially elevate their electorates" (Ndzovou 2014: 4), civil society organisations such as Muslim NGOs and human rights groups have sought to raise the problem of Muslims' marginalisation and

put pressure on the government to address political and economic concerns in the coast. Still, frustration among local people persists, testified by renewed tensions (e.g., Al Jazeera 2012a; Ayele 2012; ICG 2016) and the rise of the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) as a major organisation claiming coastal separation to the cry of "'Pwani si Kenya' ('the coast is not Kenya')" (Chonghaile 2012a).

Kenya and the war on terror

As seen in the previous section, Kenya's modern history is marked by the presence of considerable friction between the ethnic Somali and Muslim population and the national government. Despite occasionally erupting into instances of large-scale violence, or generating more evident forms of conflict, such friction generally persisted in a latent form during the twentieth century, manifesting its effects in the ordinariness of Kenya's political life. The difficulties of ethnic Somali people in accessing Kenyan ID cards, as well as the land grievances of coastal Muslims, were (and are still) symptoms of more profound fractures lying at the roots of the Kenyan political state; fractures that circumscribe and isolate communities whose "Kenyan-ness has been historically questioned" (ICG 2014: 12).

Confirming the presence of scope condition 2 (C2) in the case study, this section shows how the war on terror has escalated the impact of historical fractures, dusting off old perceptions of Muslim and ethnic Somali communities as a potential threat to national security. As detailed in the following pages, these dynamics have had major repercussions on the character of Kenyan counter-terrorism policies after the rise of Al-Shabaab, resulting in the systematic targeting of such communities. Still, several effects were already visible in the measures adopted by national authorities in the face of Al-Qaeda's attacks and of political upheavals in Somalia during the 2000s.

Despite manifesting reluctance to pledge full support to US directives and strengthen its counter-terrorism architecture, in the years following the 1998 embassy bombings in East Africa, the Kenyan government intensified activities to capture AQEA militants. Besides cooperating with FBI agents during investigations on the 1998 attacks, Kenyan forces increased controls in the border areas and enhanced surveillance in the country, supported by the rise in US security assistance and the launch of EACTI in the early 2000s. However, Nairobi's security initiatives attracted serious criticism for overstepping legal boundaries, mostly at the expenses of Muslim and ethnic Somali people (e.g., KHRC 2003; AI 2005; HRW 2008b; Bachman and Hönke 2009; Mogire and Mkutu 2011).

Following the 2002 AQEA attack in Kikambala, Kenyan authorities demanded the banning of several Muslim NGOs, while national forces launched an extensive campaign of arrests against hundreds of Muslims in the coastal territories and in Nairobi's Eastleigh district (which, due to the

high concentration of Kenyan Somalis and Somali refugees, has been nicknamed 'Little Mogadishu') (KHRC 2003; AI 2005; Prestholdt 2011; Bachman 2012). A year later, the Kibaki administration sought to pass legislation on terrorism, publishing the Suppression of Terrorism (SOT) Bill. Several national and international human rights organisations campaigned against the bill, claiming that the vague definition of terrorism provided, along with the major extension of police and military powers, could "brin[g] back the era of indefinite detention" (K-HURINET 2003), also "open[ing] up the potential for the abuse of the legislation through politically motivated arrests or personal vendettas" (Redress and Reprieve 2009: 43-44). Specifically, human rights groups raised concerns that the SOT Bill could result in the profiling and "target[ing] of Muslims as a group" (including ethnic Somalis) (AI 2005: 4), given that the law even allowed security forces to arrest (without warrant) Kenyans whose clothes would arise 'suspicions' in terms of their membership in a terrorist group (AI 2004; Lind and Howell 2008).

At the end, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the bill was withdrawn. Still, the rise and fall of the ICU in Somalia during the mid-2000s, with the consequent exodus of Somalis fleeing towards Kenya, led the Kibaki administration to tighten up security measures. Fearing that militants might hide within the wave of asylum seekers and penetrate the country, between 2006 and 2007 Kenyan agents arrested several dozen people in the border area, a considerable percentage of which was rendered to Ethiopian forces in Somalia without due process (HRW 2008b; Redress and Reprieve 2009).[4] Finally, in early 2007, the Kenyan government announced the closure of the border with Somalia (BBC 2007).

The emergence of Al-Shabaab as a major threat during the late 2000s, and its subsequent expansion in East Africa, fuelled political paranoia and heightened tensions in Kenya. As feelings of insecurity increased, reminiscences of old conflicts against Somali separatists in the NEP began to spread among the population. In the eyes of many Kenyans, the profile of the ethnic Somali individual progressively merged with that of the Shifta fighter rebelling against Kenyan authorities in the 1963-1967 war, finally overlapping with that of the Somali jihadist (see ICG 2012; Scharrer 2018). The result was a rise in anti-Somali feelings in the country (see e.g., Odula 2011; Raghavan 2011; ICG 2014; Lind, Mutahi and Oosterom 2015). As a major Kenyan newspaper reported:

> the government has allowed these relatives of al-Shabaab to invest in the country…

[4] According to some sources (e.g., HRW 2008b; Prestholdt 2011), US agents were also involved in the interrogation and rendition of detainees.

> Kenya has continued to host thousands of Somalis in camps, where, overfed on rations, they plot how to harm their hosts. After infiltrating every state department, they have pledged their loyalty to their kin by issuing identity documents and passports, thus turning Kenya into a major transit point and recruiting ground for terrorists…
>
> Recall that since 1962, Somali have always wanted to leave Kenya and join the greater Somalia (Makokha 2014)
>
> It would appear that every little, two-bit Somali has a big dream – to blow us up, knock down our buildings and slaughter our children.
> They declared war on us and we thought it was a small matter that some guy in government was going to take care of. We were wrong (Mathiu 2014)

In a similar fashion, coastal Muslims' historical marginalisation and resentments against the Kenyan government increased suspicions with regard to their cooperation with the state in the fight against terrorism, with the result that Muslims started being "equate[d]…with Somalis, and with al-Shabaab" (Chonghaile 2012b).

Several reports by NGOs and human rights groups show how the intensification of Al-Shabaab's activities in Kenya has been associated with a dramatic (re-)escalation of state violence in the north-eastern and coastal regions of the country, emphasising how the Kenyan security response has frequently degenerated into "discriminatory operations targeting Somali refugees, ethnic Somali Kenyans and Muslims" (HRW 2016: 15; see also e.g., HRW 2012a; OSF 2013b; AI et al. 2014; HAKI Africa 2016). However, to capture the full spectrum of such operations, and shed light on the nature of counter-terrorism in Kenya, it is necessary to explore how the effects of historical fractures have intertwined with those of another phenomenon: corruption.

Since national independence, corruption has been one of the major and most complex problems plaguing Kenya. Despite multiple appeals by national authorities to tackle such a problem once and for all (for an historical account, see TJRC 2013), the country continues to rank among the most corrupt in the world (e.g., Transparency International 2018, 2019). In particular, Kenya's security and defence sector has repeatedly been identified as the most affected area (Transparency International 2015a), with the Police Service indicated as the "most bribery prone institution" (Transparency International 2017: 15). A survey conducted in 2013 by the Kenyan Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA), created in 2012 to increase accountability and prevent impunity of the Kenyan police force, shows that one third of the respondents had suffered "assault/brutality, falsification of evidence, bribery, and threat of imprisonment" at the hand of the police in the preceding year (IPOA

2013: 7). Along these lines, a 2015 survey conducted by Transparency International and Afrobarometer to explore corruption in Africa stresses how three out of four Kenyans believed that "most" or "all" members of the national police were corrupted (Transparency International 2015b).

The effects of corruption on counter-terrorism in Kenya are twofold. On the one hand, corruption deteriorates the level of security in the country, weakening the operational capabilities of the counter-terrorism system. Whether the progressive development of the Kenyan security architecture in the post-9/11 period has led to important victories in the fight against Al-Shabaab and its affiliated networks (see e.g., Ochami 2015; ICG 2018; Kazungu 2020; Otsialo 2020), in many circumstances, using their powers for personal gain, Kenyan security agents have facilitated militants' operations in East Africa. For example, investigations have discovered that, during the 2013 Westgate mall attack, members of the Kenyan army supposed to counter the attackers were instead looting the mall (Al Jazeera 2013a; Jorcic 2013; Hidalgo 2015). Along these lines, despite Kenya's efforts to tackle the penetration of Al-Shabaab's fighters, also involving the creation of a wall separating the country from Somalia (e.g., Cannon 2016), high levels of corruption among Kenyan patrol units have preserved the permeability of the border to the traffic of arms and men, to the point that "smugglers reportedly include the cost of Kenyan police bribes in their fees" (Mwangi 2017c: 1048; see also Higgins 2015; Ombati 2015; Hope 2018). In a notable case, Kenyan border guards were bribed by two Al-Shabaab's militants to cross the border and be escorted to Mombasa with weapons, ammunition and explosives (Meservey 2015; Goodman and Arabia 2018). According to several reports (e.g., JFJ 2015; Rasmussen 2017), even the capture of Kismayu by the KDF during Operation Linda Nchi has proved to benefit Al-Shabaab, as Kenyan forces taking control of the Somali city substituted militants in the smuggling of charcoal and sugar, continuing to generate financial income for the group through its web of roadblocks and taxation systems.

On the other hand, corruption "enable[s] the excessive use of force" (Goldenberg et al. 2016: 22), causing a significant increase in human rights violations and reinforcing a climate of impunity. Many witnesses report how Kenyan security forces have frequently relied on violence and abuse against local people during counter-terrorism operations, engaging in forms of extortion and bribery (HRW 2012a, 2013, 2016; ICG 2014). Refugees in the Dadaab camp (Garissa county) recount their personal experiences during a security operation carried out in 2011 after terrorist attacks against security officials:

> it was the day after an explosion in the market…They were three policemen who came. They were saying, "Bring us money"…The three of them started beating me with a metal stick (HRW 2012a: 2).

> Six policemen came. They asked me to produce explosives, but I had nothing to show them. I told them that I am an innocent refugee but they did not listen to me. They beat me with boots and batons on almost every part of my body…They also robbed two mobile phones and 5,000 Kenyan shillings [about US$60]…I was detained on the same night in Dadaab main police station. I paid 7,500 Kenyan shillings [about US$90] to be released. I didn't file a police report (HRW 2012a: 2-3).

The systemic nature of corruption in Kenya has hampered the prosecution of counter-terrorism crimes. Despite some attempts to initiate official investigations, processes have suffered repeated setbacks and their outcome has often remained confidential (HRW 2012a; Fick 2018). Lack of accountability and a deeply rooted culture of impunity have meant that most of the cases of human rights violations have gone unpunished (UN 2013a; AI 2015a; HRW 2016). Furthermore, national security authorities have frequently dismissed allegations of abuses during security operations, for example claiming that missing people have not been victims of police or military actions but instead have left the country to avoid legal prosecution (e.g., Yusuf 2013; Muraya 2015a, 2015b; HRW 2016; Zirulnick 2016). As already observed by the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Philip Alston, when investigating violence in Kenya's Mount Elgon and during the 2007-2008 post-election crisis,

> the Police Commissioner…along with various other senior officials, assured…that no such killings [i.e. extrajudicial killings] take place. But he and his colleagues appear to be the only people in the entire country who believe this claim (quoted in OSF 2011).

Such an attitude within Kenyan authorities has been associated with a tendency to frame civil society organisations dealing with counter-terrorism crimes as seeking to destabilise the security system. In 2015, for example, a Kenyan Police spokesman explicitly declared that a report of the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) focusing on violence and abuse during security operations was "cheap propaganda", carried out by the "agents of the hand grenades, bombing and killings in Nairobi and the country…[who] want the security agencies to be under pressure and relax on what they are doing" (quoted in Muraya 2015b). Similarly, while dismissing allegations of KDF involvement in the illegal trade of sugar and charcoal in Somalia as "ridiculous", President Kenyatta maintained that

> instead of commending our security forces who are making major sacrifices to defend and guard the country against terrorists, some Kenyan leaders are discouraging them by supporting the misplaced allegations…
>
> Would you like us to allow these people [i.e. terrorists] to move freely in our country and harm us? Of course not…That is why we insist that our military and other Kenyan security agents must be given room to carry out their work without political interference (quoted in PSCU 2015).

Such accusations have often been followed by more concrete counter-measures. In the last decade, Kenyan NGOs working on accountability and the impact of Kenyan counter-terrorism policies have faced increasing difficulties and, in some cases, even forced de-registration over alleged support for terrorism (HRW 2015c, 2018; KHRC 2015b). For example, in 2014, in response to a series of terrorist attacks in the country, Kenyan authorities closed more than 500 NGOs (BBC 2014; Honan 2014). A year later, after the Garissa attack, the Kenyan government listed 85 entities suspected to be associated with Al-Shabaab, freezing the bank accounts of two well-known NGOs investigating counter-terrorism crimes against minority groups in the country (BBC 2015; Kubania 2015). Even though the ban against the NGOs was lifted after a ruling by the High Court, the actions of Kenyan authorities were interpreted by national and international human rights groups as an attempt "to intimidate not only the two organizations but all civil society" (KHRC 2015b; see also e.g., AI 2015b; HRW 2015c).

Two security initiatives can be taken as an example to show the effects stemming from the intertwining of historical fractures and corruption in post-9/11 Kenya. Despite not differing from many other cases in terms of their main features, such initiatives gained wide media resonance because of their scope and intensity (case 2) or their occurrence in direct response to major terrorist attacks (case 1).

The first case is that of the Kenyan security response after Al-Shabaab's attacks in Lamu and Tana River counties in 2014 (which included the Mpeketoni attack mentioned in Chapter 3). Despite the magnitude of the incidents, which saw a considerably high number of militants raiding villages along the main road connecting the two counties, Kenyan security forces involved in the counter-terrorism operations were reported to suffer from lack of coordination and planning, arriving hours late on the scene only to commit widespread human rights violations against local Muslim and ethnic Somali communities (HRW 2015a, 2016; Nyagah, Mwangi and Attree 2017). An IPOA investigation shows that the focus of Kenyan agents was "on self-preservation and caution rather than immediate response to save life, property, provide assistance to the public and apprehend the offenders" (IPOA 2014a: 13). Other reports of human rights groups highlight how security forces used indiscriminate

violence against local people, stealing valuables from citizens and arbitrarily "arrest[ing] men and boys from their houses, inside the mosques and on the road" (HRW 2015a: 35; see also HRW 2016).

The second case is that of Operation Usalama Watch ('Peace Watch'), launched by the Kenyan authorities in 2014 after terrorist attacks in Mombasa and Eastleigh (Nairobi) with the official objective of tackling terrorism in specific hotspots. Even in this circumstance, investigations express serious concerns regarding the ostensibly discriminatory character of the operation, which targeted primarily ethnic Somalis and refugees living in Nairobi (AI 2014; Muhumed 2014; Williams 2014; HRW 2015b; Wairuri 2018). Reports emphasise how counter-terrorism forces asked for bribes, "raided homes, buildings, and shops, carting away money, cell phones, and other goods" (HRW 2015b; see also IPOA 2014b). Arrested people were detained "without charge, and in appalling conditions for periods well beyond the 24-hour legal limit" (HRW 2015b). Thousands were transferred to refugee camps in northern Kenya, while hundreds of ethnic Somalis were forcibly deported to Somalia (AI 2014: 4).

In both of the above cases, old fractures lying at the roots of the Kenyan state echoed throughout the actions of Kenyan forces. Mistrust towards (historically) 'othered' communities (see Breen-Smith 2014) escalated in the face of terrorism, turning Muslims and ethnic Somalis (including Somali refugees) into scapegoats for the security crisis in the country. Furthermore, in both of the above cases, corruption and lack of accountability played a considerable role in affecting the character of Kenyan initiatives, turning the war on terror into a catalyst for the legitimisation of extraordinary means of coercion and the normalisation of the excessive use of force. Operations designed to identify and capture Al-Shabaab's militants rapidly lost their 'counter-terrorism' character, as well as their operational efficiency, degenerating into a wave of raids characterised by the recurrence of violence and abuse at the hand of security forces (AI 2014; HRW 2015a).

Stemming from the interplay between historical fractures and corruption is a security system that "fight[s] terror with terror" (KNCHR 2015), countering terrorism by relying on indiscriminate repression against suspect groups.

Personnel from most of the units composing the Kenyan security system have been reported to take part in "widespread, systematic and well-coordinated" human rights violations against Muslims and ethnic Somalis (KNCHR 2015: 6), including the Anti-Terror Police Unit (ATPU), the Kenyan Defence Forces (KDF), the Administration Police (AP), the General Services Unit (GSU) and the Rural Border Patrol Unit (RBPU) (e.g., HRW 2013, 2014, 2015a, 2016; Al Jazeera 2014a; KNCHR 2015). In many circumstances, security agents have followed a similar modus operandi during counter-terrorism operations, cracking down on the population after terrorist attacks with the aim of

identifying the perpetrators and punishing potential supporters of Al-Shabaab. As a local activist clarifies,

> every time a terror incident happens in northern Kenya the towns are deserted fearing violent retaliation and collective punishment from security forces. Security forces arrest everyone on the street without discrimination (quoted in ICG 2014: 13).

Interviews undertaken by NGOs and journalists with ethnic Somalis living in the north-eastern counties highlight how KDF security initiatives in the region have frequently degenerated into forms of collective punishment (HRW 2012a, 2012b; Wakube et al. 2017; Bearak 2019; for similar KDF initiatives in the coastal region, see e.g., The Standard 2019). A notable instance occurred in Garissa town after the killing of three soldiers in November 2012. Military forces retaliated against residents, beating, arresting and shooting dozens of people (including students in a local school) (BBC 2012a; Wakube et al. 2017). In the heat of the struggle, the Suq Mugdi, the biggest market in Garissa, burst into flames (ICG 2014; Osman 2015).

In many circumstances, members of different units have operated in conjunction during reprisals (see e.g., HRW 2012b, 2013, 2016; AI 2014). Interviewing local people in northern Kenya, Human Rights Watch (HRW) details some of these operations:

> 12 witnesses told…that a combined force of regular police, administration police, and the riot police (General Service Unit) carried out a two-hour-long operation in the village of Bulla Iftin on the outskirts of Garissa [north-eastern Kenya] in response to a 9:30 p.m. grenade attack on the Iftin police post. The witnesses told…that within 20 minutes of the grenade attack a large contingent of police officers arrived in the village, kicking doors open, beating women and children, and threatening villagers. "We shall make sure we have killed all of you terrorists before you kill us," one witness said he heard an officer say (HRW 2012b).

However, besides large-scale raids directed against entire communities, personnel from Kenyan security units such as the ATPU have also been reported to participate in more surgical operations targeting specific suspects among the Muslim and ethnic Somali population (OSF 2013b; HRW 2016). Even in this case, operatives have tended to follow a defined pattern of action:

> heavily armed ATPU officers break down doors; give no warning, reason, or display a warrant for the raid; provide no or minimal identification; and beat and threaten bystanders and terrorist suspects (OSF 2013b: 30).

Personal testimonies of Kenyans arrested during targeted raids have regularly included allegations of excessive use of force, incommunicado detention and psychological and physical torture at the hand of security agents (AI 2005; KNCHR 2015; HRW 2016; Allison 2017b). Such allegations have frequently been complemented by concerns regarding the implementation of a planned policy of assassination by Kenyan security authorities to eliminate potential militants and their sympathisers (BBC 2013; Gisesa 2013; OSF 2013b; Al Jazeera 2014a; HRW 2014; Meleagrou-Hitchens 2015). Whether "compelling evidence" regarding the existence of "death squads" among the Kenyan police, "charged with eliminating suspected leaders and members of criminal organizations", was already gathered by the UN Special Rapporteur in 2009 (UN 2009; see also KNCHR 2008), in more recent years such a policy of assassination has been mentioned in relation to the unexplained murders of several prominent Muslim leaders, some of whom were allegedly linked to Al-Hijra (see Al Jazeera 2012b, 2014a; Linthicum 2014; INCLO 2016). Still, according to some sources, its scope might be wider (e.g., KNCHR 2015; HRW 2016). Many Kenyans who have disappeared or been found dead in the last decade (most of whom had some responsibilities within, or were frequenters of, local mosques) were last seen by witnesses in the custody of members of the ATPU, the KDF and other security units (OSF 2013b; KNCHR 2015; HAKI Africa 2016; HRW 2016). As of 2020, 'Missing Voices', a group of organisations investigating extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances in Kenya, has documented more than 160 cases that occurred during anti-terror operations, the vast majority of which have not resulted in prosecutions (Missing Voices 2020).

Self-declared members of the ATPU confirmed the involvement of the unit in extrajudicial killings during interviews with the BBC and Al Jazeera, framing police frustration in regard to the persistent lack of evidence against suspects, hampering convictions through legal proceedings, as the main reason underlying the line of action of security agents:

> the justice system in Kenya is not favourable to the work of the police…So we opt to eliminate them. We identify you, we gun you down in front of your family, and we begin with the leaders (quoted in BBC 2013).

> If the law cannot work, there's another option…eliminate him (quoted in Al Jazeera 2014a)

Similar claims regarding the limitations of the law in the fight against terrorism were also made by the Mombasa County Commissioner when justifying the issuing of a shoot to kill order on terrorist suspect in 2014:

> these are not people to be arrested since they have also killed others. If we find any of them, we will finish them on the spot. They are not people to take to court. Who is going to be your witness in court? What witnesses will be used? (quoted in Ndonga 2014; see also Mwahanga 2014).

However, despite the allegations of Kenyan security agents, since the early 2010s the country has tightened up considerably its legislation on terrorism. Whether the absence of a specific regulation during the 2000s might be framed by some analysts as complicating the issuing of court rulings and encouraging security agents to operate outside the legal framework (e.g., Watts, Shapiro and Brown 2007), in the last decade, Kenyan policy makers have pushed for more stringent legal measures to prosecute militants and their supporters. Still, none of these measures have prevented security authorities from continuing to rely on violent means when tackling the terrorist threat. On the contrary, in the years following the adoption of the 2012 Prevention of Terrorism Act, Kenya registered an upsurge in human rights abuses. Faced with the escalation of Al-Shabaab's attacks in the country, security agents intensified the "collective profiling of Muslims, and specifically Somalis" (Halakhe 2014), while the average cost of a bribe asked by the police to Somali refugees and Kenyan Somalis to avoid detention even increased threefold (ICG 2014: 12).

To an extent, such a trend was also a consequence of the law itself, which provided security forces with additional leeway to arrest and detain suspects. Indeed, the Prevention of Terrorism Act was widely criticised for granting police wide powers that could be used "as a tool against political opponents, civil society, religious and ethnic groups" (OSF 2013b: 11; see also Chonghaile 2012b; AI 2019c). Along these lines, the controversial Security Laws (Amendment) Act, signed by President Kenyatta in 2014, provided security authorities with supplementary powers to hold terrorist suspects (up to a year, even without charges), also limiting the freedom of expression and placing considerable restrictions on the national refugee policy (to the point that eight sections of the Act were declared unconstitutional by the Kenyan High Court) (Al Jazeera 2014b; Smith 2014; Agoya 2015).

However, as much as specific laws can legitimise more draconian security responses, or enhance legal avenues to prosecute terrorist suspects, the enduring nature of violence in post-9/11 Kenya lies primarily in the way in which dramatic levels of corruption and impunity, along with historical fractures, have normalised the exploitation, abuse and circumvention of national and international laws by security authorities during counter-terrorism operations. As already noted by the Executive Director of the Kenyan section of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), when discussing the SOT Bill,

> the existence of the legislation is not sufficient to deter the vice neither are the stiff penalties that are recommended in the bill. There is need for genuine support from the government to enact this law. We need a good set of people to be put in place to interpret the legislation (quoted in Mogire and Mkutu 2011: 478).

Regardless of the legal landscape at the national level, in the last two decades, Kenyan forces have continued to respond to terrorism by relying on a heavy-handed approach against perceived threats in Kenyan society (see Lind, Mutahi and Oosterom 2017; Mogire, Mkutu and Alusa 2018).

Recent developments in the Kenyan counter-terrorism framework must be interpreted against such a background. Indeed, although since the mid-2010s the Kenyatta administration has placed a greater emphasis on preventive initiatives to fight radicalisation and rehabilitation programmes for former militants, major changes for what concerns the character of Kenyan security initiatives are yet to materialise. The Kenyan National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism (NSCVE), announced by President Kenyatta in 2016, has built on the devolution of powers enshrined in the 2010 Kenyan Constitution, promoting security projects at county level and seeking to foster a more collaborative approach towards civil society (Presidency of Kenya 2016). Such directives have had positive outcomes in some areas of the country, contributing to forging more trustful and constructive relationships with the local Muslim and ethnic Somali population (Wakube et al. 2017; ICG 2018). As a human rights campaigner in Mombasa explains,

> [the police] began to engage us and we in turn could reach out to community members who are suspicious of members of the security establishment. This changed dynamic resulted in much better relations between the authorities and the community (quoted in ICG 2018: 10).

However, as important as local successes are, more is yet to be done to heal historical wounds and address deep-rooted flaws in the security system fuelling the cycle of violence. As documented by the IPOA and by Kenyan civil society organisations, the number of abuses committed by the police, including extrajudicial killings and disappearances, rose sharply in 2019 (Missing Voices 2020; Yusuf 2020; Wambui 2020). In several circumstances, counter-terrorism forces have continued to respond to terrorism through repressive means, facilitated by the permanent climate of impunity (see e.g., HRW 2019a; The Standard 2019). Furthermore, Kenya has sought to tighten its grip on suspect people. Despite the ruling of the Kenyan High Court, which struck down a plan to close the Dadaab complex and repatriate Somali refugees as unconstitutional, the government has periodically re-proposed the project on the basis of national security concerns, framing the refugee camp, in the words of Deputy President William Ruto, as a “center for recruitment, radicalization and training and

planning for terrorist attacks by al-Shabaab" (quoted in The Washington Post 2016; see also AI 2019b; Bhalla 2019; HRW 2019b; Mwangi 2019). Although Kenya's 2016 NSCVE is a welcome step towards a change in the management of national counter-terrorism measures, without more targeted policies tackling the sources of inequality and social frictions in the country, security strategies can hardly prevent such counter-terrorism measures from being driven, and manipulated, by the historical perceptions and the personal interest of local security actors.

Remote warfare and its implications in Kenya

Chapter 3 has shown how post-9/11 US security policies in Kenya have reflected the key elements of a remote warfare strategy aimed at pursuing the war on terror in a distant region of the world while limiting the number of American soldiers on the ground. As discussed, in the last two decades, seeking to tackle the intensification of Al-Qaeda's and Al-Shabaab's activities in East Africa, Washington has encouraged and supported Kenyan counter-terrorism initiatives, providing national authorities with increasing resources and more sophisticated instruments to combat security threats. To explore how such policies have impacted at a local level, interacting with the concerned socio-political environment, the previous two sections of this chapter have complemented the analysis of US efforts in Kenya with a perspective on security and counter-terrorism in the country. Contextualising post-9/11 Nairobi's security responses within Kenya's socio-political history, this chapter has shown how fractures lying at the roots of the Kenyan state, along with endemic corruption, have had a crucial impact on the character of the counter-terrorism measures adopted by local security authorities. The rise of insecurity in Kenya during the last two decades has been associated with a dramatic escalation of indiscriminate repression against suspected Muslim and ethnic Somali communities, confirming the presence of scope condition 2 (C2) in the case study.

This has major implications for US security policies. Indeed, whether increasing military and defence support directed towards Kenya has favoured the expansion and diversification of Nairobi's security architecture, fostering interagency cooperation and strengthening national counter-terrorism capabilities, it has also contributed to fuelling a security system that is profoundly affected by the historical perceptions and the personal interests of local actors. Such perceptions and interests have meant that US assistance has inadvertently been diverted from its intentional objectives, falling prey to the local dynamics of violence. Chapter 3 has illustrated how Kenyan security units such as the ATPU, the RBPU and the KDF have received substantial amounts of US assistance to fight terrorism, including training and equipment. The same units, as detailed in the previous section, have regularly been reported to participate in repressive operations against Muslims and ethnic Somalis. The ostensibly endemic character of such operations, along with the tendency of national authorities to

deny their occurrence or downplay their significance as the consequence of the actions of "a few rotten apples" in the security system (OSF 2011), raise serious concerns with regards to the repercussions of US security efforts in the country.

Faced with such concerns, US officials have increased pressure on the Kenyan government to enhance good governance and fight impunity. Several DOS reports express an increasing awareness of the levels of corruption among local security forces and the deterioration of human rights in the country (DOS 2007, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2018). In 2014, Washington joined the chorus of Western countries criticising the Security Laws (Amendment) Act, highlighting that "protecting Kenya's constitution and upholding civil liberties and democracy are among the most effective ways to bolster security" (Al Jazeera 2014b). Such a view was reiterated a year later by the US Ambassador to Kenya, Robert F. Godec, during a public speech in the country:

> here in Kenya, there have been accusations of extra-judicial killings, and other abuses, by the police. Communities have spoken out on the need to improve treatment by police, on the need to build stronger trust…
>
> …words are not enough. Promises about human rights are not enough. Not nearly enough…
>
> Government leaders, politicians, the police, the judiciary, and their partners in civil society must all take action to stop injustices. They must investigate allegations (Godec 2015).

Besides highlighting more evident humanitarian implications associated with Kenya's harsh security measures, in some circumstances, US officials have also identified potential repercussions in strategic terms. US documents recognise that some state actions, including "state-sanctioned violence and heavy-handed tactics by security actors", could have deleterious effects (DOS and USAID 2016: 4), and that "governments that routinely victimize their citizens may be particularly vulnerable to generating VE [i.e. violent extremism]" (USAID 2009: v). Especially since the adoption of the 'whole-of-government' approach by the Obama administration, Washington has placed an increasing emphasis on democracy and human rights as crucial instruments for countering violent extremism (e.g., DOD 2010; White House 2010; DOS and USAID 2016). As President Obama himself stressed during his 2015 official visit to Kenya:

> if you paint any particular community with too broad a brush, if in reaction to terrorism you are restricting legitimate organizations, reducing the scope of peaceful organization, then that can

> have the inadvertent effect of actually increasing the pool of recruits for terrorism and resentment in communities that feel marginalized (White House 2015a).

Along these lines, several US officials have warned that, in the absence of concrete steps taken by Kenyan authorities to implement changes on the ground and halt the misuse of security assistance, the US would not hesitate to resort to unilateral measures to sanction human rights violations. As the US Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Johnny Carson, wrote to President Kibaki,

> [Kenya's] future relationship with the United States is directly linked to the degree of your support for urgent implementation of the reform agenda as well as a clear opposition to the use of violence (quoted in Dagne 2011: 3).

Similarly, while emphasising that counter-terrorism crimes in Kenya "place elements of U.S. security assistance at risk", the US Secretary of State, John F. Kerry, considered the possibility of limiting US security support:

> we strongly condemn human rights abuses by Kenyan security forces and take seriously our responsibility to withhold or condition our assistance in light of applicable legal requirements and ethical principles (U.S. Government Publishing Office 2016a: 98).

However, despite the warnings of US policy makers, little has changed in the way in which Kenyan forces have confronted security threats. The following pages provide strong evidence in support of the case-specific prediction formulated in relation to Step 2 of the causal mechanism (q → r), showing that Kenya has managed to exploit the US strategy of remote warfare, avoiding major sanctions while using US security assistance to implement indiscriminate repression against Muslim and ethnic Somali communities.

A first factor that has hampered US initiatives and enabled Kenya to take advantage of Washington's support has concerned the limited capacity of US policy makers to exert sufficient oversight over the actions of surrogates in the country receiving assistance.

Over time, the US has developed several legal instruments regulating the provision of assistance towards partner states and determining how and under which conditions such assistance must be suspended. Specific bills, for example, have been adopted by Congress to restrict aid delivered to countries exhibiting a lack of respect for rule of law and human rights (Ploch 2010: 37; SAM 2014: 3). Still, the major tool used by US policy makers to bar assistance to foreign security, military and police forces have been the Leahy Laws. Named after their author, Senator Patrick J. Leahy, the laws

were promulgated in 1998, and subsequently expanded in 2012 (United States Congress 2012: 431), to regulate assistance provided under the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act as well the provision of training by the DOD (although the DOS-managed NADR fund is exempted, the DOS has regularly included it, see Serafino et al. 2014: 5, 8). Under the Leahy Laws, the US cannot provide training, equipment or other forms of aid to a unit of a foreign country if even one of its members is suspected to be involved in a gross violation of human rights (aid is restored only after proper investigations are conducted and the perpetrators are brought to justice in the concerned states). The vetting of the security agents is initiated by the members of the local US embassy, who analyse data from US databases and reports of civil society organisations, and subsequently continued by the DOS Bureau for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and the DOS regional bureaus (Serafino et al. 2014: 10).

The introduction of the Leahy Laws has represented an important step towards the protection of human rights worldwide. Still, the laws, as well as the other instruments regulating US aid, have a (potential) weakness: the effectiveness of the vetting process is highly dependent on the availability of information for the US staff. Without monitoring mechanisms ensuring appropriate knowledge of the local context in which aid is delivered, the individual identification of human rights violators, and of their units, becomes rather complicated. This is of fundamental importance in the case of partnership relationships such as that between the US and Kenya, characterised by a strategic and physical distance separating the benefactor state from local actors receiving indirect support. Indeed, as the remoteness between Washington and its frontline partner in the war on terror increases, so does US difficulties in monitoring actions on the ground.

In Kenya, the erosion of US oversight capabilities has enabled local forces benefiting from US assistance to engage in repressive operations. Despite several attempts to strengthen the Leahy vetting system (see e.g., Wikileaks 2008c, 2009e; 2010), US officials have often been unable to suspend aid due to a lack of evidence regarding the identity (i.e. the names) of the Kenyan agents committing human rights abuses (e.g., HRW 2014, 2016). The abovementioned frequency of joint operations among members of different units has further complicated individual identification. In some circumstances, local witnesses have recognised the security units involved in repressive operations thanks to their familiarity with the uniforms and the vehicles used by specific security forces (e.g., KNCHR 2015; HRW 2016). Still, whereas such testimonies have rarely constituted strong evidence for the vetting process, on several occasions, Kenyan people have lacked appropriate knowledge to support US investigations. As leaked US embassy cables highlight,

> since police and military units wear almost identical uniforms, correctly identifying perpetrators can be difficult (Wikileaks 2008a).

> …the substantial similarity of uniforms worn by Kenyan Army, Kenya Police Service (KPS), and Administration Police (AP) personnel caused confusion and hampered efforts to identify better alleged perpetrators of human rights abuses (Wikileaks 2008b).

Furthermore, Kenyan security agents have often managed to circumvent monitoring mechanisms in the country. Witnesses of police and military violence have stressed how, despite introducing themselves as members of security forces, agents have often concealed their identity, dressing in plainclothes (e.g., Yusuf 2013; KNCHR 2015; HAKI Africa 2016) or even wearing "balaclavas or masks during arrests" (HRW 2016: 3). Such a course of action, along with the lack of internal investigations in the country, have thwarted US efforts. As noted by US officials, in the absence of measures addressing the climate of impunity in Kenya, Washington "face[s] a significant challenge to minimize the risk of having trained police personnel who commit abuses" (Wikileaks 2009b).

Although the DOS does not generally publicise the suspension of aid as a consequence of the Leahy vetting (see OSF 2014), US officials and some NGOs have occasionally confirmed the exclusion of some Kenyan units from security assistance due to human rights concerns (e.g., U.S. Government Publishing Office 2016a: 98). For example, whereas several sources document the continuing provision of training and resources to the ATPU during the first half of the 2010s (e.g., OSF 2013b; HRW 2014), a 2016 HRW report attests the suspension of US assistance to the unit, stating that "if the ATPU comes under consideration for future assistance, US officials told Human Rights Watch that it would carefully review all available information in order to determine whether to assist the unit" (HRW 2016: 75). However, even so, the report notes how US aid to other units involved in counter-terrorism crimes, such as the KDF and the RBPU, persisted (HRW 2016: 74-75; for instance, in 2018 alone, the Trump administration provided the RBPU with more than US$12 million through Section 333, see SAM 2021j). In addition, according to human rights operators, Kenyan security authorities have even sought to exploit the remoteness of US policy makers to overcome the Leahy vetting by creating "temporary, ad hoc units", comprising members of the police and the military, from whom funding cannot be withdrawn, as "they don't officially exist" (Allison 2017a).

Such a state of affairs concerning US oversight capabilities in Kenya has also been exacerbated by some shortcomings in the collection and updating of information by US officers. Reports of the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) show how US assistance programmes have often presented imprecisions in their data or have lacked important documentation. For example, a study on PREACT finds mistakes and imprecisions in the reporting of the activities carried out on the

ground (GAO 2014), while a 2008 investigation on the ATA programme in Kenya and other five countries states that "ATA annual reports…contained inaccuracies…such as the number of students trained and courses offered" (GAO 2008: 5). Such findings have been corroborated by further examinations of the ATA programme at a global level, highlighting how data on members of the security forces participating in the activities have often been incomplete (GAO 2017). Leaked US embassy cables reveal US efforts in the late 2000s to tackle such problems by "developing a comprehensive database of all Kenyan personnel trained" and ensuring "greater control over candidate selection to…eliminate as much as possible participants whose deployment histories raise questions about their conduct" (Wikileaks 2009b). Still, an inspection of the US embassy in Nairobi carried out by the State Department Office of the Inspector General (OIG) in 2012 raises serious concerns regarding the lack of a "process for collecting and updating information on human rights abuses" and of a "reporting mechanism to verify that individuals who are vetted and cleared are the same persons who receive training" (OIG 2012: 9). According to the OIG report, the US embassy staff only checked names of potential human rights violators based on a 2008 KNCHR report on violence in the 2007-2008 post-election crisis (OIG 2012: 9). Without a precise account of the number and the identity of trainees, US safeguards against human rights abuses are weakened. However, more recent inspections of the embassy register improvements in the conduction of the vetting process (e.g., OIG 2018).

A second, and most important, factor that has enabled Kenya to abuse US security assistance concerns the nature of the US strategy on the ground and the role played by Kenya forces within such a strategy.

As argued in Chapter 2, despite showcasing the power and the resources of the US military and economic machine, remote warfare originates from the identification of a 'limit', that is, the benefactor's willingness to avoid higher political, economic and military costs in the conduct of the war on terror through the deployment of troops in distant theatres. Such a limit has major implications for what concerns the management of US relationships with African partners. Indeed, rather than allowing US policy makers to operate from a position of strength, it forces them to make several compromises. Washington's reluctance to directly engage in remote conflicts turns local intervener states into *crucial* allies for the projection of US power and the achievement of short-term security goals on the ground. This increases costs associated with disengagement, generating considerable dilemmas for US policy makers facing cases of repression in partner countries. Whether repressive security measures are contrary to the democratic principles upheld by the US, a withdrawal of indirect support could exacerbate regional insecurity and favour the expansion of terrorism. DOD documents call for the adoption of preventive procedures avoiding the emergence of such dilemmas by providing

assessments of potential risks involved in the use of security assistance in specific contexts (for a review of such documents, see GAO 2013). Still, to find a balance between Washington's commitment to human rights and the pursuing of counter-terrorism objectives, US officials have often relied on a pragmatic approach, preserving security partnerships with key allies while seeking to redirect them towards a greater respect for human rights and the rule of law. As the 2011 US National Strategy for Counterterrorism states,

> in some cases partnerships are in place with countries with whom the United States has very little in common except for the desire to defeat al-Qa'ida and its affiliates and adherents. These partners may not share U.S. values or even our broader vision of regional and global security. Yet it is in our interest to build habits and patterns of CT cooperation with such partners, working to push them in a direction that advances CT objectives while demonstrating through our example the value of upholding human rights and responsible governance (White House 2011: 6).

Such an approach is evident in the case of Kenya. On the one hand, Washington condemns counter-terrorism crimes carried out by Kenyan security authorities. On the other hand, however, the role that Kenyan security institutions play in the war against terrorism, as discussed in Chapter 3, is regarded as of fundamental value for the achievement of security objectives and the preservation of stability in East Africa. As a senior US official clarified to the Kenyan president during a meeting, "no country between Cairo and Capetown [sic] is more important than Kenya" (Wikileaks 2009c). As a result, rather than altering security assistance policies in the country, US policy makers have sought to calibrate them so as to provide local actors with support to counter AQEA and Al-Shabaab while, at the same time, avoiding an intensification of repression.

Leaked US embassy cables shed light on US diplomatic efforts and the political calculations underlying remote warfare in Kenya (e.g., Wikileaks 2006b, 2007b, 2009b, 2009c, 2009d, 2010). While stepping up pressure on the national authorities to uphold democratic values, US representatives have often refrained from taking measures that might undermine Kenya's stability and counter-terrorism capabilities. An example concerns the visit of a Kenyan senior official to Washington in 2007 and the related request for more US security support. US officials acknowledged that "transparency is not a word he [i.e. the Kenyan representative] is comfortable with and he is sometimes disposed to thinking that human rights are a troublesome obstacle to law enforcement", also stressing that his "'shoot to kill' orders to the police are not something that we can endorse" (Wikileaks 2007b). However, at the same time, a refusal of the request for security assistance was framed as capable of jeopardising counter-terrorism goals on the ground, causing a greater harm to the security of the region while undermining US national security interests:

> the primary reason for his visit to the U.S. is to obtain assistance for the police in their fight against crime and terrorism. As the U.S. Government, we can have no higher priority than addressing the violent crime and terrorism problem in order to help ensure the safety of Americans.
>
> It is essential that we dig deep and pursue every avenue to be responsive to the Kenyan government's requests. Being responsive will help reinforce Kenyan cooperation on Somalia and anti-terrorism efforts, and will directly contribute to fighting crime, thus contributing to the safety of Americans and the stability of our strategic partner (Wikileaks 2007b).

In another case, after having raised concerns with regard to endemic human rights breaches at the hand of the Kenyan police and the lack of oversight mechanisms in the country, US officials underlined the importance of Kenyan counter-terrorism efforts within the post-9/11 security framework:

> there are important U.S. national security interests at stake in Kenya. Security sector assistance is a key means to advance those U.S. national security interests. The challenge we must grapple with is how best to use security assistance to engage on areas of interest to us without in any way contributing to human rights abuses, and how best to use current and possible future assistance to press for and encourage meaningful police reform (Wikileaks 2009b).

Washington's approach to the security partnership with Kenya reverberates also in several public statements of US policy makers. An example is the remarks made by President Obama during the abovementioned visit to Kenya in 2015. Facing increasing episodes of violence in the country, Obama reminded President Kenyatta that "the Kenyan government is accountable to the Kenyan people", also underlining how "respecting civil society" and the rule of law is of fundamental value in the fight against terrorism (White House 2015a). Yet, at the same time, the US president praised the efforts of Kenyan forces combating Al-Shabaab in Somalia and emphasised the significance of US-Kenya counter-terrorism cooperation, announcing that Washington would provide additional security support (White House 2015a).

However, in the same way that the adoption of a remote warfare strategy affects the behaviour of the benefactor country, even surrogate states are responsive to such a change. Kenya is not a passive partner, unaware of the role that it plays on the international stage and of the limit from which remote warfare originates. On the contrary, US counter-terrorism imperatives in East Africa, along with Washington's reluctance to tackle the terrorist threat through direct intervention, have generated

a moral hazard, providing Nairobi with considerable leverage in the partnership relationship (see Prestholdt 2011). While cooperating with the US in the fight against AQEA and Al-Shabaab, Kenyan security authorities have managed to take advantage of the post-9/11 scenario to "accommodate [US] demands which suit them, and adapt, subvert or obstruct those which they cannot ignore" (Hills 2006: 638). This is evident, for example, in the case of US demands concerning the signing of a Bilateral Immunity Agreement (BIA) in the mid-2000s. As already mentioned in Chapter 3, Nairobi opposed Washington's request, causing a suspension of some US assistance programmes in the country. Still, Kenya's inflexibility to US pressure forced Washington to come to terms with its strategy in the war on terror and to rapidly restore most of the aid to protect security interests in East Africa (Bachman 2012). As a Pentagon official declared,

> Kenya is a key partner in our counterterrorism strategy and our goals in Africa…this [i.e. the suspension of aid] hurts us, there's no question about it (quoted in Mazzetti 2006).

In the framework of Kenya's counter-terrorism initiatives, despite the intensification of US pressure to stop the perpetration of violence and the warnings of US policy makers regarding potential sanctions, Kenyan forces have continued to operate outside of the law, exploiting Kenya's post-9/11 geo-strategic significance and the consequent difficulties of US policy makers to disengage or cut aid, to gain additional assistance. As a recent HRW report notes, Western "rhetorical comments, though important, are not prompting change in the conduct of Kenyan security forces" (HRW 2016: 73; see also HAKI Africa 2016).

Confronted with such a lack of change, Washington has enacted counter-measures seeking to enhance local civil-military relations and improve the living conditions of vulnerable communities in the country. After the 2007-2008 post-election violence, Kenya was included among the beneficiaries of DOD Section 1207 Security and Stabilization Assistance, with the aim of supporting "positive civic engagement among disaffected youth…foster[ing] trust between police and local communities; enhanc[ing] Kenyan military's ability to provide security and stability" (Serafino 2010: 10). Funding from Section 1207 was used in the late 2000s to finance USAID development projects seeking to increase social inclusion and reduce the vulnerability to terrorist recruitment of ethnic Somalis in the north-eastern region (Wikileaks 2009e). Similar projects have also been implemented in the Kenyan coast and Nairobi's Eastleigh district to address local grievances and encourage peaceful dialogue between Muslim communities and the national institutions (e.g., Bradbury and Kleinman 2010; Nyagah, Mwangi and Attree 2017). Furthermore, the US has provided support to IPOA to increase accountability in the country (Watts, Jackson et al. 2018: 58), and has sought to empower Kenyan

civil society organisations as a way "to promote positive changes in Kenya governance" (DOS 2009b: 78; see also e.g., Wikileaks 2009b).

In addition, Washington has taken precautions to prevent the misuse of security support. Whether the International Military Education and Training (IMET) programme has continued to be used to professionalise the Kenyan military and spread the values of democracy and rule of law, Section 1206 Train and Equip Authority was supplemented with a human rights training component for local forces. Such a component was transferred to Section 333 Building Partner Capacity by the US National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2017, being flanked by institutional capacity building programmes aimed at enhancing "civilian control of the national security forces" in partner states (U.S. Government Publishing Office 2016b: 506).

However, as important as such precautions and US soft security measures have been, they have suffered from major shortcomings. Specifically, they have been extremely limited in comparison to US security support to Kenyan forces and have rarely come to grips with the historical and systemic nature of repression in Kenya. Despite the increasing emphasis placed on institutional capacity building and security sector reform, the bulk of post-9/11 US security assistance in Kenya, as shown in the previous chapter, has been directed towards short-term counter-terrorism objectives in the fight against AQEA and Al-Shabaab (e.g., Bachmann and Hönke 2009; Bruton and Williams 2014; Goldenberg et al. 2016; Goodman and Arabia 2018). Compared to such goals, "considerably less energy and fewer resources [have been] focused on ensuring that the internal security services…address…threats effectively, or protect and do not marginalize or alienate vulnerable populations" (Goldenberg et al. 2016: 2). As a US embassy cable highlights with respect to US aid to Kenyan police,

> building counterterrorism capacity, including enhanced border security and maritime security capabilities, has been the major focus of our assistance. Capacity building in core civilian police skills…has not been our main focus (Wikileaks 2009a).

For example, in 2018, when the DOD Section 333 in Kenya reached a peak of US$69 million, only 0.1% of such an amount was used for human rights training and seminars, while most of the assistance consisted of tactical and logistical support for Kenyan counter-terrorism forces (SAM 2021j).

Nonetheless, even in the case of greater sums allocated for human rights training during joint military exercises, doubts would persist with regard to its actual impact in terms of a decrease in state violence. Indeed, despite contributing to the professionalisation of Kenyan forces, such a training is unlikely to tackle the underlying causes of repression in the country (for a similar argument, see OSF

2013a). Without being integrated into more extensive measures aimed at favouring a process of reconciliation at a national level and rooting out endemic corruption, US preventive tools can hardly ameliorate social conditions and avoid the misuse of security assistance in Kenya. In the same way, regardless of their success, US small-scale development projects seeking to address grievances and foster social inclusion of Kenyan Muslim and ethnic Somali communities cannot decrease or overshadow the effects that corruption and historical fractures still have on the daily life of such communities (see Bachmann and Hönke 2009; Prestholdt 2011). As a report emphasises when exploring US development activities in the country, "it is naive to assume that a project or series of small projects are sufficient to change people's perceptions, convictions, and values, regardless of the historical and contemporary local, regional, and global sociopolitical and economic context" (Bradbury and Kleinman 2010: 5).

The Obama administration sought to redirect US security policies in Kenya towards a greater combination between indirect support against terrorism and longer-term initiatives addressing inequality and promoting human rights. Besides the Security Governance Initiative mentioned in Chapter 3, the US president also sponsored joint efforts with Kenyan authorities to fight corruption and enhance democratic values (e.g., White House 2015b). Yet, so far, the balance between such initiatives and US short-term security imperatives in East Africa has been rather fragile. Limited funding and pressing counter-terrorism needs have often undermined the scope of US long-term efforts on the ground (e.g., Bruton and Williams 2014; Goodman and Arabia 2018). Such imbalances have showed the great importance attached by US policy makers to the fight against Al-Shabaab and the achievement of regional stability. At the same time, however, they have also reflected the prominence of a problem-solving approach to (counter-)terrorism that, while framing local security institutions as the main referent to neutralise threats on the ground and restore stability, has not fully appreciated the dangerousness (and the destabilising nature) of the status quo. Intertwining with the realpolitik of local actors on the ground, such an approach has contributed to delaying concrete changes in the Kenyan counter-terrorism policy. Conscious of the relevance of US-Kenya counter-terrorism cooperation within the post-9/11 US security framework, Kenyan security authorities have managed to evade external pressures, welcoming increasing amounts of US security support while maintaining repressive measures against (perceived) threats in the country.

Conclusions

This chapter has focused on Step 2 (q → r) of the causal mechanism outlined in Chapter 2, according to which, in African states relying on harsh security measures based on indiscriminate repression against suspect groups (scope condition 2 [C2]), the establishment of the partnership relationship with

the US means that local authorities gain resources and room for manoeuvre to implement such measures. After having assessed the presence of C2 in the case study, the chapter has tested q → r by looking for its case-specific manifestations in the form of Kenyan authorities managing to use US security assistance to carry out indiscriminate repression against Muslim and ethnic Somali communities.

The chapter has provided extensive evidence of Kenya taking advantage of the relationship with the US in the post-9/11 period, showing how Kenyan security authorities benefiting from US logistical support, training and equipment have regularly been involved in cases of indiscriminate repression against ethnic Somali and Muslim communities while managing to evade Washington's pressures and avoid major sanctions. As outlined in the methodological section of the introductory chapter, such evidence constitutes a strong inferential test corroborating q → r. Indeed, besides having a high degree of certainty (Step 2 could hardly occur in its absence), the evidence has also a high degree of uniqueness, as the abuse of US assistance by Kenyan authorities could hardly have explanations other than the establishment of a partnership relationship within the framework of remote warfare. This has been further highlighted in the above analysis. As shown, the US strategy of remote warfare in Kenya has had major implications, limiting the ability of Washington to exercise control over the actions of its partner and determine the use of security assistance. The remoteness separating the US from the theatre of its intervention has undermined oversight of Kenyan security units receiving assistance, hampering the vetting process. Furthermore, the US reluctance to intervene directly through the deployment of troops in East Africa has increased the agency of Kenyan security authorities vis-à-vis US policy makers, generating a moral hazard. While cooperating with the US in the fight against AQEA and Al-Shabaab, Kenyan authorities have managed to exploit Washington's counter-terrorism imperatives on the ground to circumvent US directives regarding the management of security in the country.

Such implications highlight how the effects of remote warfare are highly dependent on the context in which the strategy is implemented. Allowing partners to use US support with fewer constraints, the US strategy is susceptible to the interests and perceptions of local actors concerning the scope and the nature of the security threat. Such perceptions and interests do not emerge from nowhere, but instead are the consequence of the convergence of social, political and cultural processes in a given time and setting.

In Kenya, perceptions and interests driving local counter-terrorism measures have been profoundly affected by the escalation of historical fractures in the post-9/11 period and the endemic character of corruption within the security sector. As illustrated, historical fractures and endemic corruption have progressively turned the war on terror into a catalyst for the normalisation of the

excessive use of force against suspect groups, causing a dramatic intensification of indiscriminate repression against the Muslim and ethnic Somali population. In such a context, US policies have provided increasing funds and resources to professionalise and strengthen the Kenyan counter-terrorism system. Still, being driven by a problem-solving perspective on the war on terror, they have almost left untouched the flaws that jeopardise its function.

Such dynamics have had substantial repercussions, contributing to the exacerbation of inequality and the erosion of human rights in the country. However, besides humanitarian and political consequences, there may also be further implications. As noted above, US documents and statements have occasionally acknowledged that some state actions may have negative effects in the conflict against violent extremism. Yet, the US strategy of remote warfare seems to underestimate the political drivers of radicalisation and the way in which Washington's indirect support towards a fragmented and corrupted system can inadvertently contribute to undermining the very stability and security that it aims to protect. The misuse of US assistance by surrogate forces relying on indiscriminate repression against perceived threats risks fuelling dynamics of violent interaction among social actors on the ground fostering social discontent and increasing mobilisation into terrorism. The next chapter will explore these dynamics, focusing on Step 3 of the hypothesised causal mechanism (r → B).

Chapter 5

Causal Mechanism: Step 3

Kenya's counter-terrorism measures and radicalisation

This chapter deals with Step 3 (r → B) of the causal mechanism discussed in Chapter 2, according to which indiscriminate repression carried out by US African partners against suspect groups causes an increase in radicalisation. The chapter tests the validity of r → B in the case study by exploring its expected manifestations and searching for evidence of Kenyan Muslim and ethnic Somali communities becoming prone to mobilising into Al-Shabaab, and managing to do so, in the face of indiscriminate repression.

The chapter is composed of three sections.

The first two sections provide evidence in support of the case-specific prediction related to r → B, showing how, in line with the Social Movement Theory (SMT) approach to radicalisation set out in Chapter 2, the use of indiscriminate repression by Kenyan security authorities has been accompanied by an increase in the propensity of Muslim and ethnic Somali communities to mobilise into Al-Shabaab, along with the generation of conducive socio-political conditions enabling them to do so.

The first section focuses on the motivational aspect of mobilisation, showing how Muslims and ethnic Somalis have become increasingly alienated from national institutions and, ultimately, prone to rebelling against the state and mobilising into Al-Shabaab when facing encounters with repressive authorities. The second section focuses on how such a propensity has concretised in practical terms. As the section highlights, dynamics of violent interaction with national authorities have been followed by the emergence and consolidation of socio-political conditions enabling would-be militants facing repression to translate their aspiration into action through the establishment of connections with Al-Shabaab.

The last section explains why the evidence provided in the chapter constitutes a strong inferential test to confirm r → B, summarising the main features of such a step of the causal mechanism and setting the ground for the conclusive chapter of the thesis.

Indiscriminate repression and radicalisation in Kenya: motivating mobilisation

As shown in Chapter 4, the adoption of a remote warfare strategy by the US in Kenya has had serious implications. Nairobi has managed to exploit its role within the post-9/11 US security framework, along with Washington's strategic and physical distance in the security partnership, to gain increasing resources and room for manoeuvre for the implementation of harsh counter-terrorism measures based on indiscriminate repression against the Muslim and ethnic Somali minority. In the last two decades, especially after the rise of Al-Shabaab as a regional player, such a minority has regularly been subjected to episodes of collective punishment, mass arrest, torture and abuse. Reports show how the escalation of terrorism in the country has been accompanied by a dramatic increase in practices of ethnic and religious profiling by national forces, subjecting suspect groups to harsh security procedures just because of their physical appearance or their clothes (e.g., HRW 2012a; ICG 2012; Ndung'u, Salifu and Sigsworth 2017). In some circumstances, even Muslim clerics publicly campaigning against terrorism have not escaped detention (and bribery), being "automatically suspected of involvement with the group [i.e. Al-Shabaab], based purely on their identity" (Wakube et al. 2017: 24).

The scapegoating of suspect groups for the escalation of terrorism has also favoured the spread of sentiments of fear and hostility among the population, "affect[ing] the attitudes toward Somalis [and Muslims] in everyday life" (Lind, Mutahi and Oosterom 2015: 26). A survey of the Inter-Religious Council of Kenya (IRCK) in Mombasa and Kwale counties (characterised by high levels of terrorist recruitment) shows that most of the respondents were critical of the religious policy of the Kenyan government, with many of them mentioning extrajudicial killings as a major driver of religious intolerance and conflicts among locals (DOS 2019b). Episodes of public violence against ethnic Somalis were registered in Nairobi's Eastleigh district after terrorist attacks in the early 2010s (Lough 2012; Al Jazeera 2013b; Botha 2014b). In the north-eastern and coastal territories, heavily targeted by Al-Shabaab's operations and the following reprisals of Kenyan forces, frictions between Christians and Muslims have over time reached alarming levels, with both communities accusing each other of not taking appropriate steps to prevent violence against their members (Ndzovou 2017a; Wakube et al. 2017).

The progressive consolidation of patterns of violent interaction with the state has affected profoundly the way in which Muslims and ethnic Somalis have constructed and conceived social reality. Indeed, cracking down indiscriminately on historically 'othered' social groups, Kenyan authorities have signalled that nearly any individual belonging to such groups could potentially be treated as a terrorist, demarcating boundaries distinguishing them from the rest of the population. Several studies emphasise the emergence of feelings of fear and mistrust towards national security

institutions among communities facing repression (Anderson and McKnight 2015a; Finn et al. 2016; Villa-Vicencio, Buchanan-Clarke and Humphrey 2016; Ndung'u, Salifu and Sigsworth 2017; Chome 2019; Botha and Abdile 2020). Interviews of Muslim and ethnic Somali people confirm such trends, conveying a marked lack of confidence in the fairness and the reliability of the Kenyan security system:

> this is the government disappearing our people. How can we trust them with fair investigations and trial? It is meaningless to expect anything from the police or the courts (quoted in HRW 2016: 25).

> We don't trust the government because of cases of rampant youth disappearances without trace, unwarranted police crackdowns and continuous sexual abuse and harassment of families whose children are suspected to have joined extremist groups in Somalia (quoted in International Alert/KMYA 2016: 31).

> What concerns me most at the moment is my security. It is not possible to get justice in Kenya under these conditions. Terror suspects either disappear or get shot, you know, and nothing happens (quoted in HRW 2015a: 46).

Eventually, a sense of isolation and victimisation has consolidated among ethnic Somalis experiencing violent encounters with national authorities in the north-eastern territories and Nairobi, contributing to politicising their collective identity. A letter sent by local leaders in Mandera (north-eastern Kenya) to the ministers for defence and internal security in 2011 expresses the state of apprehension and the concerns of the local population following repeated cases of collective punishment for the occurrence of terrorist attacks against Kenyan forces in the region:

> on daily basis security men were being killed by thugs in other regions of Kenya and yet the population dwelling within that [sic] environs are not collectively punished. Does this mean Somalis are all naturally threat [sic] to the security of this nation? Does it signify that we are all Alshabab [sic] or their sympathizers? (quoted in HRW 2012a: 34-35).

Similar concerns were emphasised by the Mandera County Senator in an article published in a major Kenyan newspaper after the 2014 Operation Usalama Watch of the Kenyan forces:

> the [ethnic Somali] community has been stigmatised and portrayed as "terrorists" by the xenophobic narrative of the State…God forbid, should any other explosion occur tomorrow, ordinary Kenyans may turn on the Somalis!...
> …Terrorism is a global scourge affecting many countries and ours is no exception. Blaming the Somali community collectively is wrong and will create more resentment towards the State… (Kerrow 2014).

Indeed, investigations on Usalama Watch have found that the recurrence of human rights abuses against ethnic Somalis during the operation contributed to fuelling frustration and social alienation (Villa-Vicencio, Buchanan-Clarke and Humphrey 2016; Wakube et al. 2017), awaking feelings of historical inequality between them and the rest of the population (Lind, Mutahi and Oosterom 2015). As a report of the Kenyan Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) stresses, Usalama Watch "elicited a perception of targeted bias or discrimination from members of the dominant Somali community" (IPOA 2014b: 7). Such a perception is captured by the words of ethnic Somali people interviewed in the aftermath of the events:

> I am a Kenyan through and through. I was born here and I do not know anywhere else to call home. But when such things happen, they make me feel like an alien. Does Kenya want us, does Kenya appreciate us?... there is a worrying element of intolerance against Somalis from the streets and even in the media (quoted in Some 2014).

> We support any operation that will weed out all kinds of criminals but what we are against is the nature of the operation. The government needs to adopt smart policing, intelligence gathering and fighting corruption within the police force [rather] than targeting [a] specific community (quoted in The New Humanitarian 2014).

A sense of isolation and frustration has also developed among Kenyan Muslims in the coastal areas of the country. Several reports emphasise increasing tensions among local communities facing the intensification of counter-terrorism raids (e.g., OSF 2013b; HAKI Africa 2016; Ndung'u, Salifu and Sigsworth 2017). Interviews with Muslim people show resentment towards national security authorities, blamed for "automatically label[ling] the Muslims as the terrorist" (quoted in Shetret, Schwartz and Cotter 2013: 10) and treating them "like second-class citizens", ignoring their centuries-old history in the coastal territories (quoted in Blair 2014; see also Botha 2013). Mass arrests, violence and detainment by ATPU members are regarded as a major cause of concern, leaving deep inner wounds among those who are eventually released:

> I have no rights. It's like I'm not a human (quoted in OSF 2013b: 48).

> What type of life do they want us to live? They keep coming for us. They portray us as dangerous. No one wants to sit in our home. We are alone here…The perception of the community is that this is a no go zone (quoted in OSF 2013b: 48).

The emerging climate of pervasive anxiety is captured by the words of the chair of the Kenyan Muslim Human Rights Forum:

> the moment…[a human rights violation] is cloaked in the war on terror, nobody gives a damn…That's where I really feel very frightened about what is going on (quoted in Chonghaile 2012b).

Trapped in a permanent condition of precariousness and insecurity, members of the Muslim population in the coast have started reacting violently. The unexplained murders of several Muslim clerics, some of whom were renowned for their ostensibly radical views (and involvement with Al-Hijra and Al-Shabaab), served as a trigger for the outburst of anger. As discussed in Chapter 4, Kenyan security units have been widely suspected of being behind the killings, which would be inscribed within a policy of targeted assassinations aimed at eliminating potential security threats while circumventing the judicial system (e.g., Al Jazeera 2014a; Linthicum 2014; HAKI Africa 2016; HRW 2016). Following the death of Sheikh Aboud Rogo, a Muslim cleric identified by the UN Security Council as Al-Hijra's major ideologue and a crucial supporter of Al-Shabaab (IGAD 2016), violence erupted on the streets of Mombasa, where rioters clashed with police forces (killing five of them) after having burned three churches and committed widespread looting (BBC 2012b; OSF 2013b). Social unrest continued as locals blamed the state for engaging in unlawful killings against Muslims. As a youth frequenting Rogo's mosque claimed after the incidents, "today it is Mr Aboud Rogo. Tomorrow it might be me" (quoted in BBC 2012b).

A similar scenario occurred a year later, in October 2013, after the murder of Rogo's successor, Sheikh Ibrahim Omar. Rioters set fire to a Salvation Army church in Mombasa, engaging in a fight against police forces that caused the death of four people. Even in this case, the government was heavily criticised by a fringe of the Muslim society, interpreting the killing as a violent retaliation by Kenyan authorities against Muslims for Al-Shabaab's attack at the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi (which happened a few days before):

> this is no doubt a police execution, given what has happened in Nairobi (quoted in Al Jazeera 2013c).

> They [i.e. the authorities] have panicked because of their own laxity which killed Kenyans at Westgate. Now they are trying to save face by sacrificing innocent Muslims…We are not going to take this lightly (quoted in Akwiri 2013).

> With Westgate, emotions are very high and there is public pressure to get results and be seen to be clamping down on terrorism…They [i.e. the authorities] know public opinion will be on the side of counter-terrorism agencies, no matter how heavy-handed the operations are (quoted in Akwiri 2013).

Among those railing against the government for the death of Sheikh Ibrahim Omar was Abubakar Sheikh Ibrahim Shariff, commonly known as 'Makaburi' ('graveyard' in Swahili); a radical preacher listed by the UN and the US as a terrorist, who exerted an increasing influence over Al-Hijra, providing support to Al-Shabaab in the Kenyan territory (UN 2013b; Nzes 2014; IGAD 2016). Interviewed by Al Jazeera and the BBC between 2012 and 2013, he predicted his own death at the hand of Kenyan forces:

> the police are supposed to protect us…But how can I go there when I know they want to kill me too; when I know that I am next (quoted in Al Jazeera 2012b).

> I know they [i.e. Kenyan forces] are going to kill me. But I am a Muslim. I believe that my life and death [are] in the hands of Allah (quoted in BBC 2014a).

Eventually, Makaburi was found dead on a road outside Mombasa in April 2014, killed by unknown assailants. Riots and protests in Mombasa followed the assassination of the cleric, proclaimed a martyr by dozens of youths (BBC 2014a; Sanga and Mwahanga 2014).

In line with what expected by the SMT approach to radicalisation set out in Chapter 2, the progressive consolidation of a climate of collective insecurity among the Muslim and ethnic Somali population suffering from dynamics of violent interaction with Kenyan forces has increased significantly costs associated with passive inaction, fuelling a desire for revenge against a state perceived more as "a source of injustice and insecurity" (Lind, Mutahi and Oosterom 2015: 27) than as a safeguard against such problems. A 2016 report of the Kenya National Commission of Human Rights (KNCHR) on youth radicalisation on the Kenyan coast shows that more than half of the people

interviewed had experienced harsh treatment by the police against their family members, one fifth of which had started developing "very extreme views against police and government" (KNCHR 2016: 16). As a study by the International Crisis Group (ICG) stresses, rather than curtailing terrorist activities, security crackdowns against coastal Muslims have often "inflamed local sentiment", exacerbating instability on the ground (ICG 2018: 8). Along these lines, a 2015 survey of Afrobarometer exploring the impact of Kenyan security measures among the ethnic Somali population finds that "Somali Kenyans feel marginalised by the state and express problematic levels of social intolerance, factors that indicate the presence of political and social conditions associated with higher levels of violent extremism" (Afrobarometer 2015: 1). Interviews of Kenyan Muslims and ethnic Somalis provide further evidence in support of such trends, highlighting increasing anger towards national security institutions:

> the KDF [i.e. Kenyan Defence Forces] doesn't respect our community. They are guilty of gross misconduct and human rights abuses. They are raping innocent girls. There are many families who want revenge (quoted in Villa-Vicencio, Buchanan-Clarke and Humphrey 2016: 19).

> People get executed [by security forces] and this makes the young blood boil, they want to get revenge (quoted in Nyagah, Mwangi and Attree 2017: 18).

> So and so was killed and nothing was done. No report on killed religious leaders. People are bitter especially the youth on what is happening (quoted in MUHURI 2015: 18).

At the same time, social alienation and collective insecurity among suspect groups have contributed to shaping a socio-political atmosphere increasing the resonance of Al-Shabaab's propaganda. Reports and research articles show how, rather than remaining indifferent to the politico-military developments in post-9/11 Kenya, the group has repeatedly appealed to the local Muslim population (including ethnic Somalis), seeking to capitalise on the escalation of historical fractures by framing state violence as the expression of a perpetual war against Islam and invoking violent jihad as the vehicle to achieve both vengeance against Kenyan authorities and self-determination in the face of recurring (historical) injustices (e.g., S. J. Hansen 2013; Anderson and McKnight 2015a; Anzalone 2016b).[5] The protraction of violent interactions with Kenyan forces has provided legitimacy to Al-Shabaab's narrative, matching it with the living experiences of targeted audiences. Accounts of

[5] I have analysed Al-Shabaab's propaganda and framing activity in a recently published article (which, as mentioned in the Acknowledgements, draws on some parts of this thesis); see Papale 2021.

think tanks and human rights groups highlight a growing consensus among the Kenyan Muslim population regarding the positive correlation between practices of collective punishment and support for the clandestine organisation (e.g., ICG 2014; MUHURI 2015; Wakube et al. 2017). By favouring the spread of interpretative orientations based on discrimination against the Muslim minority, state violence has generated sympathy for Al-Shabaab among aggrieved communities while increasing hostility towards national institutions (KNCHR 2016; Villa-Vicencio, Buchanan-Clarke and Humphrey 2016). As a youth leader in Garissa declares to Human Rights Watch,

> young people have started saying that if today they were given the opportunity to decide between [living under] al-Shabaab and the Kenyan military, they would choose al-Shabaab. The military doesn't usually have contact with the civilian population, so they use a lot of force. You can't even talk back to them. They don't even ask you questions (quoted in HRW 2012a: 35).

A similar perspective emerges from the words of a Muslim woman in Lamu:

> the reality is that people have some sympathy for al-Shabaab and fear the KDF. Even for me, if I had to pick between the two, I would run to al-Shabaab (quoted in Nyagah, Mwangi and Attree 2017: 14).

As expected by the proposed SMT approach, such "cognitive effects" of repression (della Porta 2013: 68) have increased the effectiveness of Al-Shabaab's mobilisation strategies in Kenya, delegitimising Kenyan authorities while turning the movement into a catalyst for quenching the thirst for revenge, obtaining justice and achieving an otherwise unachievable political change in the eyes of potential supporters (see also Mwangi 2017a, 2017c).

Accounts of Kenyans mobilised into Al-Shabaab highlight how members of suspect groups decided to join the organisation in the face of indiscriminate violence at the hand of Kenyan security units. Interviewing 95 Kenyan members of Al-Shabaab, along with 46 relatives of Kenyans associated with the group, a 2014 investigation by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) shows that, while 97 per cent of the respondents perceived the Islamic religion as under threat, 65 per cent considered the Kenyan counter-terrorism strategy as the "single most important factor" that drove them into the arms of militants, blaming Nairobi for treating all Muslims as terrorists, killing Muslims during security operations and, consequently, persecuting Islam (Botha 2014b: 20). As a Kenyan who spent a period in Al-Shabaab clarifies,

> I believe my religion is under threat because those who are guilty of terrorism and those who are not guilty are treated in the same manner by the authorities (quoted in Ndung'u, Salifu and Sigsworth 2017: 40).

Such findings are reflected in a broader study of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) exploring dynamics of terrorist recruitment on the African continent, in which one-fifth of the respondents were Kenyans mobilised into terrorism. As the UNDP final report highlights (UNDP 2017: 73), 71 per cent of the people interviewed regarded "government action", including practices of violence and abuse during counter-terrorism operations, as the factor that finally pushed them in their journey towards violent extremism. Declarations of Kenyan militants provide further evidence of the political causes of mobilisation, supporting a view of national security policies as a major driver of militancy. For example, when asked by an Al Jazeera reporter whether she would carry out a terrorist operation in Kenya if commanded to do so by Al-Shabaab's emir, a supporter of the group based inside the country replied that

> judging by how the Kenyan government is acting, if I'm given a task to do and it agrees with the teachings of Islam, then I'll do it (transcribed from Al Jazeera 2015).

In some cases of radicalisation, the killing of a Muslim cleric has been a tipping point, fostering feelings of community belonging and motivating Kenyan Muslims (including ethnic Somalis) to mobilise to avenge the perceived persecution by national authorities (e.g., K. Allen 2015; Yahya 2016). For instance, locals in Kutulo (Wajir county) estimate that Al-Shabaab recruited hundreds of people from the surrounding area in the year after a religious teacher was seen being taken by the KDF in a near village and later found dead on a road (Bearak 2019). Such consequences of the disappearance and extrajudicial killing of Muslim religious leaders have been emphasised by some Kenyan activists calling for a greater respect for human rights:

> the government is radicalizing the people…It doesn't matter if the guy [i.e. Muslim leader] is a devil or an angel. We are saying due process should be followed (quoted in Linthicum 2014).

In other circumstances, Kenyan Muslims have mobilised after personal experiences of repression. Mkutu and Opondo (2019: 13), for example, recount the case of a young Kenyan turned to Al-Shabaab after the 'disappearance' of his two brothers to gain more security, escape state violence and avenge his relatives. Other investigations show that Kenyan women have joined the organisation after episodes of police abuse and violence against loved ones (Ndung'u, Salifu and

Sigsworth 2017; The East African 2018; West 2019). Such experiences of violence and mistreatment against family members have also been reported by some Al-Shabaab's Kenyan senior operatives (e.g., Mohamed 2019). A youth leader at the Pumwani Riyadha Mosque in Nairobi, where the Muslim Youth Centre (MYC) was founded (Anzalone 2012), confirms dynamics of violent interaction with the state as a crucial determinant of radicalisation among local Muslims, emphasising the sense of hopelessness and the anger driving youths into jihad and increasing Al-Shabaab's allure in the country:

> this because they [i.e. Muslim youths] feel that they've been forgotten, they have been neglected, and they have nowhere to run. These individuals have lost total hope. They have nothing to lose. They see the state as an enemy [rather] than the protector. I have seen my neighbours disappearing, I have seen my friends being shot. What is the difference between here and Somalia? You can die here for being nothing, and you can die there for being something. The majority of persons between thirty-five and thirteen, [the] majority of them, they do feel that way (transcribed from Al Jazeera 2015).

Similar accounts are provided by a member of a civil society organisation in Nairobi, showing how episodes of indiscriminate repression against fellow Muslims in the country have often had a major impact for the process of mobilisation of local people into Al-Shabaab:

> when Muslims in Majengo [i.e. slum in Nairobi] see Muslims in North Eastern, or Muslims in Eastleigh or in other parts of the country, being persecuted, they feel bitter. Most of them are not able to control their anger, so they look for ways to vent out, and one way is to join Al-Shabaab so that they can unleash the bitterness that they have. You realise most of the Muslims from Majengo went to Somalia because of the injustices, the bitterness and frustrations that they have experienced. They have never healed from the traumas that they have experienced (quoted in Breidlid 2021: 11).

The above findings highlight how the interplay between security authorities and suspect groups has had major implications in Kenya. In line with the SMT approach to radicalisation detailed in Chapter 2, Muslim and ethnic Somali communities facing violent encounters with Kenyan authorities have become increasingly motivated to embark in collective action against the state. The exacerbation of feelings of insecurity, alienation and resentment among such communities has progressively culminated in the generation of a reservoir of potential recruits for Al-Shabaab in the Kenyan territory. Confirming the case-specific prediction formulated in relation to r → B, the next section focuses on

the way in which the propensity for mobilisation among Kenyans has concretised in practical terms, leading them to join the Somali group. To do so, the section looks at the establishment of connections between Al-Shabaab and suspect groups, providing the latter with access to channels and resources to mobilise and sustain violent contention against the state.

Indiscriminate repression and radicalisation in Kenya: enabling mobilisation

The precise number of Kenyan people mobilised into Al-Shabaab is unknown and subject to debate, with some analysts suggesting figures of nearly two thousand militants, corresponding to a quarter of the group's members (Burridge 2014; Mogire, Mkutu and Alusa 2018; Cannon and Ruto Pkalya 2019). However, most of the sources agree to consider Kenyans as the largest group of foreign fighters within Al-Shabaab (e.g., Botha 2013; Kajee 2014; AP News 2017). The organisation has gained increasing appeal among disenfranchised youths in the country, extending its tentacles even to non-Muslim areas such as the central and western counties, where some Christians have recently converted to Islam and joined the cause of jihad (e.g., Nyamori 2016; Gikandi 2019; Oudia 2020). Still, the vast majority of Al-Shabaab's supporters in Kenya have come from the capital and the Muslim- and ethnic Somali-inhabited territories. In this regard, a 2018 survey involving 190 youths and 23 community leaders from Nairobi and the counties of Isiolo, Garissa, Kwale, Kilifi and Mombasa discovers that 70 per cent of the respondents had at least one relative, close friend or neighbour engaged in violent extremism (including recruitment activities on Kenyan soil) (Miriri 2019). As shown in Chapter 3 and 4, the porosity of the Kenyan border with Somalia, along with the presence of a supportive environment dating back to Al-Qaeda's first ventures in the country, have facilitated considerably the penetration of Al-Shabaab and favoured early episodes of recruitment among local groups. Nonetheless, much of the reason why the organisation has managed to take deep roots in Kenyan society, eluding national security mechanisms while providing aggrieved communities with channels and means for mobilisation, is to be found elsewhere than in the mere overlapping of such factors. Most of the conditions for mobilisation have emerged and consolidated following dynamics of interaction among social actors in the country, therefore developing in action.

As noted in Chapter 3, even before the official affiliation with Al-Qaeda and the subsequent process of regionalisation under the guide of Ahmed Abdi Godane, Al-Shabaab had started retracing Al-Qaeda's routes in East Africa. The presence of some leading Muslim figures involved in Islamist activism in Kenya (among which the aforementioned Sheikh Aboud Rogo and Makaburi) paved the way for the establishment of links with the Somali organisation during the late 2000s (Hansen 2013; Bryden and Bahra 2019). In such a context, networks of Muslims (including ethnic Somalis) gravitating around mosques and religious groups played a significant role in facilitating the spread of

Al-Shabaab's message, allowing the penetration of the movement. Since the early 1990s, such networks (especially on the Kenyan coast) had constituted a centre of political debate and an arena of interaction for local groups propagating radical religious ideas (Mwakimako and Willis 2014; Bryden and Bahra 2019). The beginning of the war on terror and the progressive increase in tensions between the Muslim population and national security authorities contributed to turning them into a major site of contention. Indeed, benefiting from a relatively high degree of resistance to the scrutiny of national security authorities, they gradually became the hubs around which Al-Shabaab developed its initial support infrastructure in the country, merging with, and also supplanting, local Islamist groups previously associated with AQEA (ICG 2012, 2018).

Reports of the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea released between the late 2000s and the early 2010s highlight how "many Somali businesses and religious centres [in Kenya]…have links with various armed opposition groups [in Somalia] and actively recruit or raise funds for them" (UN 2008: 47), raising concerns regarding the progressive formation of "indigenous networks engaged in recruitment, radicalization and resource mobilization on behalf of Al-Shabaab in Kenya" (UN 2011: 24). Some mosques on the Kenyan coast, such as the Masjid Musa and Sakina mosques in Mombasa, were allegedly used for terrorist activities, storing weapons and propaganda items for militants (e.g., Al Jazeera 2014c; BBC 2014b; Van Metre 2016). Even mosques in the central and north-eastern territories were used by Al-Shabaab to achieve mobilisation of Muslims in the region (e.g., Wikileaks 2009e; Mayoyo 2014).

Taking advantage of the difficulties of Kenyan authorities in penetrating the social fabric of local religious institutions and collecting security information, the group tended to follow regular patterns of action during encounters with potential adherents in local mosques. Individuals regarded as more responsive to radical propaganda were generally approached after sermons and then gradually isolated from their peers, sometimes being invited to participate in discussions and seminars in smaller groups (Botha 2014a; Mwakimako and Willis 2014). As Kenyans mobilised into Al-Shabaab recall,

> it was after afternoon prayers. We went to a corner of the mosque [in Mandera] where we could talk quietly (quoted in Maclean, Khamis and Ahmed 2012).

> One day while we were at the Majengo Mosque [in Nairobi], some people approached us and invited us to a meeting…At the time, the mosque was still under construction so we held the meeting in one of the old rooms on the ground floor. We were nine of us…At the mosque, we were introduced to someone who would turn out to be a leader of Al-Shabaab in the country (quoted in Komu 2020).

Once persuaded to join the cause, aspiring members were instructed on how to reach the territories under Al-Shabaab's control and who to rely on to be transported during the different stages of the journey, sometimes being escorted directly to the group's training camps by exploiting the high porosity of the Kenyan border with Somalia (see e.g., P. Taylor 2013; Komu 2020). Investigations show how, in several circumstances, militants relied on intermediaries to smuggle Kenyan supporters across the frontier, using hotels in Eastleigh to traffic false documents and host people before their departure (UN 2011; Maruf and Joseph 2018).

Until the early 2010s, the Pumwani Riyadha Mosque in Nairobi was one of the major arenas of interaction for the radical milieu in Kenya, disseminating Al-Shabaab's propaganda and organising several events in support of jihad (UN 2011; Anzalone 2012; ICG 2012). As mentioned in Chapter 3, the MYC, which was founded at the mosque in 2008 (Anzalone 2012), rapidly turned into a operational base for Al-Shabaab in the Kenyan territory, developing strong connections in other areas of the country (such as Mombasa and Garissa) and engaging in recruitment for the Somali group (Nzes 2014). In 2012, when the MYC officially allied with Al-Shabaab and changed name in Al-Hijra, the group's leader, Ahmed Iman Ali (who was a student of Sheikh Aboud Rogo in Mombasa), was appointed coordinator of Al-Shabaab's activities in Kenya (ICG 2012). In the same period, however, the group started suffering several setbacks at the hand of Kenyan security forces, as part of the intensification of Kenya's heavy-handed security measures for the escalation of Al-Shabaab's attacks. Increasing raids on suspicious mosques and religious centres, along with the unexplained killings of Al-Hijra's cadres and ideologues (including Rogo and Makaburi), forced several militants and their affiliates to escape to Al-Shabaab's strongholds in Somalia or disperse throughout Kenya and Tanzania, abandoning their traditional centres of activity in Kenya's major cities (IGAD 2016: 4; see also Ahmed 2019; Bryden and Bahra 2019).

However, rather than dismantling the terrorist support infrastructure in the country, the tightening up of Kenyan counter-terrorism policies, with the consequent intensification of indiscriminate repression, has had considerable repercussions on national security. As expected by the proposed SMT approach to radicalisation, repressive security measures have been followed by the generation of socio-political conditions enabling members of suspect groups facing dynamics of violent interaction with national authorities to concretise their emerging propensity for mobilisation, gaining access to channels and resources to engage in collective action against the state.

While creating incentives to mobilise, the increase in violent encounters between Kenyan forces and suspect groups, along with the resulting erosion of trust in the state-citizen relations discussed in the previous section, have pushed the Muslim and ethnic Somali minority to gradually close in on

itself, "increas[ing] the relevance of informal networks to people's survival strategies" (International Alert/KMYA 2016: 27). Investigations show how, fearing practice of indiscriminate repression, Muslims and ethnic Somalis have often retreated into their own communities, seeking to minimise contacts with Kenyan forces. For example, the aforementioned study of IPOA on Operation Usalama Watch highlights that, as a result of the police raid in Nairobi, "members of the…[ethnic Somali] community would flee and lock themselves up in houses whenever they sighted Police vehicles or officers" (IPOA 2014: 7). Interviewed by Amnesty International, a local woman declares how, due to the high risk to personal safety associated with the interaction with national forces, she decided to "imprison" herself in her house for a period after the operation (AI 2014: 11). Similar episodes have been reported throughout the country. As a local in Garissa observes,

> at night…this town is just like Mogadishu…Mogadishu is better than Garissa…because the town is deserted…Sixty per cent [of local ethnic Somali people] do not have ID cards…the happening of these issue [i.e. insecurity and Al-Shabaab's killings]…has put youths in a bad situation…if you do not have ID cards you are [treated by the security forces] like an [Al-Shabaab's] ally…it has led to so many youth arrested, some of them being taken…where we do not know (transcribed from Al Jazeera 2013b).

Along these lines, a youth in Wajir emphasises that, as a consequence of indiscriminate repression against locals,

> people fear the military. If they see a military car coming, everybody locks the doors (quoted in HRW 2012a: 35).

Such dynamics have contributed to deteriorating national security in two ways: firstly, by reducing community support to national security authorities and secondly, by disincentivising discussion on terrorism at a community level. Being frightened by the reaction of counter-terrorism forces, aggrieved communities have been increasingly reluctant to report cases of recruitment of Kenyan youths into Al-Shabaab or provide information regarding the activities of the group in the country (e.g., K. Allen 2015; Van Metre 2016; BBC 2017; Nyagah, Mwangi and Attree 2017; Botha and Abdile 2020). In several circumstances, for example, "fear of victimisation and harassment at the hands of the police" has held Muslim women back from reporting the disappearance of their partners, given that many who have done so have been subjected to regular interrogations (Ndung'u, Salifu and Sigsworth 2017: 46). A survey of local people in Isiolo county confirms such a trend, showing how even parents reporting the disappearance of their children have been treated like potential

terrorists and subjected to mistreatment by national forces (Mkutu et al. 2018: 104). Interviews and focus group discussions on counter-terrorism provide further evidence regarding the concerns of Kenyan people:

> Muslims are presumed to be terrorists by security officers. Me being a Muslim will be the first one to be held responsible when I report such a case to police [coming forward with information] (quoted in Botha and Abdile 2020: 29).

> The police use the aspect of collective responsibility. They arrest everyone including the one forwarding the information (quoted in Botha and Abdile 2020: 79).

> The security agencies are not well trained to handle any person who report information hence the reporter will be the first victim hence fear for my life (quoted in Botha and Abdile 2020: 81).

However, such concerns have tended to be neglected or overlooked by national authorities, identifying old frictions with the Kenyan state as a major cause for the lack of security cooperation among Muslim and ethnic Somali communities. As the Kenyan police spokesman replies when asked why security forces are still struggling to capture Al-Shabaab's militants operating in the country,

> it is because of the fact that the [ethnic Somali] community does not open up…these are people from one community. Whether you are Somali from Kenya or you are Somali from Somalia, these are brothers (transcribed from Al Jazeera 2013b).

Fearing to be associated with militants and their supporters by dealing openly with sensitive topics, Kenyan communities have also shied away from public debates on Al-Shabaab and radicalisation. For example, an investigation shows how, being afraid to draw police attention, people in Isiolo have been reluctant to discuss cases of mobilisation among local youths (Miriri 2019). Discussion has increasingly gone underground, developing within small networks of friends and relatives providing aggrieved groups with arenas of free speech circumventing repressive Kenyan policies (Villa-Vicencio, Buchanan-Clarke and Humphrey 2016). On the one hand, this has contributed to complicating counter-terrorism investigations, increasing the impermeability of Muslim and ethnic Somali communities to national security authorities (see Burridge 2014). In parallel, it has weakened people's ability to coordinate and manage security at the local level, depriving communities with crucial information on terrorist activities while disempowering religious

leaders who could discourage mobilisation and spread messages of peace (Van Metre 2016). A local in Eastleigh complains:

> we know sleeper cells exist in our community, but we have no idea where they are (quoted in Van Metre 2016: 30).

Such a condition has been exacerbated by the intensification of Al-Shabaab's campaign against Kenyan Muslims opposing jihad. Since the early 2010s, the group has stepped up its incursions in Kenya, intimidating locals into not cooperating with Kenyan security agencies and punishing individuals regarded as 'betrayers' (Ndzovu 2017b; see also Garvelink 2012; UN 2015). In a notable case, the chairman of the Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK), who lined up against jihadism, was killed by gunmen in Mombasa while returning home from a local mosque (Anderson and McKnight 2015a). Targeted communities have increasingly felt backed into a corner, caught between Al-Shabaab's violence and the retaliatory measures of Kenyan security authorities. This has reinforced the climate of fear and mistrust in the country, further discouraging public engagement with counter-terrorism issues. As a journalist in Lamu explains,

> people are scared about al-Shabaab sympathisers being among us - so we are careful on what we say […] Both al-Shabaab and the security forces are the reasons for not writing stories on these issues – but the security forces are worse (quoted in Nyagah, Mwangi and Attree 2017: 14).

The Kenyan government has sought to address such problems by launching the Nyumba Kumi Initiative; a community policy strategy that foresees the establishment of a community leader every ten households to monitor potential security threats. However, despite achieving some positive results, the initiative has suffered from operational difficulties (e.g., Mkutu et al. 2018; Diphoorn, van Stapele and Kimari 2019), sometimes also clashing with the diffidence of Muslims and ethnic Somalis (International Alert/KMYA 2016; Breidlid 2021). As an ATPU officer admits when discussing the condition of Kenyan women in the country, the threat posed by Al-Shabaab and the Kenyan police has continued to represent a major obstacle towards the exchange of information between national authorities and aggrieved communities:

> some women are caught between a rock and a hard place…When al-Shabaab warns them, they fear the group and cannot talk. No one will protect the women if the information is leaked. Fear [of the police] prevents the disclosure of information especially when police are corrupt and take money from people (quoted in Ndung'u, Salifu and Sigsworth 2017: 32).

The growing disconnect between Muslim and ethnic Somali communities and Kenyan authorities has contributed to increasing the resilience of Al-Shabaab in the country, enabling militants to circumvent the counter-terrorism system while forging ties with suspect groups. Facing the increase in surveillance and the intensification of heavy-handed security measures by Kenyan authorities, Al-Shabaab has reduced traditional recruitment efforts in Kenya's mosques. However, far from being erased, dynamics of radicalisation have been pushed further underground. The organisation, along with its Kenyan affiliates, have exploited divisions in the country to gain freedom of movement among disenfranchised groups, adopting a more flexible and decentralised network structure to operate from the shadows while capitalising on increasing frictions among Kenyan actors (see IGAD 2016). Investigations show how militants have infiltrated the social space of local communities in Nairobi's slums as well as in institutions of higher learning, where a number of university students have mobilised into Al-Shabaab's ranks (BBC 2014c; Burridge 2014; Merab 2015; West 2016). In parallel, more secure venues such as madrassas and private houses, along with social media platforms, have been used for terrorist propaganda and the establishment of contacts with potential adherents (ICG 2012; Villa-Vicencio, Buchanan-Clarke and Humphrey 2016). As a security source highlights in an interview for a major Kenyan newspaper,

> the cells are currently active…Only that the recruiters have changed tack…(quoted in Ahmed 2019).

In most cases, emerging links between Al-Shabaab and Muslim and ethnic Somali communities have been constructed around the role of "brokers" (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001: 142) such as friends, teachers, religious figures and family members, providing militants with access to local networks (Speckhard and Shajkovci 2019). Reports show that friends have generally been the main actor connecting Kenyans to the organisation (Botha 2014b; UNDP 2017). Feelings of trust and personal bonds characterising the friendship relationships between the group's intermediaries and potential recruits have eased the penetration of Al-Shabaab and the negotiation of its interpretative orientations at the periphery of the Kenyan society, also alleviating the impact caused by the rupture of previous social ties during and after the process of mobilisation (Botha 2014b). At the same time, the lack of trust and communication between national authorities and aggrieved communities, along with the increasing difficulties of the latter in exercising control over their own security, have contributed to keeping much of such dynamics underground.

Al-Shabaab has also relied increasingly on women as a source of connections with Kenyan suspect groups. Due to their alleged "influence on the private sphere" of individuals within the household (Villa-Vicencio, Buchanan-Clarke and Humphrey 2016: 25) and their unsuspicious profile in the eyes of security forces, the group's female supporters have mostly operated in non-combative roles, "provid[ing] the 'invisible infrastructure' for al-Shabaab by enabling, supporting and facilitating violent extremism through a number of…activities" (Ndung'u, Salifu and Sigsworth 2017: 30-31), including recruiting Kenyan militants, providing mujahideen with safe refuge before and after operations in the country, delivering weapons and gathering intelligence on the ground (Mukinda 2015; Al Jazeera 2018; Badurdeen 2018b; The East African 2018; Achuka 2019; ICG 2019; West 2019). As regards the latter task, recent studies provide evidence on the use of women as spies by Al-Shabaab. Information networks among sex workers in Nairobi slums, often developed as a form of personal defence and safeguard in the face of repeated dynamics of violent interaction with police forces, have been exploited by militants to buy information disclosed by corrupt agents (Petrich 2018; Petrich and Donnelly 2019). Even in this case, the disconnect between segments of the Kenyan population and the security forces has provided Al-Shabaab with a window of opportunity to increase operations. In some circumstances, the group's female agents have even been sent to specific hot spots to obtain intelligence by local forces and set the ground for future attacks. As an officer of the General Services Unit (GSU) explains,

> they [i.e. Al-Shabaab's female agents] always target villages that closely border our camps. They have tried establishing a close relationship with us while others are even willing to become lovers of some officers (quoted in Kazungu 2017).

Besides relying on the figure of local intermediaries, militants have also taken advantage of increasing mistrust between Muslim communities and Kenyan security authorities to gain direct access to local networks. In recent years, Al-Shabaab has begun to occupy Muslim-majority villages on the Kenyan coast for hours, seeking to forge ties with the local population and gain proselytes by promoting peaceful interaction, delivering sermons and preaching about militancy (Chome 2017; West 2018; Speckhard and Shajkovci 2019). Fear of security authorities, along with increasing sympathy towards the organisation among some members of local communities (see e.g., Nyagah, Mwangi and Attree 2017), have often hampered cooperation with the Kenyan forces, undermining investigations in the area. As the commander of Operation Linda Boni, implemented by Nairobi to oust Al-Shabaab's fighters from the Boni forest (Kenyan coast), complains,

> every time our officers are deployed in those areas to conduct a search once an attack happens, no terrorist is found. Does it mean that these terrorists evaporate? (quoted in Kiage 2018).

In line with the SMT approach set out in Chapter 2, the progressive consolidation of connections between Al-Shabaab and Kenya has contributed to removing barriers to mobilisation, providing aspiring militants facing practices of indiscriminate repression by national security authorities with major opportunities to concretise their propensity. Indeed, the group has represented a crucial source of channels and resources for aggrieved communities to "translate individualized discontent into organized contention" against the state (Wiktorowicz 2004b: 10). Operating as a transnational organisation controlling territories outside the radar of Kenyan forces (which, due to the high porosity of the Kenyan border with Somalia, have been relatively easy to reach), Al-Shabaab has provided would-be militants with sanctuaries where to take refuge and acquire resources in the form of organisational and tactical skills, leadership, as well as supplies, to engage in collective action. Accounts of Kenyan recruits and returnees shed light on the rigid paramilitary training imposed by Al-Shabaab in Somalia, involving exercises with firearms and grenades, and even 'martial arts' (Al Jazeera 2015; UN 2018; Ahmed 2019; Komu 2020). A report of the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea provides details:

> new Al-Shabaab recruits initially receive three months of basic military training, which can be reduced to a month if there are pressures at the frontline for more troops. Thereafter, some trainees continue to take specialized courses in assembling IEDs, sniping, or guerrilla warfare (UN 2013b: 66).

Such training, along with the provision of leadership and military and technical equipment, have contributed to increasing considerably the capability of Kenyans to organise and sustain violent contention against the state, turning weak and isolated groups of potential dissidents in the country into the branch of a broader and more powerful network. As an investigation of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) points out, "since [East Africa's] regional jihadist cells and networks typically lack the tradecraft to plan and stage effective operations, returning Al-Shabaab veterans provide much-needed operational experience, expertise, and, in some cases, leadership, potentially transforming aspiration into action" (IGAD 2016: 21). Such dynamics were confirmed by Ahmed Abdi Godane as a central component of Al-Shabaab's strategy of regionalisation, aimed at destabilising East African societies by using experienced fighters who "understand their own countries vulnerabilities intimately" (quoted in Chome 2017). Chapter 3 has shown how 'Jaysh Ayman', the paramilitary unit created by Al-Shabaab's leader to expand operations in coastal Kenya,

has been composed primarily by native people who, after having received specific training in Somalia, have gone back to their home country to fight. As a senior Al-Shabaab's member emphasises when discussing the group's foreign operations arm,

> we are training Muslims boys from Kenya who had been oppressed there, and we return them back there (quoted in Mubarak 2014).

However, besides Jaysh Ayman's fighters, even Kenyan-based supporters and members of cells and groups such as Al-Hijra have "continued to travel back and forth to Somalia" to "receiv[e] training and instructions before returning to Kenya to engage in operations" (IGAD 2016: 4). In line with what was argued in Chapter 2, the availability of such "*resources for violence*" (della Porta 2009: 19, emphasis in original) has reportedly played a major role in reducing the "asymmetry of force" (Salehyan 2011: 7) in the country, providing Al-Hijra operatives with the capacity to remain operational in the face of the security crackdown implemented by Nairobi and gain even more autonomy to conduct clandestine operations (Bryden and Bahra 2019). As a security analyst argues when examining the rise in terrorist violence in Kenya,

> partly what we are seeing now is blowback…The people who spent time in Somalia are now coming back to use that experience in their country (quoted in Raghavan and Lynch 2013).

The reduction of Al-Hijra's vulnerability, in turn, has increased its ability to forge and strengthen connections between Al-Shabaab and Kenyan suspect groups, acting as a bridge for the exchange of support and resources. Recovering from the decapitation and dispersion of its leadership, the organisation has managed to gain access to the Kenyan prison system to recruit militants (especially among vulnerable people on trial for terrorism-related crimes, see IGAD 2016: 28) and plot new attacks in the country (Kelley 2016; Ndung'u 2016; Bryden and Bahra 2019). In 2018, Al-Hijra was officially designated by the US as a terrorist organisation, highlighting its major role in providing Al-Shabaab with new members and facilitating the travel of mobilised Kenyans to Somalia (Kelley 2018).

An alarming number of Kenyans have reportedly turned to Al-Shabaab since the early 2010s and the intensification of Kenya's heavy-handed security measures (e.g., K. Allen 2015; UN 2015; Jebet 2016; M. Odhiambo 2018; Bearak 2019; Miriri 2019). As seen above, the presence of a receptive environment for Somali militants among Kenyan Islamist networks has played a role in favouring Al-Shabaab's penetration and setting in motion initial processes of mobilisation. The porosity of the

Kenyan border with Somalia has been another component of such processes, allowing the free movement of militants and their supporters from and to the country. Still, more than by those factors, the mobilisation of Kenyans into Al-Shabaab has been enabled by conditions that have developed and consolidated following dynamics of interaction among social actors. It is after such dynamics that Al-Shabaab's message has gained increasing resonance, Kenyan security forces' monitoring capabilities have been weakened and aggrieved communities have turned into a fertile environment for the establishment of channels of mobilisation. Ultimately, it is such dynamics that will shape the future of terrorism in the country. Indeed, whether relying on more sophisticated border control and counter-terrorism intelligence can improve Nairobi's capacity to detect jihadist cells and foil their plots (for example, see UN 2018), such initiatives risk being insufficient if not flanked by more targeted policies increasing community support in the fight against terror. Kenya will hardly erase terrorism just by seeking to isolate vulnerable groups from potential providers of resources for violence when its counter-terrorism measures continue to produce and reproduce conditions (and incentives) for mobilisation. As a supporter of Al-Shabaab based inside the country declares when discussing Kenyan government's attempts to dismantle terrorist networks by building a wall at the border with Somalia,

> let them build a wall…Actually we're praying for them to build the wall. Let's see if the fighting will end. Let them build a wall. We're already inside Kenya (transcribed from Al Jazeera 2015).

Conclusions

This chapter has focused on Step 3 (r → B) of the causal mechanism discussed in Chapter 2, according to which practices of indiscriminate repression carried out by US African partners increase radicalisation on the ground. The chapter has tested r → B in the case study by searching for its expected manifestations: Kenyan Muslim and ethnic Somali communities becoming prone to mobilising into Al-Shabaab, and managing to do so, in the face of indiscriminate repression.

The chapter has provided extensive evidence in support of the above forecast, showing how, in line with what expected by the SMT approach set out in Chapter 2, the use of indiscriminate repression has been accompanied by an increase in the motivation of targeted communities to mobilise into Al-Shabaab, along with the generation of socio-political conditions enabling them to realise their ambition. As outlined in the methodological section of this work, such evidence constitutes a strong inferential test substantiating r → B. Indeed, on the one hand, it has a high degree of certainty, as r → B could not occur without groups facing indiscriminate repression becoming motivated to mobilise into terrorism and managing to do so. At the same time, the evidence provided

has a high degree of uniqueness, as the increasing propensity to mobilise among Muslims and ethnic Somalis facing indiscriminate repression, along with the concretisation of such a propensity, could hardly have plausible explanations other than the negative effects that indiscriminate repression has on radicalisation (r → B). This has been further confirmed in the analysis. As shown, dynamics of violent interaction between the Kenyan state and the ethnic Somali and Muslim minority have contributed to widening historical fault lines in the country, demarcating rigid boundaries isolating suspect groups from the rest of the population and exacerbating feelings of insecurity, frustration and social alienation. This has had major effects in terms of national security, fuelling the propensity of suspect groups to rebel and take revenge against the state while increasing Al-Shabaab's appeal. In parallel, dynamics of violent interaction have also played a major role in shaping conducive conditions allowing mobilisation to unfold. Indeed, fuelling fear and mistrust towards national institutions, encounters with repressive authorities have caused a gradual disconnect between Muslim and ethnic Somali communities and the state, increasing Al-Shabaab's capability to navigate Kenyan society and penetrate the social space of suspect groups. Facing Kenya's crackdown on mosques following the intensification of terrorist attacks in the early 2010s, the organisation has adapted its network structure, exploiting social divisions to circumvent national security measures while providing potential supporters with channels and means to mobilise. Emerging connections between Al-Shabaab and Kenyan communities have enabled aspiring militants facing indiscriminate repression to gain access to sanctuaries outside the radar of Kenyan authorities as well as resources to engage in collective action and sustain contention against the state.

Kenya's counter-terrorism measures based on indiscriminate repression have fuelled the process of radicalisation in the country, contributing to shaping militancy and its horizons in the East African region. The validation of Step 3 of the causal mechanism in the case study finally validates the mechanism in its entirety, highlighting the link connecting post-9/11 US security policies and radicalisation in Kenya. Such a link, along with its theoretical and empirical implications, will be discussed in the next chapter, which draws the conclusions of this study.

Conclusions

Each chapter of the thesis has provided a piece of the puzzle enabling this study to answer the research question, exploring whether and how post-9/11 US security policies have had a negative impact on radicalisation in Africa. The first chapters have assessed the state of the art in the related literature, introducing the conceptual, methodological and theoretical tools that have been used to conduct the analysis. Then, the last three chapters have focused on exploring the hypothesised causal mechanism in the case study. This chapter sets out the conclusions of the work, summarising its findings and discussing its contribution.

The chapter is composed of three sections.

The first section presents the research findings. It starts by briefly summing up the structure of the research, reviewing the procedure that has been taken to answer the research question and discussing its rationale. Then, the section outlines how each of the three steps composing the causal mechanism validates the hypothesised link between post-9/11 US security policies and the increase in radicalisation in the case of Kenya.

The second section focuses on the empirical implications of the research, detailing its contribution to the literature on post-9/11 US security policies and radicalisation in Kenya while providing recommendations to stakeholders. The section highlights how harsh counter-terrorism measures have contributed to deteriorating national security in Kenya, calling for a recalibration of both Nairobi's and Washington's security efforts on the ground so as to fight the threat posed by Al-Shabaab and Al-Qaeda without losing local support and fuelling dynamics of mobilisation into Islamist terrorism.

The final section discusses how the evidence provided in the thesis validates the research hypothesis with its underlying theoretical framework, filling a longstanding gap in the literature by shedding light on the dynamics through which post-9/11 US security policies are connected to an increase in radicalisation in African states. In so doing, the section outlines the implications that the theoretical framework has for US policy makers and for the study of US initiatives in Africa.

Research findings

This thesis has focused on US security efforts and the emergence of terrorism in Africa during the last two decades, investigating whether and how post-9/11 US security policies have had a negative impact on radicalisation in African states. Relying on a critical theory-inspired research orientation,

the study has placed the emphasis on the socio-political environment of African states receiving Washington's support as a crucial link between US initiatives and radicalisation on the ground, pointing to dynamics of interaction between local authorities and the population as a major dimension affecting the process of mobilisation to political violence. Through a deductive approach, an interdisciplinary framework has been set up to capture the interaction between US policies, African agency and the emergence of terrorism. Incorporating analytical elements from multiple theoretical traditions, such a framework has been developed around a three-step causal mechanism hypothesised to connect the subjects of study. The mechanism represents the conceptualisation of the research hypothesis according to which, by reflecting a strategy of remote warfare in contexts characterised by the threat of terrorism and the use of indiscriminate repression against suspect groups by local security authorities, post-9/11 US security policies have had a negative impact on radicalisation in African states.

To test the hypothesis, the research has been designed as a qualitative case study, exploring the case of post-9/11 US security policies in Kenya through a theory testing process-tracing method. Such a method has allowed to identify causal forces in action by translating each of the steps of the mechanism into case-specific predictions of their observable manifestations. The relatively high degree of uniqueness and certainty characterising the predictions formulated has meant that the evidence found in their favour has provided strong tests for causal inference, substantiating the related steps of the mechanism (see Van Evera 1997; Beach and Pedersen 2013).

Building on research on remote warfare, Step 1 (A → q) of the mechanism has hypothesised that, in African states characterised by the threat of terrorism (scope condition 1 [C1]), post-9/11 US security policies lead to the establishment of a partnership relationship within the framework of remote warfare. This step has been corroborated in the case study by providing evidence of its expected manifestations: the US providing security assistance to Kenya to fight Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab while keeping a low military presence on the ground. As shown in Chapter 4, in the last two decades, the US has increased security efforts in Kenya significantly, providing national authorities with growing amounts of indirect support, including counter-terrorism training and equipment to security forces, to fight local terrorism. In so doing, however, Washington has limited its military presence in the country to a few dozen soldiers, relying on Nairobi as a surrogate to project its military power on the ground.

Building on research on security assistance and the role of agency, Step 2 (q → r) of the mechanism has hypothesised that, in contexts characterised by the use of harsh security measures based on indiscriminate repression against suspect groups (scope condition 2 [C2]), the partnership relationship with the US means that local authorities gain increasing resources and room for

manoeuvre to implement such measures. This step has been substantiated in the case study by providing extensive evidence in support of its case-specific prediction: Kenya managing to use US security assistance to implement indiscriminate repression against suspect Muslim and ethnic Somali communities. As illustrated in Chapter 5, Kenyan security authorities benefiting from US assistance have been involved in practices of indiscriminate repression against such communities, who have been scapegoated for the escalation of terrorism in the country. Still, despite the recommendations and the pressure exercised by US policy makers, two main aspects underlying the US strategy in the country have allowed Kenyan authorities to avoid sanctions and continue abusing assistance. Firstly, the increasing remoteness between the US and its surrogate, which has jeopardised US oversight capabilities, hampering the enforcement of legal provisions regulating the allocation of aid to repressive security units. Secondly, the generation of a moral hazard, in that local security authorities have exploited the role of Kenya as a frontline actor within the post-9/11 US security framework and the reluctance of Washington to fight the local terrorist threat by deploying troops on the ground to disregard US demands while welcoming increasing assistance.

Building on research on Social Movement Theory (SMT), Step 3 (r → B) of the mechanism has hypothesised that indiscriminate repression implemented by US African partners increases radicalisation on the ground. Even this final step has been validated in the case study by providing strong evidence supporting its case-specific prediction: Kenyan Muslim and ethnic Somali communities becoming prone to mobilising into Al-Shabaab, and managing to do so, in the face of indiscriminate repression. Chapter 6 has shown how the implementation of Kenya's harsh measures based on indiscriminate repression has been accompanied by a deterioration of national security. On the one hand, Muslim and ethnic Somali communities facing dynamics of violent interaction with national security authorities have displayed an increasing propensity to engage in collective action against the state through mobilisation into Al-Shabaab. On the other, violent encounters with the state have been followed by the emergence and consolidation of conducive socio-political conditions enabling would-be militants to access channels and resources for mobilisation, therefore turning aspiration into action.

The validation of the three steps of the mechanism in the case study (A → q → r → B) has both empirical and theoretical implications.

Empirical implications

At the empirical level, the validation of the mechanism firstly highlights the need for a recalibration of the Kenyan counter-terrorism policy so as to counter Al-Shabaab without losing community support and fuelling (old) frictions undermining national security. The progressive intensification of

indiscriminate repression against suspect groups in the post-9/11 period has alienated vulnerable sections of the population, increasing social disconnect and fuelling the motivation of Muslim and ethnic Somali communities to radicalise. As the evidence provided in this work suggests, growing fear, mistrust and resentment towards national authorities among such communities have not only disempowered Kenyan forces, undermining their capabilities to penetrate the social fabric of suspect groups, but have also had major repercussions for what concerns militants' appeal in the country, shaping a socio-political terrain on which Al-Shabaab's message has increasingly taken deeper roots. The terrorist group has easily taken advantage of Nairobi's counter-terrorism measures to gain traction at the periphery of Kenyan society and establish connections enabling aspiring recruits to concretise their emerging propensity to violence.

Chapter 1 has illustrated how the literature on radicalisation in Kenya has often prioritised factors such as religious identity, ideology and socio-economic grievances as the major drivers of terrorism in the country. Such a prioritisation, as shown in Chapter 2, has reflected a broader tendency in the field of terrorism studies towards a 'de-politicisation' and 'de-contextualisation' of dynamics of radicalisation in favour of a closer focus on terrorists and their organisations. This work does not neglect the multiplicity of drivers that can trigger the process of mobilisation of Kenyans. On the contrary, while exploring the impact of local repressive measures on radicalisation, it has provided a story of how the process unfolds in the country, treating such measures as a 'contributing factor' rather than the sole driver of mobilisation (see Mahoney 2015). The thesis acknowledges that the story provided can intertwine with a multiplicity of other stories and that factors such as economic incentives or status claims can sometimes play a role in cases of individual involvement in terrorism. Setting up a universal explanation of radicalisation, as discussed in Chapter 2, has not been the aim of this research. Rather, the thesis makes a contribution to the literature on terrorism in East Africa by shifting the emphasis to dynamics of violent interaction between social actors as a major dimension of radicalisation in Kenya, bringing politics back into the analysis of terrorism in the country and shedding light on the role played by the state as an agent of mobilisation.

Stressing the negative repercussions of violent counter-terrorism in Kenya does not mean denying the importance of military and police measures in the fight against Islamist militancy in East Africa. The threat posed by Al-Shabaab cannot be tackled without relying on resolute initiatives including security interventions to counter the penetration of militants and oust the group from its hideouts. Still, terrorism cannot be defeated when the approach implemented generates continuous incentives for radicalisation. The point here is that acting effectively is not a matter of finding a balance between counter-terrorism imperatives and objectives related to human rights and social stability. Rather, effective action requires aligning Kenyan security goals to human rights standards,

countering terrorist violence while tackling endemic corruption and healing (historical) fractures among social actors. Without addressing the political drivers of Islamist militancy and promoting a genuine process of pacification between the state and suspect groups, Nairobi risks having a long road ahead before terrorist networks will be dismantled and the fight against the 'mujahedeen' will be over.

These insights have profound implications for US security efforts. Chapter 1 has shown how the scholarship on post-9/11 US security policies in Kenya has been broadly divided between studies stressing the benefits of US engagement in local security and a more critical strand of research emphasising negative repercussions of US activities in humanitarian and political terms. This work provides a contribution to such a literature by highlighting serious consequences of US policies for what concerns the rise of terrorism.

As the evidence provided in the thesis shows, the adoption of a remote warfare strategy in the post-9/11 period has allowed US policy makers to contain costs in the fight against Islamist militancy in East Africa, turning Kenya into a surrogate to achieve aligned security objectives on the ground. Nairobi has been added to regional counter-terrorism initiatives, also becoming one of the major recipients of US bilateral security assistance on the African continent. Such a strengthening of US-Kenya politico-military ties has played a role in the development of the local counter-terrorism architecture, increasing Kenyan security capabilities and contributing to the generation of specialised anti-terrorism forces. However, rather than erasing the local security threat, the US strategy has entailed serious consequences for the stability of the East African region. The establishment of a security partnership with Kenyan security authorities has enabled the latter to gain resources and room for manoeuvre to implement indiscriminate repression against suspect groups, unintentionally contributing to increasing radicalisation in the country.

More is to be done to achieve peace and security in Kenya. As illustrated in Chapter 3 and 4, while investing in the Kenyan military and counter-terrorism machine, the Bush, Obama and Trump administrations almost left unaltered the flaws that jeopardise the local security system and generate support for Islamist militants. The echo of ancient conflicts and disputes has continued to reverberate among social actors in the country, affecting local perceptions and interests. Historical fractures have widened in the face of increasing insecurity, reshaping old feelings of hostility towards Muslims and ethnic Somalis. The effects of this process have intertwined with those of endemic corruption within the Kenyan security sector, resulting in a major intensification of human rights violations. Faced with such repercussions, US policy makers have occasionally sought to engage Kenyan security authorities in long-term programmes addressing social frictions and the abuse of power in the country. Yet, so far, despite Washington's (ostensibly genuine) desire to redirect Kenyan policies and improve human

rights on the ground, most US efforts have continued to be directed towards the achievement of short-term objectives in the fight against AQEA and Al-Shabaab, conceived as a prerequisite for any other major initiative. Human rights training for Kenyan forces and military-led social and development projects in vulnerable areas of the country have been the main instruments adopted to redress the effects of remote warfare on the ground. Nonetheless, however useful, such instruments cannot deal with the systemic nature of repression in Kenya, nor can they tackle the mechanism causing the abuse of US policies. On the contrary, they have generally ended up falling prey of the very same dynamics enabling local authorities to evade US pressure while repressing suspect groups.

Regardless of whatever action may be taken by the US in the forthcoming years, the last two decades of counter-terrorism in the country highlight how any effective security strategy must start from acknowledging the limits of 'fighting threats from a distance' and, above all, the political causes of mobilisation into Islamist terrorism, identifying dynamics of violent interaction between the Kenyan state and the local Muslim and ethnic Somali communities as a critical factor determining the effect(iveness) of Washington's indirect intervention. Without such a processes of identification, and a consequent reorientation of US policies in line with a greater sensitivity towards the local socio-political context, the provision of support to Kenyan security authorities risks only adding fuel to local violence, inadvertently favouring Al-Shabaab's activities on the ground.

In line with what has been argued above in relation to Kenyan measures, the rethinking of US efforts in Kenya does not necessarily imply a withdrawal from more military and defence-oriented activities in the country. Security assistance has the potential to impact positively on the future of the war on terror in East Africa, helping Kenyan forces defeat the threat of Islamist militancy. Rather, US policy makers should make sure to build conditions fostering peace and emancipation before building local military capacity. This includes ensuring that the persistence (and expansion) of jihadism is not the expression of poor civil-military relationships generating resentment and anger among the most vulnerable sections of the population. Doing so would require greater US efforts to promote (long-term) initiatives increasing accountability among Kenyan forces and favouring reconciliation between the state and Muslim and ethnic Somali communities, even at the cost of making much of US military support conditional on their implementation. Short-term achievements in the fight against Al-Shabaab and its ally Al-Qaeda may prove to be insufficient in the long run if not flanked by concrete socio-political measures rooting out corruption and addressing inequality in the country.

Theoretical implications

As outlined in the methodological section of the introduction, a causal mechanism identified in a case study through process-tracing cannot automatically be assumed to operate in other cases composing the population of reference. This is a limitation intrinsic to case study research and the process-tracing method, which do not allow for cross-case inferences. However, such a limitation does not mean that the theoretical expectations of this work are to be discarded. On the contrary, they are valid as they have proven to apply *at least* to the case of Kenya. As discussed in the introduction, the main requirement of process-tracing "is simply that the generalization apply to the kind of case under analysis" (Mahoney 2012: 585), meaning that the theory is to be consider valid if within-case evidence suggests so, setting the ground for further research testing its ability to explain other cases in the population (see Van Evera 1997; Beach and Pedersen 2013). Along these lines, the findings of this work corroborate the research hypothesis, confirming its underlying theoretical framework as an innovative lens through which to capture the impact of post-9/11 US security policies on radicalisation in Africa. Such a lens does not make a definitive conclusion on the issue. Rather, to quote Gerring (2006: 85), it is more of a "hunch", representing a first attempt to explore a new pathway for the study of American interventionism and the emergence of terrorism on the continent. Further studies should be undertaken to build and expand this pathway, investigating the proposed causal mechanism, with its underlying theory, in African states other than Kenya.

Integrating elements from multiple and historically unconnected strands of research, the theoretical framework of this work sheds light on the way in which US security efforts intertwine with the social fabric of African states, giving voice to local communities by shifting the emphasis to local politics and pointing to dynamics of interaction among social actors as a critical dimension affecting the process of radicalisation. This shift, which has been inspired by the Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) research orientation adopted, brings politics back to the centre of the analysis, conceiving terrorism as a form of political violence and contextualising cases of mobilisation to such violence into their landscape of meaning. In so doing, it allows for a holistic study of *how* US policies unintentionally contribute to increasing radicalisation on the continent, filling a longstanding gap in the literature by tracing the steps through which such policies are connected to a deterioration of local security.

The theoretical framework suggests that post-9/11 US security policies in Africa entail major risks. Being driven by a problem-solving perspective on the war on terror that frames remote interventions based on the provision of indirect support to African security institutions as the major strategy to restore local stability, US policies overlook the way in which the status quo can play a crucial role in destabilising the system. The actions taken by African states can contribute to the rise

and expansion of terrorism, generating social frictions playing into the hands of potential agitators. Without appropriate precautions and a closer focus on the socio-political dynamics underlying the process of mobilisation, security efforts centred on African authorities as surrogates may cause blowback effects paradoxically jeopardising the achievement of the very goals that Washington aims to achieve. This is because, rather than allowing US policy makers to negotiate from a position of strength, remote warfare increases the leverage of African agents vis-à-vis their partner. As highlighted in the pages of this work, African actors are not passive agents merely executing US directives. On the contrary, they have a lot to gain from partnering with Washington and turning into frontline states in the war on terror. US counter-terrorism imperatives on the ground, along with its reluctance to intervene directly and fight enemies through the deployment of a considerable number of troops, enable African states to gain increasing resources and room for manoeuvre to evade sanctions while abusing American assistance.

Such dynamics illustrate how 'fighting threats from a distance' is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it allows the US to project its power in distant territories, containing economic costs as well as potential military and political repercussions associated with the maintenance of security divisions in the theatres of violence. On the other, however, it risks fuelling, or even triggering, socio-political dynamics on the ground dramatically increasing the costs and repercussions of US intervention.

The first chapter of the thesis has shown how, while acknowledging potential negative implications of US indirect intervention, some authors have regarded the benefits of such intervention as outweighing the costs, arguing that security partnerships are a pragmatic and effective instrument enabling Washington to pursue the fight against terrorism in otherwise difficult environments. A similar argument has often resonated throughout the words of stakeholders, identifying disengagement from key allies as entailing detrimental consequences. As argued in the previous section in relation to post-9/11 US security policies in Kenya, this research does not advocate for disengagement. A complete withdrawal of US support from Africa would hardly ameliorate the situation in vulnerable states relying on external assistance to counter militants and would probably end up generating a void to be filled by other international powers seeking to fight their way into the continent (see Allen 2018). Nor does this research call for an increased reliance on direct forms of US intervention based on the deployment of military contingents in African states. To reiterate, US assistance has the potential to do good and alter the balance of power in fragile settings, promoting local ownership while providing African actors with crucial resources to strengthen the local security system and combat terrorism. Still, underestimating the impact of local politics on the effectiveness of US indirect intervention risks doing more damage than good.

Particularly, as the theoretical framework suggests, in African states relying on indiscriminate repression against suspect groups, the provision of US indirect support to fight the local terrorist threat remotely contributes to adding fuel to local dynamics of violent interaction between the state and the population, increasing radicalisation on the ground. The decreasing ability of US policy makers to exert control over the assistance provided leaves room for the integration of such assistance within the vicious cycle of violence by African forces. Here, Social Movement Theory (SMT) captures the effects caused by the protraction of violent encounters with national authorities. Rather than enabling the state to identify potential agitators hiding among the population, discouraging suspect groups from providing support to militants, indiscriminate repression has dramatic consequences, exacerbating the problem of terrorism. Repression widens the cleavage between political institutions and targeted communities, politicising their collective identity while fuelling a desire for revenge. In so doing, it generates sympathy towards militants fighting national authorities, increasing the resonance of the terrorist message by turning mobilisation into a vehicle to engage in collective action against the state. The social disconnect that is created as a consequence of such dynamics favours the establishment of connections with militants at the margins of the society, enabling aspiring recruits to get access to channels and resources for mobilisation.

Reverting the mechanism linking post-9/11 US security policies to a deterioration of security in Africa is not just a matter of redirecting the efforts of local partners towards the achievement of common objectives, as suggested by studies reviewed in Chapter 1, or intensifying activities to professionalise African forces. Rather, as the Kenyan case shows, it requires acknowledging the more complex, historical and systemic nature of the flaws undermining counter-terrorism efforts on the ground and enabling the abuse of US policies. Local politics in African states is not made of ephemeral material that can be fixed with short-term and military-oriented forms of indirect intervention. On the contrary, it is the expression of the convergence of broader social, political and cultural processes in a given time and context, which can only be addressed and reoriented through long-term engagement. Without such an engagement, Washington risks investing efforts to merely perpetuate conditions increasing local vulnerability from terrorism, building partnerships that it cannot control and supporting actors whose agenda runs counter to emancipatory objectives on the ground. Along these lines, this work recommends US policy makers to reorient security policies in the continent so as to fight terrorism while effectively promoting processes of reconciliation and increasing accountability in socio-political environments plagued by repression and long-standing frictions between suspect groups and the state. This line of action would not only ensure that the achievement of short-term operational goals within the counter-terrorism framework is not done at the expenses of human rights and fundamental freedoms of African people, but also that pursuing

such goals do not unintentionally contribute to laying the foundations for the spread of further violence, generating never-ending conflicts on the ground.

One way this could be done is by empowering local actors supporting peace and accountability while imposing stricter conditions for the allocation of military and defence aid. This last solution would inevitably cause some turbulence, generating tensions with repressive African governments and, in some contexts, even operational difficulties during counter-terrorism operations. However, promoting the alignment of security initiatives to human rights standards is a first and crucial step to safeguard humanitarian and development conditions in local theatres while moving effectively towards the eradication of terrorism.

In any case, the reorientation of US policies cannot be initiated without a deeper understanding of the political drivers of radicalisation on the part of US policy makers. As highlighted in this work, US documents recognise that state violence and the curtailment of freedom can have potential repercussions undermining counter-terrorism efforts and favouring the resilience of terrorism. Such concerns must not take second place to the pragmatism required in the fight against Islamist violence in Africa. Instead, a greater effort has to be made to identify and understand the political conflicts underlying such violence. Treating terrorism on the continent as the expression of a political willingness generated by context-specific conditions does not mean providing jihadists with some sort of justification or overshadowing the more military imperatives of counter-terrorism. On the contrary, it entails rehumanising African militants, grasping the full spectrum of local dynamics of contention and, consequently, acquiring a greater knowledge regarding the type of intervention required, and its potential implications on the ground. In this sense, it means acting concretely to avoid the already mentioned identification of the African continent as a "key front in the next stage in the fight against terrorism" (quoted in Gardner 2020) by US officials turning into a dramatic self-fulfilling prophecy in the near future.

Besides providing guidelines to US policy makers, the theoretical insights of this work have implications for the study of US initiatives in Africa. As highlighted at the beginning of this section, the main contribution that the thesis makes to such scholarship stems from its interdisciplinary and innovative character, which allows it to explore the links between post-9/11 US security policies and radicalisation on the ground by developing a framework capturing the implication that local politics entails. For too long the study of US interventionism in the continent has remained unconnected from that of mobilisation into terrorism, prioritising a focus on the structure of the counter-terrorism architecture set up by Washington while forgetting that the effectiveness of such an architecture and, ultimately, its raison d'être, depend on its actual impact on local security. Detailed accounts of the character and opportunities of post-9/11 US security policies have advanced the academic debate on

American foreign policy in the era of global terrorism. However, they have done little to increase our knowledge about whether and how such policies contribute to the fight against terrorism in Africa. To do so, it is necessary to shift the focus of analysis, merging the study of US policies with that of African politics and radicalisation on the ground.

The (apparent) distance that separates these units of analysis should not discourage academic inquiry. On the contrary, it should stimulate more efforts to integrate analytical tools from different research fields enabling appreciation of their intertwining. In this respect, as this work shows, adopting a CTS research orientation can help accommodate multiple perspectives within a single framework and formulate hypotheses regarding the causal connections between the subjects of study. As discussed in the introduction of the thesis, data on these subjects do not abound and are often difficult to be retrieved, as most of the activities concerning (counter-)terrorism in Africa occur out of the public eye in contexts characterised by high levels of violence. Still, triangulating between different documentary sources can enable the researcher to overcome potential difficulties and mitigate the impact of access problems. Finally, the evidence collected can be organised and examined by using a process-tracing method, which allows us to measure and evaluate the hypothesised causality.

This work hopes to serve as an encouragement and a call for more holistic and interdisciplinary examinations of the impact of post-9/11 US security policies in Africa. Kenya does not stand alone among the states that in the last two decades have presented favourable conditions for the occurrence of the causal mechanism outlined in the thesis. Several other countries on the continent have experienced US military and security initiatives to fight terrorism associated with increasing levels of state violence and radicalisation. A notable example is Nigeria, where the battle against Boko Haram has escalated since the late 2000s. Still, even states in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel region receiving considerable amounts of US support have often relied on controversial measures to counter the rise of terrorism and defeat local militant groups. Studies focusing on these countries would contribute to the development and consolidation of the proposed theoretical framework, providing important touchstones and paving the way for cross-case analysis. Such studies would require conducting new operationalisations of the mechanism, so as to identify its case-specific manifestations. Most of all, however, they would require embracing a de-exceptionalised view of terrorism that acknowledges the context-dependent and political nature of Islamist violence in Africa rather than labelling it as the mere expression of an irreconcilable desire for destruction. Moving in this direction would bring major benefits to the discipline, advancing understanding of the US-led war on terror by exploring its concrete effects on the dynamics that nurture the Islamist threat on the

ground. Ultimately, it would contribute to advancing peace and security on the continent, working towards the elaboration of more effective and sustainable policies against terrorism.

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