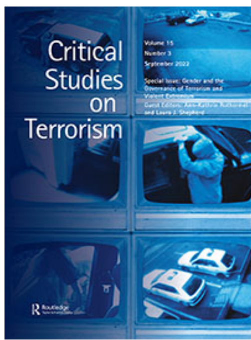

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Beyond instrumentalisation: gender and agency in the prevention of extreme violence in Kenya

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ABSTRACT
Since the adoption of UNSCR 2242, which calls for the integration of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and the Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) agendas, feminist scholars and activists have cautioned that such a move instrumentalises and securitises the WPS agenda and its objectives of gender equality and women's empowerment. Based on over 80 interviews with civil society actors involved in P/CVE in Kenya – specifically, Mombasa, Isiolo and Nairobi – this article argues that both the calls for empowerment and the critiques of instrumentalization similarly draw on racialised constructions of women's agency, or lack thereof, in the global south. Further, the instrumentalised/empowered binary is premised on a liberal feminist conceptualisation of agency only as resistance, which does not accurately capture the complex ways in which WPS actors and feminist peace activists negotiate with and work to transform security agendas. While recognising the harms caused by state and donor-led P/CVE approaches, this article centres the perspectives and experiences of men and women who work in daily violence prevention within and beyond the frame of P/CVE to theorise the agentive capacities that emerge from securitised spaces.

KEYWORDS
Gender; agency; violent extremism; counterterrorism

Introduction

In January 2019, I travelled to Kenya to meet with civil society organisations engaged in the daily work of violence prevention, both within and beyond the Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) agenda.[1] At the time, I was the lead researcher on a project for a Swiss NGO interested in understanding the impact of P/CVE on civil society organisations implementing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. The project was inspired by the call to link the WPS and P/CVE agendas, codified in United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2242 and in member states' National Action Plans (NAPs) on WPS and P/CVE.[2] Feminist peace activists and WPS actors in Switzerland and elsewhere had expressed concern regarding the potential negative ramifications resulting from the integration of an agenda historically devoted to anti-militarist objectives with one that emerged squarely from the global counterterrorism security architecture and the so-called "war on terror" (Coomaraswamy 2015; Gender Action for Peace and Security 2018; Shepherd and Ceccon n.d.). Undoubtedly, tethering feminist objectives to

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military agendas dilutes the power of feminist activism seeking to dismantle violent, imperial and patriarchal systems. As a feminist researcher long concerned with the leveraging of the rhetoric of women's rights and gender equality to advance military and security agendas (Mesok 2015, 2016), I travelled to Kenya anticipating that WPS actors would express a similar concern with and resistance to P/CVE. What I found, however, forced a reconsideration of my own conceptualisation of gendered agency within the intersection of WPS and P/CVE.

Kenya was chosen as a research site given the prevalence of donor-funded P/CVE programming focused on women and gender as well as the rise of violence classified as "terrorism" or "violent extremism."[3] It was only by coincidence that I arrived in Kenya less than two days following an attack perpetrated by al-Shabaab, the non-state armed group based in East Africa, at the Dusit D2 hotel and office complex in Westlands, an affluent area of Nairobi. Allegedly conducted in retaliation for President Trump's 2017 proclamation of Jerusalem as the rightful capital of Israel, the 19-hour siege resulted in the death of 21 civilians. Of the five assailants, the majority were Kenyans of non-Somali origin; analysts characterised this shift towards "home grown terrorism" as a new manifestation of al-Shabaab's threat in East Africa, as the organisation widens its recruitment base to include Kenyans of non-Somali descent (Bryden and Bahra 2019). Reverberations of the attack were felt in each of the research sites that I visited – the coastal regions of Kwale and Mombasa counties; the Eastern region of Isiolo; and Nairobi, including the informal settlements of Eastleigh, Majengo and Mathare.[4] Nearly all of my interlocuters expressed frustration that yet another act of extreme violence had occurred after a period of relative calm and in spite of the immense financial resources and energy being poured into counterterrorism and P/CVE. In addition, research participants frequently commented on the perpetration of violence by state security actors, which both precede and follow incidents classified as terrorism, including the harassment and marginalisation of Muslim and ethnic Somali communities by the military and police, extra-judicial killings and enforced disappearances. For many of my interlocuters, the Dusit D2 attack served as a marker of why a continued focus on preventing violent extremism was necessary but also simultaneously, why the approach represented by donor and state-led P/CVE and the counterterrorism security architecture more broadly was often incompatible with the goals of sustainable peace.

Indeed, the counterterrorism security architecture in Kenya, as elsewhere, has expanded beyond the "hard," reactive security approaches of military and police to include the civilian-focused, "soft" and supposedly preventative strategies of P/CVE, strategies which mirror counterinsurgency tactics of engaging populations to "win hearts and minds" and discourage individuals from joining or supporting violent extremist organisations. Shifting the global war on terror beyond the formal security sectors of military and police, P/CVE relies on shaping civilians into self-governing, self-policing security actors tasked with the responsibility of preventing themselves and their communities from engaging in violence (Brown 2020; Kienscherf 2016). This shift depends, in part, on mobilising the gendered, affective and relational labour of women towards the early detection and disruption of radicalisation that leads to violent extremism. In this "maternalist logic," women, who are almost always imagined to be mothers within P/CVE policy and programming, are identified as an "untapped resource" who can significantly contribute to counterterrorism objectives (Brown 2013; Winterbotham 2018).

The leveraging of women's relational, affective labour to meet state and international security objectives risks essentialising women as universally knowable, peaceful and maternal subjects and further, relegates women's participation to the private rather than the political sphere, pushing women further outside of the "true" work of peace and security. In addition, the call to mobilise women for P/CVE is couched in the language of "women's empowerment" and "gender equality"; the neoliberal logic of P/CVE focuses on empowering or building the capacity of women to act as agents of detection within their homes and communities rather than addressing structural, systemic inequalities and violences that make both men and women susceptible to radicalising towards violent extremism. Overall, for scholars and activists critical of the integration of WPS and P/CVE, the call for women to actively participate as agents working to prevent violent extremism amounts to the instrumentalisation both of women's gendered labour and the instrumentalisation of the feminist rhetoric of women's rights and gender equality (Huckerby 2015; Ní Aoláin 2016; Heathcote 2018).

The tension between empowerment and instrumentalisation has emerged as a central binary shaping the debates around women, gender and P/CVE. Yet, such debates are often limited to discursive analysis of policy and lacking in ethnographic field research. In order to attend to the nuances of gendered P/CVE in practice and to complicate the empowered/instrumentalised binary, the research conducted for this article was enacted through feminist ethnographic methods, which insists on context-specific, differentiated analysis and rejects presumptions of "women" as a universally coherent identity. Such a method is particularly important for research on women's agency within WPS in the global south, where women are often constructed as either passive recipients or victims, and rarely as diversely situated political subjects in their own right (Pratt 2013).

Importantly, recent ethnographic research has begun to dispel assumptions about women's agency or lack thereof within P/CVE, rejecting homogenised and racialised constructions (Chikodiri and Ezeibe 2019; Aroussi 2021; Pearson 2020), while also differentiating between an analysis of P/CVE policy and P/CVE practice (Basarudin and Shaikh 2020). For instance, in Basarudin and Shaikh's analysis of P/CVE efforts in Southern California, they offer the concept of convergence – posited as distinct from "cooptation, collusion, or instrumentalisation" – as a useful theoretical framework to make sense of Muslim women's engagement with P/CVE (2020, 127). Basarudin and Shaikh insist that both can be true: women's empowerment discourse can be co-opted for imperial agendas *and* Muslim women can exert agency vis-à-vis their interaction and negotiation with P/CVE. Similarly, Elizabeth Pearson's (2020) study of Muslim women's participation in *Prevent*, the heavily criticised UK CVE programme, refutes the idea that women's engagement with CVE is only ever legible through narratives of victimisation or as representing the imposition of unidirectional, top-down power. Indeed, as this body of research makes clear, Muslim women's engagement with P/CVE is more than mere victimisation or instrumentalisation: women can and do exert agency within and against oppressive security regimes.

Building on this recent ethnographic work, this article analyses interviews and focus group discussions with over 80 research interlocutors, including human rights activists, women's civil society actors, organisations and networks, religious leaders and peacebuilders in Kenya.[5] Foregrounding the actual experiences of individuals and organisations working at the intersection of WPS and P/CVE, narratives which are often lost in critiques

of instrumentalisation, I explore the particularly racialised and gendered construct of liberal agency that governs both calls for women's empowerment within P/CVE policy *and* critiques of instrumentalisation made by feminist scholars and activists. Here, the work of postcolonial feminist theory, and in particular ethnographic accounts of agency in the practice and politics of Muslim women, is relevant for the ways in which it exposes the limits of a liberal feminist conceptualisation of agency as predicated on a binary of oppression and resistance (Abu-Lughod 1990; Mahmood 2005; Deeb 2006).

In this article, I draw on Saba Mahmood's theory of agency as "not simply a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that specific relations of *subordination* create and enable" (2005, 18, emphasis in original). Indeed, as Mahmood and other postcolonial feminist scholars argue, assuming that agency is only ever about resistance is a particularly liberal and Western conceptualisation that should not be read onto all women everywhere; to do so erases iterations or manifestations of agency that exist beyond a liberal feminist imagination. To assume that women who engage with P/CVE are always already instrumentalised is to project a racialised conceptualisation of liberal agency which reproduces colonial tropes of Muslim women's passivity and oppression, rendering illegible any acts of agency that do not appear as direct or overt resistance.

Ultimately, neither the framework of empowerment nor instrumentalisation adequately accounts for the lived and nuanced experiences of both men and women enacting the daily work of violence prevention within and beyond the P/CVE agenda. While the critiques of the securitisation and instrumentalisation of the WPS agenda, the rhetoric of women's rights, and women's affective labour are important, such critiques are limited in their ability to account for agentive capacities beyond resistance to state security, as well as how the P/CVE agenda might actually enable, rather than constrain, such agency.

To this end, the article will first analyse the gendered and racialised constructions of agency that underwrite the calls for women's empowerment, arguing that such constructions are also present in the critiques of instrumentalisation. The following section explores how feminist peace activists and WPS actors articulate the necessity of engaging with P/CVE, arguing that such engagement is not reducible to instrumentalisation or empowerment, but rather is better defined as strategic negotiation enacted to harness the funding and power available within the P/CVE space. The final section analyzes the role of mothers and mothering as an example of why the empowered/instrumentalised binary is insufficient for capturing the modalities of agency that exist beyond a liberal feminist framing of agency only as resistance; women's performance of the normative role of mothering is a site of affective agency that holds enormous potential for the prevention of violence, particularly for the ways that it insists on the humanity of individuals involved in both the prevention and perpetration of violence. Such agency is lost within a framing of women as only ever empowered or instrumentalised.

Women's empowerment, women's instrumentalisation: gender, race, and liberal agency

Over the last five years there has been a significant rise in attention to the gendered dimensions of violent extremism and its prevention, owing largely to the adoption of UNSCR 2242 in 2015 and the 2016 UN Secretary-General's "Plan of Action to Prevent

Violent Extremism," both of which call for the promotion of women's empowerment and the advancement of gender equality in approaches to countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism. The focus on women and gender within P/CVE and counterterrorism was seen by some as long overdue, given the harms caused by the gender-blind counterterrorism measures enacted since the beginning of the war on terror (Huckerby and Fakih 2011). Others argued that UNSCR 2242 represented an important shift in the Security Council's approach to gender in peace and security, as it expanded an understanding of women's participation, highlighting the agency of women and women's organisations in violence prevention and moving beyond the construction of women as victims (Fink, Zeiger, and Bhulai 2016; Heathcote 2018). Whereas many view the integration of WPS and P/CVE as potentially empowering for women, as it provides the legitimacy through which women can claim a role in the design and implementation of security approaches, others argue that such a move securitises and instrumentalises both women and WPS objectives in the pursuit of state security (Brown 2013; Coomaraswamy 2015; Ní Aoláin 2016; Giscard d'Estaing 2017; LSE Centre for Peace and Security 2017; Winterbotham and Pearson 2017; Gender Action for Peace and Security 2018; Brown 2020). While such critiques importantly caution against the risks posed by tethering feminist objectives to security agendas, they also risk reproducing racialised and gendered tropes which underwrite the call for women's empowerment, in which women in the global south are conceptualised as lacking in agency, voice and power.

The integration of the WPS and P/CVE agendas is founded, in part, on the belief that women's empowerment and gender equality are in and of themselves bulwarks against violent extremism and terrorism. Within international development and security discourse, the term "women's empowerment" largely refers to the processes by which women gain power, through increased access to education or healthcare, greater political or economic participation, but with a simultaneous focus on transformations in self-understanding and conduct, including an individual's sense of self-worth and independence. For instance, USAID recently defined "women's empowerment" as

> the state in which women have the ability to act freely in society, exercise their rights equally to that of men, and fulfil their potential as equal members of society, such as to determine their life outcomes, assume leadership roles, and influence decision-making in households, communities, and societies. (USAID 2020, 10).

Women's empowerment can therefore be seen as the precondition for and outcome of legally granted equality, where women's individual attitudes, beliefs and emotions are critical, and include "all those processes where women take control and ownership over their lives" (Strandberg 2001, 4).

Within the context of P/CVE, women's empowerment is also about both increasing the power of individual women and the broader context of gender equality. For instance, UNSCR 2242 calls on Member States to

> ensure the participation and leadership of women and women's organizations in developing strategies to counter terrorism and violent extremism which can be conducive to terrorism, including through countering incitement to commit terrorist acts, creating counter narratives and other appropriate interventions, and building their capacity to do so effectively, and

> further to address, including by the empowerment of women, youth, religious and cultural leaders, the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism and violent extremism which can be conductive to terrorism. (United Nations Security Council 2015, 6).

Here, the "empowerment of women" can be read as contributing to P/CVE in two interrelated ways. First, women can be empowered to act as individual agents of violence prevention, whether as peacebuilders, detectors of radicalisation within their homes or among their communities, or as police or military personnel. Second, the larger social and political context of gender equality is posited as necessary for disrupting the "conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism and terrorism," a claim found throughout P/CVE policy addressing women and gender. For instance, the Secretary General's *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism* states, it is "no coincidence that societies for which gender equality indicators are higher are less vulnerable to violent extremism" (United Nations General Assembly 2015). One oft-cited study of P/CVE policy and programming in Bangladesh and Morocco claims that "an increase in women empowerment and gender equality has a positive effect on countering extremism, as it does similarly in peacebuilding" (Couture 2014, viiii). Despite such an assertion, the study offers no clear evidence to support a causal link between the reduction of violent extremism and gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives (Winterbotham 2018).

Indeed, the evidential basis for claiming that women's empowerment and gender equality lead to a reduction in violent extremism or terrorism is speculative at best. While there is some evidence to suggest that states characterised by gender inequality are more likely to resort to violence as a means of settling interstate disputes (Tessler and Warriner 1997; Caprioli and Boyer 2001; Caprioli 2003), and that states characterised by greater gender equality are less likely to experience intrastate conflict (Caprioli 2005), there is little clear evidence of a causal relationship between gender inequality and violent conflict, and even less research on the relationship between gender inequality and violence classified as violent extremism or terrorism. And yet, the supposition that women's empowerment and gender equality will lead to the reduction of violent extremism is almost always treated as a given within P/CVE policy and programming.

The instrumentalisation of women's empowerment discourse for international agendas is, of course, not new. Initially articulated in the postcolonial struggles of third world feminists, women's empowerment discourse has its roots in the 1980s when, as Srilatha Batliwala argues, it existed as a "more political and transformatory idea for struggles that challenged not only patriarchy, but also the mediating structures of class, race, ethnicity – and in India, caste and religion – which determined the nature of women's position and condition in developing societies" (2007, 558). Introduced as a critique to the women in development model, which sought to integrate women into existing frameworks of development agencies without addressing the absence of gender in existing policies and programmes or its connection to larger systems of class, race or imperialism, the revolutionary and transformative potential of women's empowerment discourse was instrumentalised by donor agencies and neoliberal states focused on mobilising individuals to solve structural issues (Cornwall and Rivas 2015; Cronin-Furman, Gowrinathan and Zarkaria 2017; Cornwall 2018).

Importantly, the leveraging of women's empowerment discourse by the development sector is both reliant on and productive of gendered and racialised tropes, including, as Kalpana Wilson writes, "hyper-industrious, altruistic entrepreneurial female subjects who are now represented alongside, while by no means fully displacing, earlier constructions of 'third world women' as the passive recipients of development, devoid of agency" (2015, 6). There exists a similar racialised and gendered logic within the instrumentalisation of women's empowerment discourse by P/CVE, where women in the global south are represented both as a homogenous class of victims to be saved through Western-led security interventions, but also as individuals that, once empowered, can be effective agents of violence prevention. As Ann-Kathrin Rothermel's recent study finds, the gendered representations of women in cross-sectoral P/CVE discourse "oscillate between women *without resources* and *as resources*, as well as between women as *passive victims* and as *active peace entrepreneurs*" (2020, 16, emphases in original). According to Rothermel, it is precisely the location of P/CVE at the intersection of the security-development nexus that produces gendered subjects according to both a "neoliberal investment logic" and a "securitized protection logic" (2020, 16). Such representations expose "continuities with the existing development and security agendas of the UN that have been criticized for instrumentalizing (Global South) women and subordinating gender equality to the (supposedly) broader goals of security and development" (Rothermel 2020, 16).

Indeed, the particular iteration of women's empowerment found repeated throughout policy and programming calling for attention to women and gender within P/CVE is a racialised construct built on liberal notions of autonomy and agency, characteristics which women in the global south are assumed to lack. Consider, for instance, the following statement from a UN Women training manual on women in P/CVE in Europe and Central Asia released in 2021, which details the importance of women's role in P/CVE efforts, including in institutions such as military, police, the courts and schools, but also within the private, domestic sphere of community and family:

> Finally, working more broadly towards women's empowerment is important for successful P/CVE initiatives. If wives and mothers are expected to silently submit to their husbands, sisters expected to silently submit to their brothers and father, these women may not be in a powerful and autonomous enough position to intervene when a family member is in danger of radicalisation towards violence, even if they can spot the signs. Therefore, the furtherance of gender equality and women's empowerment goals greatly contributes to more impactful P/CVE initiatives by empowering women to be effective P/CVE actors in their communities and their homes. (Speckhard 2021, 71).

Here, as in UNSCR 2242, exists the claim that both the empowerment of individual women and the overall furtherance of gender equality for women as a class will contribute to the prevention of violent extremism. The tautology of the final sentence is found in much if not all of P/CVE policy related to women and gender: women's empowerment will empower women and women can therefore be effective agents of P/CVE. This construction assumes that women in contexts with high incidences of violent extremism are always already disempowered and lacking in autonomy, particularly in regards to cultural arrangements and familial relationships. According to this logic, "the furtherance of gender equality and women's empowerment goals" will increase women's autonomy, contributing to both women's "liberation" from supposedly oppressive patriarchal relations and to global counterterrorism objectives.

A similar rationale is present in an essay by Chantal de Jonge Oudraat, the President of Women in International Security (WIIS), who argues that the focus on women's empowerment as a cornerstone of P/CVE is based on misguided ideas about Muslim women's influence within the domestic sphere. Her interviews with "over a dozen African and Asian women leaders engaged in efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism," revealed that, instead, "children and husbands often show real disrespect for their mothers and wives – women are invisible. This is not to say that they are ignorant, rather that they are powerless" (Chantal de Jonge 2016, 23). Thus, in order for women to be effective within the realm of P/CVE and security more broadly, gender equality and empowerment are the necessary preconditions. As she writes,

> my interviews with women in Africa and Asia reveal that most women are invisible and have no voice. The majority is powerless and their strategy for survival is not to speak up, but to be in denial. For women to become effective agents in preventing and countering violent extremism they need to be given voice. Here, the empowerment of women is key. (2016, 19).

While Oudraat makes an important point about danger of assuming women's ability to detect and disrupt radicalisation within their homes and communities, she problematically homogenises "women in Africa and Asia" as similarly disempowered and oppressed. The discursive construction of women as silent and submissive in the UN Women training manual and Oudraat's statements are emblematic of a liberal feminist ideology that contributes to the production of a "third world woman," erased of cultural or historical specificity, absent voice and agency except through the empowerment offered vis-à-vis P/CVE.

Unfortunately, the racialised logic underwriting the call for women's empowerment as necessary for P/CVE represented in the above examples is not exceptional but is found throughout most P/CVE policy and programming. As Wilson and Rothermel make clear, however, the construction of women as resources does not wholly replace the gendered victimhood projected on women through global security discourse. Women stand as both the subjects to be saved through P/CVE initiatives and the agents needed to do the saving. The narrative is no longer only, as postcolonial feminist theorist Gayatri Spivak writes, "white men are saving brown women from brown men," but also brown, Black and Muslim women are responsible for saving everyone, including themselves (1993, 92). Further, this dual construction of women as, in Rothermel's words, both passive victims and active peace entrepreneurs, is only possible through a framework that identifies Muslim women as simultaneously oppressed by their familial structures *and* uniquely situated to wield power within the domestic sphere as mothers and wives. It is precisely P/CVE's promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment – absent concrete evidence of causality, dependent on racialised notions of "good" mothers and without the sustained, material support actually needed to improve women's lives – which feminist peace activists and WPS actors argue constitutes instrumentalisation, both of the WPS agenda and the materiality of women's affective, relational labour.

Overall, the above exploration demonstrates exactly why caution regarding the integration of the WPS and P/CVE agendas is needed and why care must be taken to avoid instrumentalising the feminist objective of increasing women's power in society for security agendas which rarely make the world safer for anyone. However, such critiques must not come at the cost of denying or erasing the experiences of women and feminist

actors engaging in P/CVE, lest we risk contributing to other, racialised essentialisms – that of women in the global south, and of Muslim women in particular, as always already duped by security actors and agendas rather than as political subjects capable of negotiating with and redirecting power. As Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, a civil society leader and drafter of UNSCR 1325, pointedly writes:

> The narrative of western-based scholars and NGOs that claim women are being 'instrumentalised' further exacerbates the situation as it denigrates the expertise, innovation and courage of women at the frontlines of the struggle against violent extremism, who offer critical lessons and solutions (2018, 33).

Indeed, the fear of instrumentalisation can overshadow the very fact that women in community-based and grassroots organisations have long been doing the work of violence prevention in their communities, well before the emergence of the P/CVE agenda (Bhulai, Peters, and Nemr 2016). The idea that such women and feminist actors are able to immediately be co-opted or instrumentalised as tools of the state and international security sector is itself grounded in racialised and gendered assumptions about women's agency or lack thereof and further, renders agency as only ever legible vis-à-vis the state. Ultimately, critiques of instrumentalisation risk reproducing the very constructs they seek to dismantle; to assume that women engaging with or enacting P/CVE are always already instrumentalised by the state or international security sector assigns such women false consciousness, rendering agentive capacity as only ever knowable through a liberal feminist conceptualisation of agency as resistance. Assuming women's participation in P/CVE always amounts to instrumentalisation forecloses a deeper understanding of the affective, relational world of gendered agency within securitised spaces.

Beyond instrumentalisation: strategic negotiation at the intersection of WPS and P/CVE

On a warm January afternoon, I sat with Fauziya Abdi Ali at a popular coffee shop in Upper Hill, a district of Nairobi. Ali, the President of WIIS Kenya and chair of Sisters without Borders, a national platform of women working for the prevention of violent extremism, understands the complexity of what it means to be a WPS actor negotiating with the P/CVE agenda. At the time of our meeting in 2019, the first Kenyan National Action Plan (KNAP) 1325 was still active, which made only brief reference to the issue of violent extremism and lacked any concrete plans to increase women's role in P/CVE. Ali recalled a meeting she attended in Mombasa, where different actors from across Kenya gathered to address the challenge of how best to link KNAP 1325 and Kenya's National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism (NSCVE) in order to ensure the promotion of a gendered perspective and women's roles within P/CVE. She remembered the meeting as frustrating and that "after two days there was no conclusion" and no "coherent agreement on how these two policies will speak to each other."[6] Indeed, the first iteration of the NSCVE deleted its "gender pillar" in the final round of revisions.

However, after advocacy by Ali, WIIS and other civil society actors, the government decided to include a gender pillar in revisions. Similarly, Kenya's second NAP 1325 (2020–2024) more clearly emphasised the role of women in preventing violent extremism in the "prevention pillar," as well as includes indicators against which to measure the success of

integrating gender responsiveness into P/CVE. Ali recognised that while linking the WPS and P/CVE agendas is necessary for many reasons, it is not without risk. For instance, one of the most important reasons to integrate the agendas is financial. As she acknowledged, "the gender budget is nowhere near as large as the one linked with national security. So then the question becomes, if we merge it, are we instrumentalising it?" Ali's statement, which simultaneously recognises the availability of badly needed funding within the P/CVE space but also the risk of instrumentalisation posed by accessing such funding, is one with which actors looking to implement the WPS agenda are always forced to grapple. As Ali explained, given that the KNAP 1325 is "poorly funded" and that "implementation is a joke," strategically negotiating with the power and the funding available via the "CVE stream" was not just smart, it was imperative.

In addition to funding, given that the KNAP 1325 largely focuses on women's participation at the level of national politics, the linkage of WPS with P/CVE enables a focus on women's participation at the community level, where the leadership required to prevent violent extremism is needed. In Isiolo, the idea that the WPS agenda did not focus enough on women's participation in peace and security at the community level was shared by women community leaders during focus group discussions. For instance, one woman commented about the lack of localisation of the WPS agenda, and in particular the priorities laid out in UNSCR 2242:

> The national action plan, it has not trickled down to local women, local communities as such; but for us, we have tried to kind of popularize 1325 even at our own local levels, local communities. But very sincerely, for me 2242 it's already been swallowed and it does not come out very well. We don't even know what it is, 2242 with women and P/CVE. It's something that we should give a meaning. Maybe if we can just work on it as a separate thing instead of incorporating in this 1325. In our country action plan, we have a standalone women pillar. In that we have mentioned about popularizing 2242 – but very sincerely women don't know.

At various points during the focus group discussion with women leaders in Isiolo, UNSCR 2242 was conflated with the P/CVE agenda, suggesting a lack of clear understanding of its relationship to UNSCR 1325 and the broader WPS agenda. Such confusion points to larger issues with the relationship of the two policy instruments and in particular how they are implemented at the local level. Later on in the discussion, a woman reiterated the desire for a greater prioritisation of P/CVE in relationship to WPS:

> 1325 is good, it's something we interacted with, but it has also eclipsed 2242. Not so many people know that 2242 is inside 1325, even the women leaders. We really do not know ... there has been no popularization, there has been no sensitization.

Here, I wrongly assumed that the women meant that UNSCR 2242 was eclipsing 1325, and that the objectives of the WPS agenda were being overshadowed by P/CVE security objectives, as this is the common critique offered by WPS actors and feminist peace activists critical of the instrumentalisation of WPS. "It's the other way around," one woman told me, slightly exasperated by my ignorance. "It's 1325 that's overshadowing 2242. It's invisible in 1325 ... If women leaders do not even know what it takes to do 2242, how can you expect a local woman in the village to?"

One of the most salient findings in Isiolo was that the women were not only not critical of the integration of WPS and P/CVE, they wanted greater implementation of the priorities laid out in UNSCR 2242. Following one woman's suggestion of having a WPS county

action plan in order to make the agenda's objectives relevant at the county and community levels, I asked whether P/CVE would be named as a key priority in such a plan. The response: "Of course, of course. It's a challenge that is already here and it affects women day by day. Because the child is always closer to the mother and it it's affecting the mother." As will be discussed more in the following section, in Isiolo women's particular social and familial roles were understood as uniquely positioning them to affect violence prevention. In particular, they understood that, given how much mothers suffer from shame and ostracisation if their children or family members join a violent extremist organisation, they can bring important perspectives to the discussion. To only ever have security policies articulated and enacted by men would grossly distort the issues that women are actually facing in their day-to-day lives. The link, then, between P/CVE and WPS was obvious. As one woman explained,

> There is a relationship because we have that pillar of protection within 1325. So we need women to be part of this discussion . . . I think that is the relationship I am seeing because it is here in Resolution 1325 for women, peace and *security*.

Yet another woman put it pointedly: "anything that talks on behalf of women, we need to uphold it, and fight for it. Because men will never give us a space." Indeed, the women in Isiolo were perfectly clear that women's participation in P/CVE was essential and that the framework of WPS was precisely the space through which to advocate for access to the design and implementation of security measures.

However, the clarity of the calls for women's participation in P/CVE by the women leaders in Isiolo and Ali should not be misread as an uncritical endorsement of the donor and state-led P/CVE agenda. Rather, it was quite the opposite: women and feminist peace activists understood that their engagement with P/CVE was necessary precisely because of the problems with the P/CVE agenda, which offers greater legitimacy to the enactment of hard security measures by state security actors despite P/CVE's rhetorical distancing from kinetic approaches (United Nations Human Rights Council 2020). For instance, the development of County Action Plans (CAPs), which were mandated by the NSCVE, allowed for the direct engagement of civil society in an attempt to offset counterterrorism approaches of the military and police. Kenyan CAPs on CVE, many of which include a gender pillar, allow for community organisations rather than security actors to claim ownership of violence prevention. Such a move was essential, a woman peacebuilder based in Mombasa explained, in order to redirect power from the police and military into the hands of civil society:

> Before the CBOs [community-based organizations] took up arms to make action plans, it was the military and the military police that were running the show. And they were hesitant to have civil society in that [P/CVE] space because they didn't think that terror or violent extremism was anything to do with civilians, that it was strictly a government affair. So slowly that space has opened up; they are finally accepting that this is a multi-sector fight, that we can't do it alone.

Indeed, the multi-sector or "whole-of society" approach promoted by P/CVE emerged in part out of a recognition that the security approaches enacted by military and police contributed to civilians' grievances against and distrust of the state. As the woman stated, "if they continued to militarize these things, they would have exacerbated the situation."

While a comprehensive discussion of the violence enacted by Kenyan state security exceeds the scope of this article, it is important to reiterate that most research participants insisted that engaging with the P/CVE agenda was necessary precisely *because* of the violence enacted by the state under the guise of countering or preventing terrorism. Indeed, in Kenya and elsewhere, the P/CVE agenda has not replaced or transformed violent and coercive counterterrorism approaches of military and police (Attree 2017; Gitau 2017; Mesok 2022; Mutahi 2017). Kenyan counterterrorism operations have perpetrated widespread human rights violations against members of the Muslim and ethnic Somali communities, including "arbitrary arrests, extortion, theft and looting of business and homesteads, sexual harassments, arbitrary detention, illegal deportations, torture, inhuman and degrading treatment" (Kenya National Commission on Human Rights 2015). Despite the NSCVE's emphasis on "soft" approaches, a recent evaluation found that, still, "policing, intelligence and military officials have been consistently accused of violating the rights of terrorist suspects, alleged terrorist sympathizers and entire communities they have profiled as sources of violent extremism" (Ogada 2017, 3; see also Nyagah, Mwangi and Attree 2017).

The targeting of Muslim and ethnic Somali communities, identified as the "sources of violent extremism," has expanded under the P/CVE security architecture, given the broadening of scope of the behaviours and activities considered actionable within anti-terror legislation (United Nations Human Rights Council 2020). For a woman human rights activist based in Mombasa, the perpetration of violence by security actors including military and police is exactly why civil society must engage with P/CVE. "Definitely you should not just leave things the way they are [with the P/CVE] agenda but you should work and attempt to do something," she explained. "It might not work but at least you've done something. Even in your guilty consciousness you know that okay, I tried to do something."

Further, the association of P/CVE with the global war on terror and counterterrorism means that communities often distrust the "brand" of P/CVE. In Isiolo, the women criticised the fact that the security agents focus on surveillance of Muslim youth, who they have pre-determined are at risk of radicalisation. As one youth leader explained, the "ATPU (Anti-Terror Police Unit) harass our youth, saying, 'You are al-Shabaab.' They set their mind so that our youth say, 'These police are calling us al-Shabaab. Let us just go and join al-Shabaab." Indeed, in Isiolo, which has been labelled a "breeding ground" for violent extremism, women leaders recognise that the security agents have already decided the fate of the youth in their communities; they wonder, why are the police focused on the young people and their families, and not on the recruiters? As one woman questioned,

> . . . they can tap the parent's phone and they understand that they child is being radicalized, but they are not catching who is radicalizing these children. Who are the financiers? You come for the child and you are not going for the big fish. Then as the government you are the person who is radicalising.

Here, the woman is gesturing to the cycle in which the surveillance and harassment of communities begets violence, where communities distrust military, police and the state, and turn instead to non-state organisations to address grievances, frustration, enact revenge, or simply, to fulfil an identity that the state and international security realm has already prescribed. As the Mombasa-based human rights activist explained, civil society

and community-based organisations have to do the work of violence prevention because people do not trust the police. She recognises that, if someone is in trouble, perhaps being recruited or having decided to return from a violent extremist organisation, the first place they turn is to her organisation. She explained that the police ask, "'Why do they come to you and not us?' And we said, 'You need to ask yourself that question.'"

The negative connotations of the P/CVE agenda are also influenced by the Islamophobia and human rights violations perpetrated by the global war on terror. A woman in Isiolo pointedly stated that violent extremism is not just about individuals radicalising towards violence but that it is a narrative put forth by the international security community against the Muslim population worldwide. As she told me, "We believe that the issue of radicalisation is bigger than what we see. We believe it's an issue of government and United Nations – they want to demonize Islam as a culture." Indeed, the belief that P/CVE is a "code or a shortcut for discussing violence and terrorism by Muslims only" is shared by Muslim communities in contexts across the world (Kundnani 2014; Pearson, Winterbotham, and Brown 2021). This is a challenge, however, that feminist peace activists in Kenya believe can be overcome precisely through the engagement of WPS actors. For instance, Ali agreed that the "brand" of P/CVE was a problem: "If the issue is the language – because most people have a problem with the brand and all the narratives that went with the brand – we can rebrand," she suggested. "One joke I say is to just move the Ps and the Vs and have PEV and then you focus on extreme violence. Because there is no escaping it, extreme violence is happening."

Babu Ayindo, a peacebuilder in Kenya for over thirty years who has witnessed the impact of the P/CVE agenda on the peacebuilding sector, similarly agreed that while the "brand" of P/CVE was a problem, the engagement of WPS actors was urgent precisely because of the perpetration of hard security approaches by the state. He explained, "if you ask me, the language of CVE is still very typical, patriarchal male response to issues. We need to do more violence. If you give us violence, we'll do double, triple violence." However, for him, the engagement of a feminist agenda such as WPS holds transformative potential given that "feminist research and women's research on those issues will bring perspectives that ordinarily governments don't want to consider when they are tackling issues of violence." Further, for Ayindo, the means is less important than the outcome; cycles of violence have to be interrupted, and interruption requires engagement. As he eloquently surmised:

> I will be here … we have to make sure we break the cycle of violence. And if that means subverting the [P/CVE] donor agenda here or there than we will do that. And you can quote me on that. Because at the end of the day, it's about breaking cycles of violence. At the end of the day, that's the focus. The language, you can be creative about that. What we are aiming at is that these cycles of violence stop. This is not the world you want to pass onto the next generation.

Ayindo's statements mirror Ali's suggestion that both the discourse and agenda of P/CVE can be creatively engaged with in order to subvert or to harness the power of the state and international security architecture and direct the immense financial resources available within the P/CVE donor space. For Ayindo and others, engagement is less of a choice and more of a necessity; if left unchecked, the P/CVE agenda could result in much more harm than good.

To return to the question as to whether such engagement amounts to the instrumentalisation of the WPS agenda or even of women themselves, Ali suggests that perhaps the question itself is a distraction. While it is a question she has considered with care, at the end of the day she believes that the narrative produced by women in the global north regarding the supposed instrumentalisation of women in the global south for security agendas distorts the reality of what is actually happening at the intersection of WPS and P/CVE. "They work on the same issues," she emphasised. "To be honest, I think the fear of instrumentalising women has taken such a huge chunk of thinking, that is has taken away from the benefits of having the two work together." Even so, Ali admits she does still feel conflicted at times. "There are parts of me that say we shouldn't have them engage each other at all," she said, "that we should focus on engaging women in peace processes, etc. But if you unpackage PVE, it fits the women, peace and security agenda. It fits in nicely."

Ultimately, for Ali and the vast majority of my research interlocuters, not engaging was simply not a choice. "If we don't engage, there will be more challenges. We have to engage," Ali said matter-of-factly. She then offered an idea of what could happen if WPS actors and feminist activists did not engage with and work to direct or transform P/CVE:

> The hijab is really a practical example of why if you don't have PVE discussions in WPS you will have more women's rights taken away in the name of combatting violent extremism. Think about it. The first thing that normally happens in any place where there's war, conflict – the people who suffer first are the women. Someone takes away a right. Clothing. WPS is also there to protect women during these times. Whether there's peace or whether there's democracy, they're supposed to protect women, because women's rights are human rights. But if you don't engage on extreme violence discussions, you give room for those who are mostly predominantly men to come up with ridiculous laws like this one. If we don't say anything, it will be worse. It will start off with the hijab, and before long it will be worse because of Islamophobia and the like. Before long it'll be we can't wear socks or something. This is how things are taken away, slowly, with time and in the name of protection.

Here, Ali beautifully articulates that fear of the instrumentalisation of the WPS agenda is not the only instrumentalisation with which feminists need to be concerned. Ali rightly points to the ways in which, in times of both war and peace, Muslim women's bodies become sites of security and control, where rights and freedoms are stripped away "slowly, with time and in the name of protection." The protectionist discourse that justifies Western imperial interventions, where Muslim women are constructed as in need of "liberation" and "empowerment," is precisely an example of the instrumentalisation of women's rights with which we should be concerned. And yet, by not engaging with security agendas, by not insisting that WPS intervene to actually protect women, not just rhetorically, such agendas are left unchecked. In short, as Ali states, "If we don't say anything, it will be worse."

Affective agency: maternal labour and the "human face" of violence prevention

When I arrived in Isiolo towards the end of my research trip, nearly a month had passed since the Dusit D2 attack, which was allegedly orchestrated by a man born and raised in Isiolo. In the aftermath of the violence, his mother and sister had been detained under suspicion of aiding and abetting him in planning the violence. Given that his father had

left the family years prior, his three young sisters were left without care. During a focus group discussion with women leaders engaged in WPS and P/CVE, one of the women gestured towards an older woman who had sat quietly throughout most of the conversation. The older woman, I was told, had taken in the three young girls. She provided them food, shelter, paid their school fees; she provided them refuge from the shame and ostracisation which they might have otherwise faced from the community given their brother's actions. This, the women explained, was an act of humanity and kindness of which women are uniquely capable. Indeed, the women in the room, who had known "the boy" responsible for the attack his entire life, expressed incredible empathy for the entire family, the boy included.[7] They understood that he was at fault and that he was likely responsible for radicalising countless other youth in their community, and this knowledge devastated them. But they also wondered what had happened that he turned to al-Shabaab, what had gone wrong? For now, their priority was caring for his sisters, repairing trust and healing the trauma wrought by his violence. Such work centres on humanity, even in the face of unthinkable violence. As one woman explained, "We want to give [P/CVE] a human face, and [the older woman] has picked up that matter and taken in the children. So this actually show how a woman not only uses her emotions … and I think that's how we should do P/CVE. Give it a human face."

For these women, living in the immediate aftermath of terror, this work *is* P/CVE, or, at least what it should be. This characterisation of the power of women's role in P/CVE, to wield affective and emotional labour in the service of detecting or disrupting violence, is a site of tension for those engaged in debates around instrumentalisation. Indeed, the calls for women's empowerment often focus on building their capacity as mothers, identifying women's presumably innate abilities of care and empathy as potential tools to leverage in the fight against terror (Schlaffer and Kropiunigg 2016; Winterbotham 2018). Those critical of the instrumentalisation of both women's material labour and WPS objectives for security agendas point to the reproduction of gendered essentialisms, stereotypical and reductive notions of women as inherently peaceful and apolitical, simultaneously submissive yet influential within their familial structures (Brown 2013; Giscard d'Estaing 2017). Further, the idea of empowering women as mothers for P/CVE is argued to be less about women's rights and gender equality and more about maximising the capacities of human intelligence within private, civilian spaces to which women have greater access than security actors. As Katherine Brown (2013, 2020), who has importantly critiqued the harnessing of this "maternalist logic" for the purposes of meeting state security objectives argues, "women's empowerment via counter-radicalization measures is simply a vehicle to access 'vulnerable men' and is used in an instrumental sense, rather than as a good, or human right in its own right" (Brown 2013, 45).

Indeed, the leveraging or instrumentalisation of mothers and mothering as a tool that can be used to increase the effectiveness of P/CVE depends upon the essentialist construction of women as inherently peaceful, apolitical and skilled at relational labour and locates the responsibility of violence prevention not with the state or international system but with civilians, and individual women in particular. Here, the idea of using mothers as instruments to detect signs and interrupt processes of radicalisation is underwritten by a maternalist and racialised logic which insists that "good mothers do not produce good radicals" (Brown 2013, 46). Locating the cause of violent extremism within family structures and with the mother in particular, has roots in the colonial logic of terrorism studies

where bad mothering and dysfunctional families are "presented as psychological compulsions that effectively determine and fix the mind of the terrorist" (Puar and Rai 2002, 122). The emphasis on the importance of the mother in P/CVE replicates these colonial and racialised tropes of Muslim women as simultaneously submissive to their husbands or sons but also powerful enough to dissuade them from violence. Women therefore might be empowered to enact P/CVE but only within the confines of their gendered roles, and are simultaneously burdened with the responsibility of its success or failure.

By the time I arrived in Isiolo, I had already experienced a number of interviews regarding WPS, women, gender and P/CVE in Nairobi and Mombasa that ended up with a discussion of the role of mothers and mothering in violence prevention. As a consultant on gender and P/CVE based in Nairobi explained, the empowerment of women in P/CVE is important but only if such empowerment is understood as a holistic process where gender inequalities are addressed alongside the pull factors that lead to radicalisation and recruitment. But he disagreed with the current deployment of empowerment discourse within P/CVE, which he recognised as inherited from the development sectors: "I don't like using the language of 'empowering women' because it is a protectionist approach that is isolating women more and more from this process of PVE," he explained. "The women are already empowered." Here, this consultant was referring to the fact that by exceptionalizing women's role in P/CVE, they become "isolated" in their burden to prevent their children from radicalising, carrying the weight of individual ownership over a much larger structural problem. "When we are following such approaches," he cautioned, "you need to be very, very clear not to burden. Empower the women, yes, but don't burden them with the whole responsibility ... " Ayindo similarly recognised that while women can and do play an important role in the space of prevention, reducing their influence to the domestic or familial sphere risks essentialising women:

> At the ground, from the work I have done in the communities, I would share [the position that women are essential to P/CVE] because people would say, look it is actually women who have the intelligence; they can support or subvert. They influence the young people a lot so it just makes sense that women should be involved. The danger is, I think—and we've come a long way—we've just not gone far enough, if you ask me, in the manner in which we articulate women's role in peacebuilding without all those typical elements of tokenism.

As Ayindo articulates, there is no question that women play an important role in violence prevention, including the prevention of violent extremism. As he says, they "have the intelligence; they can support or subvert." And yet, promoting women's participation in P/CVE, particularly as mothers, risks to gendered essentialisms of women as apolitical, passive and maternal.

However, I would argue that to read the participation of women who engage with P/CVE only ever as instrumentalised is equally problematic and risks reproducing similar gendered and racialised logic. To return to Mahmood, a conceptualisation of agency that is only ever about resistance to power misses the ways in which agency can also occur in "specific modes of being, responsibility, and effectivity ... agentival capacity is entailed not only in those acts that resist norms but also in the multiple ways in which one *inhabits* norms" (2005, 15). Thus, while recognising the dangers posed by conflating women as mothers and mothers as responsible for the prevention of violence, I nonetheless argue that evaluating the work of mothers who engage in P/CVE as only either empowered or

instrumentalised flattens a more nuanced reading of the agency that exists in the enactment of maternal labour, foreclosing a reading of the agentive capacity of mothering within the space of violence prevention. As scholars of feminist peace politics have argued, maternal thinking, shaped by the normative practice of mothering and the culturally determined location of women in society, is not inherently peaceful but *could* serve as an important resource for peace (Cohn 2013; Ruddick 1989).

Indeed, while gendered approaches to P/CVE certainly rely upon the instrumentalisation of maternal logic, it would be a mistake to not also consider the iterations of agency and resistance in P/CVE programming that occur at the site of women's affective relationships. Such agency occurs, according to Pearson, at the site of practice and "its reliance on human relations of empathy between Muslim women" (2020, 105). Indeed, the violence prevention work occurring in Isiolo emphasises the creation of spaces for women to gather, to share experiences, to gain strength from their relationships within one another and to raise political pressure to address the violence plaguing their community. In Isiolo, women created these spaces in the form of Women's Situation Rooms, a model which they borrowed from women in Sierra Leone working to implement UNSCR 1325. As one woman explained:

> I remember in 2014, nobody even wanted to speak about violent extremism in Isiolo. I remember one day we were only women and, like now, we can give our suggestions, we can contribute. When we met with other women, there was another organization that was talking about violent extremism in Isiolo. But all of the sudden, women cried in the room—they said, 'you know my son has gone?' Another one said, 'you know my son has gone?' If we didn't have that opportunity of bringing those women together no one would have the opportunity to know that maybe my friend here is also affected—because I fear. But if we have the Women's Situation Room, then we feel that we are protected.

In this statement, the outcry of mothers with grief at the loss of their children – whether to state violence or to violent extremist organisations – can be read as a space of political subjectification and agentive capacity. These women are, in their affective relation to one another, their maternal longings and their shared trauma, mobilised to act. To assume that women who engage in such spaces are instrumentalised by P/CVE reifies the belief that mothering is inherently apolitical, that mothers lack their own will to use their maternal roles and affective relationships to prevent violence. Associating mothering with violence prevention does risk essentializing women as inherently peaceful or passive and reducing women to their reproductive capacities; but assuming that mothers are devoid of political agency or refusing to consider that power can be derived from the social relations and affect cultivated through the act of mothering or care is similarly problematic.

The insistence on giving P/CVE "a human face" stayed with me long after I left Isiolo. There is something quite radical in this call as it forces a recognition of the humanity that exists throughout all facets of violent acts. The women spoke fondly of the boy that they remembered, before he turned into an armed assailant for al-Shabaab. He was a good boy, they recalled. He committed heinous, horrifying acts of violence but he was also human. He had family and friends and was once a student sitting in their schools. He had humanity. Such tensions and complexity are revealed and attended to by the affective, maternal labour enacted by the women, which contributes to the prevention of and healing from violence in ways that would not be recognised within a standard rubric

measuring P/CVE, which cannot be understood solely as empowerment as indicated by international donor standards, nor should be dismissed as instrumentalisation by feminist security scholars and other WPS actors. To assume that such labour is only ever coerced by the state or is merely another tool for P/CVE fails to recognise the complex and often contradictory agentive and affective lives that exist inside of securitised spaces.

Conclusion

The tensions explored throughout this article speak to some of the larger questions faced by feminists committed to anti-militarist and anti-imperialist work. How do we take seriously individual and community engagement with security structures that we also imagine as complicit with larger imperial regimes? How, as feminist scholars, can we hold onto the critiques of militarist agendas while simultaneously acknowledging the agency of the actors on the ground and their desires to engage with, subvert, and harness the resources at hand for their own objectives? While there has been a great deal of necessary and important literature either calling for or cautioning against the linkage of the WPS and P/CVE agendas, it is worth considering whether the focus on these international policy frameworks obscures the rich tensions that emerge from the lived experiences on the ground. Even if we agree that the WPS agenda has been co-opted by the P/CVE agenda, acknowledging this only tells us so much. It does not tell us about how gender is actually made sense of, how it materially manifests, in securitised spaces. It does not tell us about the agency that is cultivated and enacted, not necessarily just as resistance but also as strategic engagement, or the ways in which P/CVE funding might actually enable rather than constrain such agency. To assume that women are always already instrumentalised within P/CVE is to project an understanding of agency that is racialised, gendered and liberal in its conceptualisation, that is only legible as resistance against the state and international security structure. Attending to the various iterations of agency, including the normative enactment of mothering and the strategic engagement with donor funding and state-led security agendas, allows for a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of what it means to do the work of preventing extreme violence.

Notes

1. In this article, I use P/CVE to denote the broad field of policy and practice identified as Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism. While I recognise the conceptual differences intended by distinguishing between Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE), the constant slippage and lack of clear differentiation between the two approaches, as well as the fact that many of the research participants interviewed for this study conflate the two terms, I only use CVE or PVE when an agency, policy, project or interviewee specifically uses that language.
2. The field research on which this article is based was conducted while I was a senior researcher at the Swiss Platform for Peacebuilding, KOFF at swisspeace, a practice-oriented peace research institute located in Bern, Switzerland. Parts of these findings were published in a report (Mesok 2019) and the research was part of a larger project, "Civil Society Contribution to the Implementation of the Swiss NAP 1325," jointly led by PeaceWomen Across the Globe, cfd – the Feminist Peace Organization, and KOFF. The project was inspired by the fourth Swiss National

Action Plan (NAP) to implement United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, which named the prevention of violent extremism as a key priority within its prevention pillar and called for linkages between the Swiss foreign PVE approach and WPS (Switzerland 2018).
3. Given that the definition of "terrorism," of which there is no universal consensus, is deeply political and moralistic (Nasser-Eddine et al. 2011), I choose to avoid it where possible. The term "violent extremism" – which did not emerge into widespread usage among international security actors until well after the 2005 announcement that the Global War on Terror was over and the Struggle Against Violent Extremism had commenced (Fox 2005, 15) – is often used interchangeably and conflated with "terrorism." As the definitional tensions between the terms and the theories which underwrite them are beyond the scope of this paper, I prefer to use the terms most used by my interlocutors, which include both "violent extremism" and "extreme violence."
4. While Lamu, Garissa, Wajir and Mandera are also greatly affected by violent extremism, the counties of Nairobi, Isiolo, Mombasa and Kwale were chosen in consultation with Kenyan civil society organisations based on the presence of P/CVE activities with a focus on women and gender. In addition, the duration of the field research trip was limited to four weeks and conducted with the Kenyan partners of the Swiss NGOs with whom I was employed, which were based primarily in Nairobi and Isiolo, with contacts in Mombasa and Kwale counties.
5. Individuals were identified for interviews via a method known as "snowball sampling," whereby research participants were asked to recommend other research participants. The intention was to speak to as many actors working in the field of P/CVE and particularly those working at the intersection of P/CVE and WPS. Focus group discussions were arranged by our partner organisation, who worked to support community-based peace activists and women leaders in Isiolo.
6. All quotes attributed to Kenyan civil society actors are from interviews conducted between 17 January and 14 February 2019. The names of individuals and organisations are only used with explicit permission of the research participant.
7. Here, I use the signifier "boy" not as a reference to the age of the person who perpetrated the attack, but to denote the understanding of the women of him as a child.

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