# REWRITING SECURITY:

# THE (PRIVATE) SECURITY INDUSTRY AND THE GENDERED AND RACIALISED FORMATIONS OF PREVENTION

Dissertation

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This is to certify that this doctoral dissertation has been approved by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Basel, upon the formal request of Dr. Elizabeth Mesok, Prof. Dr. Laurent Goetschel, and Dr. Amanda Chisholm.

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# INTRODUCTON

> Private security always plays a role when it comes to counterterrorism, particularly in the case of third world countries where the army is not professional, which means they have to rely on this important commercial component for liabilities (Interview with anonymous, 14 July 2022).

> There is no appetite for the U.K. to have their soldiers dying. It is just so much easier to have contractors on the ground (Interview with anonymous, 29 June 2022).

> They talk about simple prevention in security terms. So nothing about, you know, the conditions conducive to terrorism or radicalisation in general, but it's just, you know, we have to make sure that the bomb is not exploding, basically (Interview with anonymous, 6 January 2023).

The launching of the global war on terror (GWOT) after 9/11 put counterterrorism as a topic of interest back on many scholar's research agendas. While academics started by analysing ways to combat "terrorism"[1], such narratives, as well as the way military interventions were conducted, resulted in counter-debates, which expose the effects, risks, and the inscribed racialised and gendered logics of reverberating counterterrorism measures (Khan, 2021). The invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq in the early 2000s, which developed an unparalleled reliance on the private security industry[2], raised public awareness on the multitude and diversity of

[1] The terminology around "terrorism" and "violent extremism" remains highly contested and politically charged with no universally agreed definition. While it is not my intention to discuss the definitional praxis of these terms within this thesis, it must be acknowledged that in contrast to the practice of using them as self-evident they are not neutral. While they are written in quotation marks at the beginning, these are omitted throughout the thesis for reasons of readability.

[2] The categorising and definition of the private security industry and the actors involved in it remains highly contested and inconsistent. Much of the literature refers to the terminology of Private Security and Military Companies (PMSC), which is based on the definition by the Montreux Document as "private business entities that provide military and/or security services, irrespective of how they describe themselves. Military and security services include, in particular, armed guarding and protection of persons and objects, such as convoys, buildings and other places; maintenance and operation of weapons systems; prisoner detention; and advice to or training of local forces and security personnel" (Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft and ICRC, 2009). The difficulty of this terminology then lies in the differentiation of what constitutes a private security company (PSC) and a private military company (PMC) as well as the associated beliefs and values tied to this catch-all phrase of PMSC (Batka, 2023). I therefore consistently use the terminology of "private security industry" to denote the industry as a total and refer to the personnel employed in this sector as "contractors"—contractors can therefore be both, part of a PMC or a PMS. Where the context requires it, I further outline the company type I am referring to, such as risk management companies or private security guarding.

actors involved. While the academic subfield of private security studies slowly started to materialise since the end of the 1990s, the surge of private contractors within the two key military operations of the GWOT led to a growing wealth of research on the privatisation of security (Cusumano and Kinsey, 2022). P.W. Singer's academic bestseller *Corporate Warriors* (2003) or investigative journalist Jeremy Scahill's successful *Blackwater: The Rise of the World's Most Powerful Mercenary Army* (2007) are illustrative contributions of early exploratory studies on the private security industry. While the role of the private security industry in the GWOT is increasingly featured in academic research, the introduction of the Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) agenda has significantly reshaped the landscape of counterterrorism and the associated academic fields, leaving the private security industry again under-theorised and under-addressed. Coming to full existence in 2015, P/CVE was designed as a complementary strategy to counterterrorism measures and promotes a holistic approach through combining traditional security policies with preventative and developmental measures.

My dissertation's intervention sits in the space of P/CVE's agility as both a security and development agenda. However, in contrast to most of the literature on P/CVE, I focus on the "developmentalised" and preventative aspect of P/CVE within the security sector—rather than the securitisation of development. There is a shortage of literature which analyses P/CVE in relation to the security sector and which asks how P/CVE is equally producing and productive of security. Consequently, the neglect of the security side of P/CVE's development-security nexus also directed the attention away from the private security industry and its role within P/CVE as complementary to counterterrorism. To date, there is no academic literature which scrutinises the connection between P/CVE and the private security industry. The principal point of reference of this thesis is thus P/CVE: what can P/CVE and its inherent shift towards prevention tell us about how we think about security and about how, and by whom, war is waged globally? How is the security sector transformed by P/CVE and how does it organise itself around this newly emerged paradigm? To get a closer understanding of the space of intervention, the following paragraphs outline the existing literature of P/CVE—generally and in connection to the security sector.

P/CVE is defined through relatively vague terminology that commonly encompasses the meaning of non-military responses which "aim at disrupting the activities of violent extremist groups and preventing their expansion, while also addressing the enabling

environments in which violent extremism flourishes" (UNDP, 2017: 19)[3]. Starting out as a rhetorical commitment from a handful of agencies, P/CVE has now become a central framework for governments, international and multilateral organisations, and development agencies to tackle security issues in the realm of terrorism. As willingly as institutions adopted P/CVE, criticism on the effects of this agenda instantly appeared. One of the most offered criticisms on P/CVE is its terminology and the lack of an internationally accepted definition. The Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism by the UN's Secretary General states in its second paragraph that "[v]iolent extremism is a diverse phenomenon, without clear definition" (2015: 1). Further, the Plan states that "[v]iolent extremism encompasses a wider category of manifestations […]", forcing politicians and practitioners to adopt their own definitions (2015: 2). Due to this lack of clarity, the terms "terrorism" and "violent extremism" are often used interchangeably (Bak, Tarp, and Schori Liang, 2019). Moreover, due to high politicisation of terrorism and its connection to the much-criticised GWOT, violent extremism serves as an alternative that is more broadly accepted and with fewer negative connotations (Frazer and Nünlist, 2017).

Another critique on the terminology is the assumed causality between extremism and violence, which risks considering so-called radical or extremist ideologies as necessarily leading to violent acts and more broadly, considering extremist ideologies as security threats to societies (Patel and Koushik, 2017; Schomerus, El Taraboulsi-McCarthy, and Sandhar, 2017). The concept of radicalisation as a process is thus substantial within P/CVE—the aim of the intervention is set on an ideology or identity which is deemed "dangerous" and thus intercedes much earlier than the aim of targeting a terrorist organisation who has committed acts of violence. With this conceptualisation, almost any ideology and its associated practices ranging from religious to ethnic sensibilities can be targeted within the range of P/CVE; however, only a few select ideologies, religions, and communities are singled out such as Islam and Muslim communities in general. Further, the association of radicalisation with an imminent threat of violence also neglects the positive role radical ideas can and often do play for societal change (Kudnani and Hayes, 2018; Frazer and Nünlist, 2017). The lack of consistent definition of P/CVE therefore has implications beyond language: critics argue that the language allows

[3] In this thesis, I sometimes refer to reports, articles, and other text forms produced outside of academic publishing. While I minimise the reliance on such texts, I utilise such secondary, not peer-reviewed sources where academic work is inexistent due to the novelty and specificity of my research. These sources can therefore provide important context and data which is otherwise not available.

governments to use the P/CVE agenda politically and opportunistically, utilising the vocabulary of extremists to create a divisive Other and as such, as a tool to suppress opposition to the state and human rights where they see fit (Frazer and Nünlist, 2017).

With P/CVE aiming to address the root causes that contribute to violent extremism, such as social, cultural, political, and economic marginalisation, the agenda is linked to the development sector and its implementation in the Global South. Under the banner of P/CVE, policymakers engage in activities such as outreach, capacity building, education, training, and general development aid programmes (Bak, Tarp, and Schori Liang, 2019). Thus, this whole-of-society approach on how to deal with violent extremism widens the policy and programming from a simply security sector driven agenda to encompassing the traditional development space. Placed at the intersection of the development-security nexus, P/CVE endorses developmental goals which serve the purpose of security instead of development being an end in itself. Thus, P/CVE is often understood as a securitisation of the development agenda, as donor driven organisations, traditional peacebuilding, and development agencies are frequently forced to adopt a P/CVE lens to get funding (Rothermel, 2020; Frazer and Nünlist, 2017). In the handbook "Alternative Approaches to Transforming Violent Extremism", Mohammed Abu-Nimer (2018) cites the head of an International NGO based in Washington DC: "In order to get funding for our peacebuilding programs, now we have to describe them in the context of violent extremism, otherwise we have no chance of being supported or even making it to the initial screening" (2). Following the logic of the securitisation of development work, the question of "whose security?" becomes central; connected to the idea of development, P/CVE is predominantly applied in the Global South in order to ensure the safety of countries in the Global North. As such, European as well as U.S. agencies often evaluate P/CVE programmes in terms of their contribution towards their security, instead of focusing on the context in which the P/CVE programme is applied. This can lead to grievances, as the perspective of American and European security is valued above the security of the population where the P/CVE programme is realised (Abu-Nimer, 2018). As Mesok, Naji, and Schildknecht argue, the P/CVE agenda "was designed to discipline Muslim communities in the Global North and Muslim states and/or populations in the Global South, in order to ensure the security of the Global North" (forthcoming). Given this entanglement of security and development, P/CVE has been criticised for the shrinking of civil society space and the endangerment of the principle of impartiality for humanitarian workers (Kundnani and Hayes, 2018; ICRC, 2017).

Even though the prevalent practice—and literature—of P/CVE focuses on the development side, the security sector also bears responsibility in preventing violent extremism. Negative encounters with security institutions such as being stopped and searched for no obvious reason, corruption, violent interactions including extrajudicial killings, and enforced disappearances can lead to grievances and frustration where the security sector becomes the source of instability or injustice. In a widespread, state-centric understanding, the police and the military are responsible for the protection of the people living within their state; the failure or deliberate denial of this protection to certain groups or people, however, can lead to a profound animosity towards these institutions (Watanabe, 2018; European Commission, 2018). Thus, the tool of security sector reform (SSR), which is based on the principles of good governance and aims to make security provision, management, and oversight more effective and accountable, is considered to be an important pillar of addressing drivers of violent extremism. Yet, literature on the use of SSR within the P/CVE agenda is relatively bleak, focusing mostly on recommendations for programming. The UNDP highlights in its report *Journey to Extremism in Africa* the following key programming point as part of P/CVE: "(…) the implementation of security-sector reform processes tailored to the specific challenges of violent extremism" (2017: 9). In the UNDP follow-up report bearing the same title, the authors are more unequivocal on the connection between grievances against security actors and causes for engaging in violent extremism. The report states the following:

> Grievances against security actors, notably the police and military, and the justice system, were particularly evident in this data sample. Sixty-two percent of voluntary recruits reported having 'little or no trust' in the police, with 61 percent of the reference group responding similarly. Similarly, 59 percent expressed a similar perception towards the military, compared to 46 percent of the reference group. These findings suggest deep-seated profound divides between communities and security actors, which is known to offer fertile ground for recruitment into VE groups. These findings highlight the urgent need to improve the quality and accountability of institutions across service delivery areas such as security (UNDP, 2023: 17-18).

This type of literature calls predominantly for an adoption of a human security lens in the efforts of security institutions, an understanding of the local context before acting, and for an engagement in next level partnering, mostly with civil society actors (Abu-Nimer, 2018; Powers, 2017). Further, SSR finds its way into many National Action Plans, indicated as necessary by national governments to prevent violent extremism. In the example of Switzerland, the plan states that "[s]ocial trust is to be enhanced by promoting the governance and democratic control of the armed forces, police and intelligence services. Security sector reform (SSR)—

combined with the affirmation of human rights and bolstering anti-discrimination and anti-abuse measures (e.g. corruption, violence in prisons and by the police)—represents a contribution towards preventing violent extremism" (FDFA, 2016: 13). While acknowledging that there remains a link between the P/CVE agenda and the security sector, the existing literature does not account for the possible effects on security beyond SSR. Analysing how P/CVE has "developmentalised" aspects of security is thus a central endeavour.

Even though there are developmental aspects to P/CVE, the agenda is unmistakeably a security practice which is deeply political and social in how it materialises. Arun Kundnani and Ben Hayes termed the successful globalisation of P/CVE as "the most significant development in counterterrorism policy in the last decade" (2018: 2). However, as a relatively new phenomenon, the literature on P/CVE remains meagre: policy papers and programming concepts are the most commonly cited literature, while the marginal academic work that does exist predominantly centres the securitisation effect of P/CVE on the development sector. As a weighty agenda on the international, national, and local level, the research gap on P/CVE in connection to its manifestation in security is therefore, simply put, astounding. Additionally, the state-centric understanding of who is considered relevant in providing security substantially overlooks the private security industry as a player contributing to how security is performed and practiced. As I elaborate in more detail below, I therefore engage with the terminology of a "public-private continuum" which problematises the binary public-private distinction by acknowledging a fluidity and interdependency between the sectors. As political scientist Ken Booth writes, "security is a word that is supercharged with power. It makes things happen, it is deeply politicized […]" (2013: xv)—P/CVE as an agenda, a policy, a practice, and a narrative influences how security is made meaningful and needs further scrutiny to close—as far as possible—the gaps in our knowledge on security. This thesis therefore adopts the following research question: how does P/CVE materialise in the ontologies, practices, and performances of security along the public-private continuum?

The foreword of a critical security methods book included the following words: "If you are going to be academic about anything, you might as well be academic about something important" (Booth, 2013: xvi). I have already pointed towards the influence of P/CVE on security and the lack of existing written knowledge on this. Yet, I believe the relevance of my academic monograph lies in its relational approach to security which includes the private security industry in its analysis—without precluding public security. The privatisation of security is undeniably significant in how security is thought, applied, and perceived. Since the

1990s, the industry has grown in its geographic outreach, breadth, and scope, with countries and institutions increasing their confidence to contracting out (lethal) capabilities (Cusumano and Kinsey, 2022). The pervasiveness of the private security industry therefore warrants a critical investigation. To do so, I go beyond the prevalent fixation on the 1990s as a means of departure for the rise of the private security industry. Rather, I read P/CVE's logic through my theoretical contribution termed "West-of-Doom", which denotes the turn to prevention and development-oriented practices in the 2010s as more acceptable forms of violence. West-of-Doom explains how counterterrorism logics are reproduced in P/CVE, yet highlighting its unique character through the transgression into new spaces by a broader spectrum of intervention—and how this transgression is utilised by actors along the public-private continuum.

In what follows, I establish the thesis' analytical framework which is comprised of a theoretical investigation of security, an exploration of P/CVE as a continuation of the GWOT, as well as the formation of my own theoretical construct of West-of-Doom. Subsequently, I outline this project's methodology and methods which are grounded in feminist ethnography. The developed analytical and methodological framework is applied to research data gathered in the context of Kenya and, to a certain degree, Somalia. The introduction to the case as well as the rationale behind selecting this particular context is elaborated in a succeeding section. Finally, the introduction concludes by providing a synopsis on the forthcoming chapters and questions asked there within.

## Analytical framework

The emergence of P/CVE as a policy and practice at the security-development nexus raises questions on the ontologies, practices, and performances of security itself. As a security-driven agenda adopting development, the engagement with P/CVE opened up new possibilities of defining and performing security—a practice that remains under-researched and obscured. By investigating the materialisation of P/CVE, we get a closer look of how security as a concept is made meaningful within different spaces and unfolding along perceived, conceived, and lived dimensions. A critical exploration of security is thus at the centre of this thesis; I explore the conditions under which "it is possible to think, speak, and make authoritative claims about (…) security" (Walker, 1997: 61), while recognising the undeniable messiness of different stories, lived realities, and intertwining journeys at a certain point in time and space. As such, I depart

from a positivist approach of reliable, "true", and value-free knowledge (see also the section on methodology), and insist that first, every knowledge is partial, and second, the way we theorise about security "is always for someone, and for some purpose" (Cox, 1986: 207). To answer the thesis' research question of how P/CVE materialises in the ontologies, practices, and performances of security, this section delineates the analytical framework by exploring the theoretical component of how we engage with the concept of security, approaching it from the perspectives of feminist, decolonial, and critical International Political Economy (IPE) scholars. While feminist and decolonial theories help to deconstruct security as an ontological truth and to investigate the power relations inscribed into security, IPE brings forward more classical views on market-state relations and paradigms such as neoliberalism that shape and are shaped by security, as well as greater insight to the constructed value of the public-private binary. The engagement with these three perspectives is key in unpacking the discourses around security and to establish a comprehensive understanding of how I employ security within this thesis. Subsequently, I put my theoretical understanding of security into conversation to existing theories and literature on the GWOT, denoting P/CVE as an agenda firmly rooted in counterterrorism practices which repackages the inscribed logics of the GWOT. Lastly, to finalise my analytical framework, I articulate my key theoretical contribution of West-of-Doom which describes P/CVE's logic of prevention.

### Theoretical explorations of security

To grasp P/CVE as a puzzle piece contributing to the fabrics of security, we need to investigate security as a product of social and political practices. In this thesis, security is not treated as a given unit or as an ontological truth, but rather as a product of power relations grounded in broader social arrangements such as racialised, gendered, and classed natures and histories. With this theoretical foundation of security, I embed myself within the scholarly field of Critical Security Studies (CSS) which has challenged classical and (neo)realist thinking on security since the late 1980s. Particularly the end of the cold war and the dissolution of the Soviet bloc led many scholars to re-evaluate "what (or who) is to be secured, from what threats, and by what means" (Krause and Williams, 1996: 230), gradually broadening the terminology of security to encompass economic, environmental, and social threats (Buzan, 1991). Moreover, these critical discussions broke with the tradition of centring self-interested nation-states as solemn providers and guardians of security, contesting the illusion of total security (Aradau et al., 2015). The

broad spectrum within CSS is minimally united in their acknowledgment of theory as political and its constitutive processes of what we recognise as "everyday life" (Shepherd, 2013):

> It is not pluralism without purpose, but a *critical* pluralism, designed to reveal embedded power and authority structures, provoke critical scrutiny of dominant discourses, empower marginalised populations and perspectives, and provide a basis for alternative conceptualizations (Biersteker, 1989: 264, emphasis in original).

Feminist thinkers have largely contributed to critical streams within security studies by problematising the naturalness of security and questioning who is being secured by security policies (Blanchard, 2003).[4] They offer criticism on IR as a field largely dominated by elite, white, male scholars, and thus, primarily concerned about *Man, the State, and War*, as Kenneth Waltz' (1959) famous book title suggests—a tradition that rendered women invisible from the politics around war and peace, since "international politics is such a thoroughly masculinised sphere of activity that women's voices are considered inauthentic" (Tickner, 1992: 4).

The gendered nature of international security politics is made visible by participants' performance of masculine behaviour, written as rational, logical, and tough, which is deemed necessary to legitimate their positions. Yet, the masculine behaviour is also available to women to be accepted as equal participants—as long as their "feminine" contributions are limited (Cohn, 1993). Cynthia Enloe's *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (1989) further engages with the gendered domain of international security politics by contesting the restriction of security to "high politics". As such, Enloe complicates women's "ordinary" lives and argues that gender is found in all possible imaginaries of the international political continuum, ranging from the diplomatic wives stationed on military bases to sex workers. Her work not only challenged the irrelevance of women in politics, but showed how gendered power is supporting practices that constitute international relations, concluding that "the international is personal [as] governments depend upon certain kinds of allegedly private relationship in order to conduct their foreign affairs" (Enloe, 2000: 196). Most importantly, Enloe cleared the ground for feminist thinking within CSS and raised the profile of feminist criticism of security as an ontological truth. Ann Tickner's book *Gender in International Relations* (1992) was another early feminist intervention to the current security paradigm, by linking the system of international relations to the multilevel, gendered insecurities in the everyday. Tickner introduced gender as a category of analysis and argued that violence produced at the

[4] Generally, feminist thinking within the realm of security is known as Feminist Security Theory (FST) respectively as Feminist Security Studies (FSS).

family, national, and international level is connected, theorising structural violence and insecurities beyond a binary war and peace divide. This raised the question of who is being secured by security policies, acknowledging that not only the production of security policies but also security needs and realities on the ground are highly gendered.

The foundations of Feminist Security Studies (FSS) have dramatically changed the way feminist scholars think, write, and act on subjects of war and peace. Scholars such as Carol Cohn, for instance, root their work in the definition of gender as a system of power, which organises access to rights, resources, and authority amongst others by demarcating categories of people. Thus, gender is not only a set of ideas about women and men, but it is "a way of categorising, ordering, and symbolising power, of hierarchically structuring relationships among different categories of people, and different human activities symbolically associated with masculinity or femininity" (Cohn, 2013: 3). Gender needs to be understood as a noun, a verb, and a logic, as it defines how we name identity categories (noun), how various security politics and practices rely on the logics of gender (verb), and how our cognitive frameworks rely on, make sense of, and relate certain characteristics to certain objects and subjects (Butler, 1990; Cohn, 2013; Shepherd, 2013). Seeing gender as a noun/verb/logic allows for a more complex vision of multiple femininities and masculinities, which are produced within numerous social settings and structures—such as conflict and war. As a result, many feminist scholars troubled essentialist assumptions that link women to peace and men to war by carefully investigating the interrelationship between masculinities and war and by reminding us about the various roles women played in human warfare (Blanchard, 2003).

In sum, adopting a feminist perspective on security resulted in three key shifts. First, it exposed international security politics as a space of gendered power, which has written women largely inexistent and irrelevant. Second, scholars have started to interrogate who is being secured by security policies and defined violence on a spectrum that is always gendered. Third, going beyond binary reflections of men/women and war/peace, the embracing of a feminist perspective on security led to critical reflections on the relations between femininities and masculinities in situations of conflict and war (Blanchard, 2003; Shepherd, 2013; Tickner, 2014). These progresses in feminist theory are crucial in my engagement with security, as they lay the theoretical foundation of treating gender beyond the category "women", but rather acknowledge gender as a system of power and meaning which underwrites social structure. The assumption that security is always gendered—unfolding on different levels and in different spaces—is a theoretical cornerstone of this thesis; I consider gender as a necessary analytical

tool to apprehend the manifestation of who gets to speak security, how security is performed, and how subjectivities are formed within the context of the Kenyan security dispositif[5].

The centralisation of gender as a defining component within security, however, has been a pitfall for feminist scholars to ignore other power relations such as race, class, able-bodiedness, and sexuality, which are crucial dynamics in how security is not only produced but also productive on the everyday level (Shepherd, 2013). The concept of intersectionality, rooted in Black feminist thought, argues that "race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive categories but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that shape complex social inequalities" (Hill Collins, 2015: 2). The theorising of the different identities in shaping power—and security for that matter—as mutually constitutive is imperative when adopting a gender lens within research. As Audre Lorde wrote, "I find I am constantly being encouraged to pluck out some one aspect of myself and present this as the meaningful whole, eclipsing or denying the other parts of the self" (Lorde, 2007: 120). To move beyond unitary identities to explain a meaningful whole, I ground my work in the mutual constitution of the different configurations of power that shape security—my intervention centres gender and race as core analytical frames, exploring primarily the gendered and racialised nature of security. As such, I situate my intervention within work of decolonial feminist scholars, who recognise the specific historical conditions of colonialism as constituting processes that "classify the population in the power structure of the new society, associated with the nature of roles and places in the division of labour and in the control of resources of production" (Quijano, 2000: 216). As I will explain in the next section, counterterrorism and P/CVE are both highly gendered and racialised phenomena; applying a decolonial feminist lens thus facilitates dismantling the underlying power structures of how P/CVE and its logic of prevention operates.

In decolonial thinking, the so-called coloniality of power exceeds the formal end of colonial rule and shapes our contemporary world. As Walter Mignolo describes, the coloniality of power is "the hidden side of Western cosmology and civilisation […] and continues to be

[5] Michel Foucault uses the French terminology of "dispositif" to denote a network of power relations which consists of "discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid" (Foucault, 1980). This network of power relations transforms the human being into "both a subject, and an object, of power relations" (Frost, 2019: 152). The term "dispositif" thus captures the relations between elements and the societal institutionalisation of material, technical, and textual forces; "installations and configurations that (…) obtain power to regulate, govern, institutionalise or empower a specific element in space" (Pløger, 2008: 56). I therefore engage with the terminology of security dispositif as an assemblage of power relations, which is productive in its nature.

hidden by the rhetoric of modernity: salvation, civilisation, progress, development, market democracy, etcetera" (Mignolo, 2014: 25). Hierarchies of race as well as imperial and colonial histories are thus often disregarded as a salient factor in classic security studies—creating the problem of "methodological whiteness" as Gurminder K. Bhambra (201) terms it. The prevalent assumption within traditional security studies of an enemy or hostile aggressor against whom a certain state needs to protect its citizens from is built on the notions of an "us" against "them", often leading to a consideration of the civilised as human against declaring the colonised subjects as external Others, or even non-humans (Adamson, 2020; Lugones, 2010). Colonial imageries and power relations have been dangerously masked through universalism, rather than being acknowledged as exclusionary practices of geopolitical nature. Scholars such as Gayatri Spivak (1993), Homi Bhabha (1994), and V. Y. Mudimbe (1988) expose the intrinsic character of the colonial project as universalist and Eurocentric by the use of particularism, racism, and Otherness. The theory (and practice) of decoloniality reacts to this exact blind spot by focusing on alternative accounts of subjecthood through the disassembly of U.S.-/Eurocentrism and its exceptional presumption of the west[6] as primary subject of the modern world history. The aim is to ground the being and thinking in the experience of the borderlands and of border epistemology, centring marginalised perspectives (Sabaratnam, 2011; Adamson, 2020).

Based on intersectional theory, decolonial feminism builds on the notion of coloniality by stressing the three dimensions of patriarchy, racism, and capitalism as the principal social structures. As such, Lugones' (2010) concept of coloniality of gender illustrates the inseparability of the racialised, capitalist, and gendered axes of the existing global power system. The established colonial structure based on subjected superiority manifests itself not only through the emergence of race and the control of labour, but also through the introduction of gender: "In our colonised, racially gendered, oppressed experiences we are also other than what the hegemon makes us be" (Lugones, 2010: 746). The significance of racial inscription within systems of power, race as a factor of governance, as well as gendered oppression are defining in how we engage with, employ, and experience security. The theoretical foundation of this thesis, therefore, builds on recognising the "colonial/modern gender system" (Lugones, 2010) as configurations of power, while simultaneously rejecting universalism around gendered and

[6] I purposefully use lowercase for the term "west" or "western" in an aim to decenter Eurocentrism and U.S.-centrism in academia.

racialised experiences. I specifically focus on the intersection of racism and patriarchy as social structures to understand how P/CVE materialises in the ontologies, practices, and performances of security—and how the policy and practice is reinforcing, adapting, or challenging existing hegemonic power relations.

These critical engagements with security are central for my thesis—they do not, however, tell us enough about the tensions among states, markets, and societal actors. As I have described above, there is a lack of research on the role of the private security industry within the question of how P/CVE materialises in security. The traditional engagement of critical security studies centres state power and marginalises economic relations, as states are considered the sole bearer of the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. As a result, security studies and IPE have long been treated as distinct entities, without a concerning overlap (Kirshner, 1998). IPE as subject area and method of inquiry investigates the "ever-changing relationships between governments, businesses, and social forces across history and different geographical areas" (Balaam and Dillman, 2014: 8). Drawing from IPE theory thus helps to recognise different perspectives and dominant paradigms, such as economic liberalisms (and in particular neoliberalism), mercantilism, and structuralism, which are producing and productive of security—beyond the state as unitary point of interaction. Economic liberalism and neoliberalism as power structures governing society are particularly important in the ways they reshaped and reconfigured insecurities and how such insecurities should be governed. I therefore scrutinise the inscribed values of (neo)liberalism as they are expressed and how they unfold within notions of security; from the organisation of capital, to the division of labour, and market narratives.

The late 1970s and early 1980s mark the start of a neoliberal era which privileges economic growth over stability, deregulation, and privatisation to allow for greater market competition. The state is hereby regarded as too big and conspicuous—in contrast to the market who is believed to function as a neutral tool that redistributes income (Balaam and Dillman, 2014). Margaret Thatcher's motto TINA "There Is No Alternative" and Ronald Reagan's commitment to a "new federalism" are symbolic for the vastness of neoliberal policies, also affecting state militaries (Steger and Roy, 2010). In combination with the end of the Cold War and the scaling back of public security forces, these policies are theorised as the main driver behind security privatisation (Singer, 2003). Within this rather niche scholarship on private security, which predominantly operates under the premise of a public-private binary, scholars largely focus on the loss of the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence (see for example

Singer, 2003; Kinsey, 2006; Avant, 2005). However, alongside the work of scholars within CSS such as Leander (2005a), Owens (2008), and Abrahamsen and Williams (2011), I question the public-private distinction as a valid theoretical ontology to engage with. Rather, I understand security as a dispositif where different elements come together to work as a system, as a contingent whole—assembling on a public-private continuum. Abrahamsen and Williams' (2009; 2017) work on "global security assemblages" provides a solid foundation to this relational approach, which treats every formation as unique and as such, rejects fixed and stable ontologies:

> In contrast to more conventional approaches, an assemblage perspective does not frame private, non-state security actors in opposition to state authority and the public provision of security. Instead it focuses on the multiplicity of actors, the different forms of power and resources available to them, and the manner in which they come together in a contingent whole to exercise powerful effects in specific sites (Abrahamsen and Williams, 2017: 15).

Feminist-informed scholarship contributes towards this approach by a foregrounding a gendered perspective. As such, the analysis of (hegemonic) masculinities in the private security industry (Barker, 2009; Chisholm, 2017, 2022) or the argument which reads security privatisation as a process of remasculinisation (Stachowitsch, 2013) facilitated the shift away from the public-private divide towards an understanding of a "new public" where private and public security actors equally contribute to the provision of security (Hudson, 2016; Stachowitsch, 2013). However, the public-private division is crucial in analysing the workings of neoliberal values, and how actors, societies, and states make sense of social phenomena. I thus want to emphasise the artificiality of this binary while simultaneously recognising its utility as an analytical frame.

The theoretical foundations of my thesis therefore rest on an understanding of security as relational and dynamic, formed by gendered and racialised governance structures. Security is always a product of power relations, which play on different levels such as global, international, state-societal, and individual and along different spaces. The thesis' emphasis on the private security industry is thus always in conversation with the imagined public, critically investigating the organisation of military violence and its relation to the ontologies, practices, and performances of security as a meaningful whole. The complexity, interdependency, and messiness of diverse power structures within a security dispositif are thus the theoretical heart of this thesis—the aim is to provide an insight into security dispositifs beyond the public-private binary, which are non-linear and paradoxical in their gendered and racialised logic.

Labelling security: P/CVE as iteration of global counterterrorism

Laying out the foundations of how I conceptualise security in my thesis is significant as I engage with P/CVE; a deeply securitised agenda. P/CVE has its roots in counterterrorism, which arose as a direct response to "terrorist" acts. The classification of violence into categories has hereby been a long tradition within security studies, with terrorism as a terminology and specific category gaining academic popularity in the 1960s and 1970s. The emergence of the security studies subfield of mainstream terrorism studies was driven by "asymmetric wars" such as the Vietnam War or anti-colonial movements (Da Silva and Martini, 2021). The centrality of western interests and political motivation in creating the label terrorism has only been critically investigated after the 9/11 attacks and the start of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) through the establishment of Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) (Khan, 2021). As I take a critical stance towards notions of security, I am relying on existing work within CTS which expose the underlying beliefs and logics inherent in counterterrorism and the GWOT. Richard Jackson notes the following:

> The "war on terrorism" is both a set of institutional practices (military and intelligence operations, diplomatic initiatives, special government departments and security bodies, standard operating procedures, specific legislation, and so on), as well as an accompanying discursive project. That is, it is simultaneously a special political language of counterterrorism with its own assumptions, symbolic systems, rhetorical modes and tropes, metaphors, narratives and meanings, and its own exclusive forms of knowledge (2005: 147).

The theorisation of counterterrorism as a discursive practice helps to shine light on the entanglement of its policies and practices within larger systems of power. Connected to the theory presented above, I understand counterterrorism as a mode of governance, domestically but also internationally (McCulloch, 2016), which has its foundation in the colonial past and is epistemologically and structurally tied to whiteness as a social identity (Abu-Bakare, 2020; Thobani, 2007). Counterterrorism thus needs to be read as informed by racial hierarchies which are manifested and sustained through neo-colonial violence. Particularly the institutionalised racism of anti-Muslim and anti-Black sentiments is closely connected to counterterrorism policies, labelling certain forms of violence as "terrorism" (Kundnani, 2015; Khan, 2021). Counterterrorism practices after 9/11 predominantly targeted Muslim communities indirectly as well as directly, and thus generated a dominant narrative that connects Islam to "terrorism" (Kundnani, 2015; Khan, 2021). Studies have shown that violence perpetrated by a member of the Muslim community is not only much more likely to receive media coverage (357% more media coverage than other attacks), but is also five times more

likely to be labelled as a terrorist act (Kearns, Betus, and Lemieux et al., 2019; Betus, Kearns, and Lemieux, 2021), highlighting the construction of Muslims as so-called "suspect" communities (see Kundnani, 2015; Breen-Smyth, 2014; Meier, 2020, 2022). The GWOT and its rhetoric upholds whiteness as innocent, vulnerable, and endangered by the irrational and fanatic non-western Other.

Within this framing of whiteness, both women as a category and gender equality as part of a value system played a key role in legitimising military violence. In Laura Bush's (in)famous radio speech of 2001, she declared that "[t]he fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women" (The Washington Post, 2001). The protection of women through the idea of "liberating" Afghan women was therefore directly used as a justification for war, illustrating how the GWOT is firmly rooted in gendered and racialised narratives of imperialism (Cohn, 2013; Thobani, 2007). These narratives of legitimising military violence are neither new nor unique to the GWOT—rather, there is a long-standing practice of using "the woman question" to justify imperial policies and interventions, a practice Leila Ahmed calls "colonial feminism" (1992) and Gayatri Spivak famously described as "white men saving brown women from brown men" (1988: 93).

The increasing scholarly attention towards the gendered and racialised workings of counterterrorism—and the rising criticism of the GWOT in general—is directly connected with the development and popularity of P/CVE as a preferred framework of engagement. It would be however misleading to regard P/CVE as a completely new modality or paradigm shift within counterterrorism; P/CVE is firmly rooted in counterterrorism logic and not only legitimises, but also allows for an expansion of its approaches. In alignment with recent scholarship, I argue that P/CVE is a continuation of counterterrorism rationalities which repackages the inherent logics rather than abandoning them (see for example Mesok, 2022a, and Bak, Tark, and Schori Liang, 2019). It comes as no surprise then that P/CVE upholds the same racialised and gendered values and beliefs as the GWOT. For instance, there has been a disproportionate focus on Islam within P/CVE, leading to a stigmatisation of Muslim communities. Although recently more attention has been given to right- and left-wing extremism, there remains a conflation of violent extremism with Islam (Schomerus, El Taraboulsi-McCarthy and Sandhar, 2017; Kundnani and Hayes, 2018).[7] Furthermore, the

[7] For instance, the U.K. programme *Prevent* focuses almost exclusively on British Muslim communities and took the size of Muslim population in each local authority area as proxy for the threat of extremism (Kundnani, 2014; Kundnani and Hayes, 2018).

linking of the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda with P/CVE through the UNSC Resolution 2242 in 2015 explicitly brought the gendered workings of P/CVE to daylight. UNSCR 2242 (2015) requires states to adopt a gender-sensitive approach within their counterterrorism strategies, to consult with women's organisations, and to increase the number of women in leadership positions in bodies related to the work of counterterrorism. The explicit engagement with women in the "fight against violent extremism" is based on the problematic use of gender stereotypes, such as the overplay of the role of women as mothers (Rothermel, 2020). In most cases, already existing local programmes by women's organisations are not recognised as contributing to P/CVE, forcing local organisations to adopt the framework on "violent extremism" to access funding (Pearson, 2020; GAPS, 2018; Haynie and de Jonge Oudraat, 2017). The integration of gender into the counterterrorism narrative can thus be understood as the instrumentalisation of gender, subordinating gender equality to the security needs of states (Giscard d'Estaing, 2017; Pearson, 2020). Ultimately, this securitisation of gender can result in greater insecurity for women as the terms of inclusion have already been set by male-dominated security institutions and women do not get to define what constitutes terrorism or how to prevent it (Ní Aoláin, 2016).

The theorisation of P/CVE as an iteration of counterterrorism—with counterterrorism itself being both a product and productive of colonial and patriarchal structures—allows for a close and timely analysis of the racialised and gendered histories within P/CVE and *how* such histories are reproduced within this framework. While critical research on P/CVE is increasing, there remains a significant gap to be filled. Particularly, there is no research available on P/CVE and its connection to the ontology of security; and further, there is no literature whatsoever, academic or otherwise, which considers security from a relational aspect that includes the private security industry. A key contribution of this thesis is thus the unravelling of P/CVE's entanglement of security and development and the exploration of how security is moving, adapting, and shifting through prevention.

### West-of-Doom: P/CVE's logic of prevention

It is crucial to acknowledge the colonial and patriarchal foundations of P/CVE so as to not mistake the agenda as an isolated, newly emergent policy and practice. Yet, the repackaging of counterterrorism logics also brings new elements to the table: in contrast to the traditional counterterrorism regime, the aspect of prevention—and its characteristic of intervening earlier

in the "radicalisation process" and as such broadening the intervention spectrum—is the most dominant feature of the ontologies of P/CVE. In P/CVE's rhetorical framing, prevention operates through managing the underlying conditions and causes to violence, thus relying heavily on what is often referred to as "soft" security approaches which transgress into the development sector and depend on the idea of whole-of-society (UNDP, 2023). Both, the intervention at the stage of "conditions conducive", as well as the target of violent extremism, are exceedingly vague. Therefore, similar to the concept of security, prevention can be everything and anything, without means of measurement and effectiveness, opening the security sector and generating room for manoeuvre within this field.

As a result, how prevention is understood and implemented in programming on the ground is dependent on the actors engaging with P/CVE. Development actors such as the UNDP, local and international NGOs, as well as local and international CSOs focus on structural drivers leading to radicalisation, as presented in the UN's Plan of Action in 2015. National security agencies including the police, intelligence service, and the military, on the other hand, classify prevention with classical policing prevention work. This approach to prevention engages with inhibiting a possible attack from an already (perceived) radicalised person, through methods such as information gathering and sharing, protective security assessments, and de-radicalisation. Depending on the institution, the donor, and the implementing partners, the point of intervention for prevention is defined at different stages of what is perceived as a linear process of radicalisation. The discrepancy and ambiguity of interpretations creates space for different actors such as the private security industry to position and reinvent themselves newly in the field of counterterrorism, refocusing on this traditional, state-centred understanding of prevention work. Additionally, the rationality of including all actors within its prevention work operates as a prominent opportunity to a variety of actors to play a crucial part in the practice of P/CVE.

To capture the ambiguity within P/CVE's logic of prevention, I developed the theory of "West-of-Doom". I utilise West-of-Doom to explain P/CVE's logic of prevention which operates as an epistemic power project—as such, it encapsulates the transformations in security governance through prevention and is a signifier in and of itself that refers to the prevention space. West-of-Doom is adapted from and leans on the popular military vernacular "left of boom", which describes the timeline of events before an explosion or incident, creating the space where one still has the chance to avert a possible crisis by taking necessary measures (Left of Boom, n.d.). The Washington Post's Glossary defines "left of boom" as "U.S. military's effort

to disrupt insurgent cells before they can build and plant bombs" (The Washington Post, 2007). West-of-Doom is similar in its logic; it labels a time period before "Doom" which can be used by public and private security actors to avert impeding violence. This time period is ambiguous and can range from direct interception of an imminent attack to investing in the security institutions through better information systems, training, or equipment—it however does not include structural, developmental measures. I purposefully use "Doom" to refer to the end of this time period—an alleged attack, an eruption of violence. "Doom" with its connotation of death, destruction, a terrible fate signposts towards the public discourse around terrorism, which treats violence from terrorism as exceptional, relying on an urgency to act (Abu-Bakare, 2020). Similarly, "West of" does not only indicate a time period as such, but also signalises the coloniality of power—pointing towards the "us" against "them" logic inherent in the counterterrorism regime of which P/CVE is a part of, where the west adopts Neo-Orientalist imaginaries. These imaginaries heavily rely on gendered and racialised understandings of terrorism, which is ultimately a western construct of monstrosity and abnormality (see for example Puar and Rai, 2002). Walter Benjamin wrote the following: "The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'emergency situation' in which we live is the rule. We must arrive at a concept of history which corresponds to this" (1974). It is this framing of emergency combined with the gendered and racialised Neo-Orientalist politics that shape West-of-Doom—the equivocal logic of prevention within the security side of P/CVE.

I theorise the logic of prevention as an amplification of the politics of protection. At its core, the logic of prevention operates through the question of who is regarded as worthy of protection and who has the means to be protected. Protection is not only a response to violence but also productive of violence, and embraces deeply gendered and racialised notions of the protector and protected. Indeed, notions of protection are shaped by masculinity and femininity, with the protected stereotypically associated with feminised dependency and the protector by masculine characteristics of strength (Eichler, 2015). Yet, my theory West-of-Doom and its logic of prevention moves beyond protection: next to the actors which are included in the discourses of protection (protector and protected), prevention also includes an events-centred logic (the "where" and the "what"), which unlocks a much broader spectrum of interventions. Prevention thus enables a temporal dimension in dealing with a possible imminent future threat, which is regarded as inevitable (McCulloch and Pickering, 2011). In this broader logic of prevention, the question of *who* is to be protected from *whom* is less distinctive—it allows a broader construction of "suspect" communities, a concept heavily

informed by Islamophobia and neo-colonial understandings (Khan, 2021; Kundani, 2015; Al-Bulushi, 2021; Naji and Schildknecht, 2024). The nature of protection operating through prevention is thus much more obscured and less recognisable in its racialised and gendered logics than protection. Moreover, the distinct feature of prevention within P/CVE speaks to accepted forms of violence; preventing non-state violence—regardless of the threat's imminence—legitimates state violence. Again, this speaks to the broader logic of protection, and as such to international norms like the responsibility to protect, which incorporates a strong—and yet violent—prevention aspect (Bellamy, 2008). The core of West-of-Doom is thus the prominent role of prevention, in addition to the logics inherent in counterterrorism, which get transferred to P/CVE. West-of-Doom refers to the expansion of security into development spaces, which allows for a broader spectrum of intervention and a capacious discursive framing that legitimises state violence, rendering (systemic) violence concealed and less recognisable as such.

The theory West-of-Doom is the key piece of my academic intervention and guides my argument(s) throughout the thesis—it is where my theoretical understanding of security as relational and always produced by and productive of social power structures meets the critical investigation of P/CVE's ontologies, practices, and performances. West-of-Doom accounts for two key historical shifts in the conceptualisation and administration of security: first, the marketisation of security through neoliberalism and second, the reframing of military interventions as humanitarian (liberal) interventions. Fuelled by the neoliberal belief that the private sector conveys greater efficiency in service delivery as well as a cost-reduction benefit—particularly because the private sector does not have to satisfy the political objectives of politicians—a new security architecture emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s where tasks such as fighting, training, intelligence support, and logistics and planning are outsourced to the private sector (Boycko, Shleifer, and Vishny, 1996). Neoliberalism as a governmental ideology and governing structure thus substantially transformed how military labour is organised and simultaneously increased its market value through outsourcing it to the private security industry services (Eichler, 2014). In 2007, the U.S. had 160,000 military personnel deployed in Iraq and hired a total of 190,000 private contractors. The context of Afghanistan accounts for similar numbers (Schwartz, 2009). This trend of privatisation has not only been witnessed in state

military organisations, but also within most UN entities[8] (see for example Østensen, 2013) as well as humanitarian organisations (see for example Stoddard, Harmer, and DiDomenico, 2009). The neoliberal commodification of security offers insight into how the market has become more central in thinking security, creating not only space for a more diverse range of actors to move into security as a business, but also indicating a constant re-orientation towards new revenues. P/CVE's logic of prevention inherent in West-of-Doom therefore operates as an easy target and attainable space to react to these market relations.

The second historical shift which empowered the logic of prevention is the fundamental revolution of centring the human (and human rights) in international affairs, specifically during the 1990s. The dysfunctionality of the state has been recognised as one of the primary causes for insecurity, hence shifting the attention away from the primacy of national security towards individuals and social groups. Further, there has been a growing focus on the threat to daily survival, acknowledging the causes of violence that lie in economic and social inequalities and exclusions (Cockburn, 2013; Hänggi, 2004). In 1994, the UN Human Development Report coined the term "human security" as a condition where people have "the right to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential" (UN General Assembly, 2012). This development paved the way for justifying interventions based on narratives of denied human rights and the responsibility to protect (Lipsey, 2016). Humanitarian (liberal) interventionism argues for the necessity of military intervention to meet humanitarian merits: the gendered and racialised power relations involved talk about rescue and salvation, about charity and benevolence, suggesting a superior self against an inferior Other who is passive, doomed, and in need of help:

> Those […] characters are portrayed as the heroic agents of progress, democratic values, peace and security, who shape target states through their interventions. The images of new threats of violence and instability serve to announce the attractiveness of such heroes as guarantors of stability, bearers of democracy and protectors of human rights and of the oppressed (Orford, 1999: 672).

The interventions serve "as forms of 'riot control' aimed at upholding the 'liberal peace'" (Duncanson, 2013: 3), and promote the story of "white knights" in "dark lands" (Razack, 2004). Humanitarian (liberal) interventionism is thus a pillar of West-of-Doom, reflected in the

[8] The critical reporting on the UN's use of private security and military companies (PMSCs) led to an internal investigation (https://www.ohchr.org/en/Issues/Mercenaries/WGMercenaries/Pages/StudyOnpmsc.aspx).

gendered and racialised enactment of P/CVE. Recognising both the security marketisation and humanitarian interventionism that inform West-of-Doom is key in analysing the ontologies, practices, and performances of security along the public-private continuum.

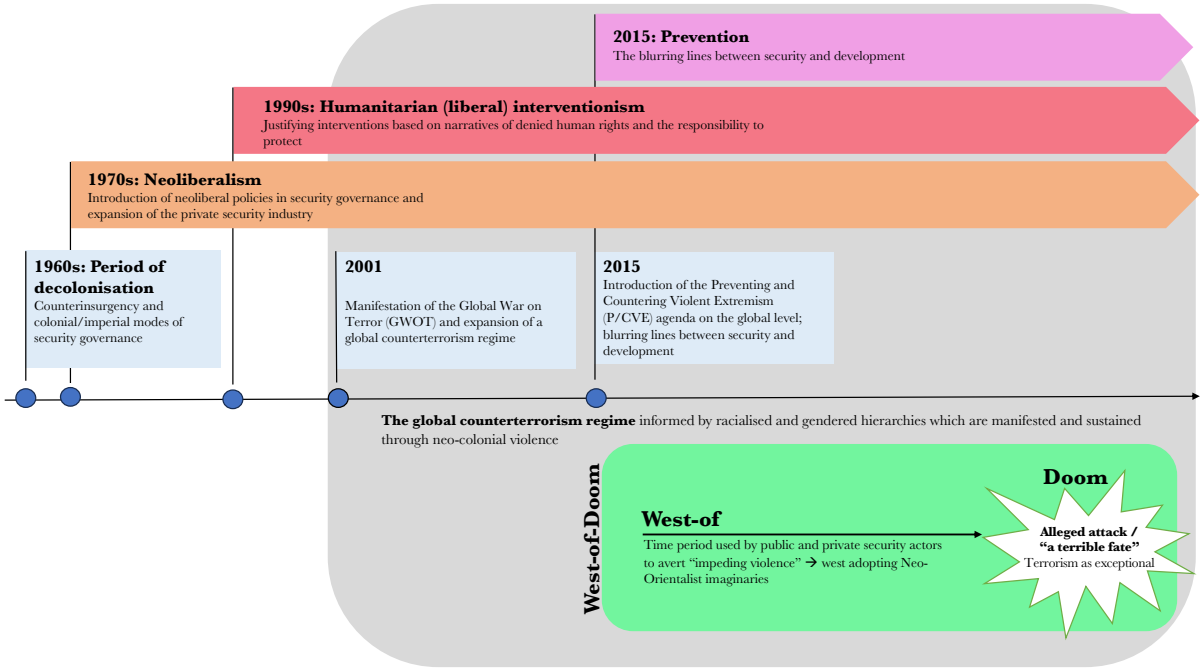


*Figure 1: The theory of West-of-Doom embedded within the described historical shifts.*

## Research methodology and methods

As outlined in the introductory remarks, the project asks the following question: how does P/CVE materialise in the ontologies, practices, and performances of security along the public-private continuum? Based on the feminist and decolonial theoretical foundations of this project, I ground myself in the practice of feminist ethnography as a methodology as well as feminist ethnographic methods. The logic and philosophy—and as such the methodology—of feminist ethnography relies on a

> feminist sensibility, and commitment to paying attention to marginality and power differentials; these include not only gender, but also race, class, nation, sexuality, ability, and other areas of difference; challenges marginalisation and injustice; […] [and] acknowledges and reflects upon power relations within the research context (Davis and Craven, 2016: 11).

The chosen methodology provides a critical tool to engage the contradictions and chaos of how security unfolds in the everyday. As mentioned in my analytical framework, truths are

intelligible in different ways and are highly contextual; as such, science is always a historical process and is always open-ended (Hale, 2008). In a simplified cause-and-effect relationship, P/CVE operates as the independent and security along the public-private continuum as the dependent variable. As I explored in my analytical framework, security is not an ontological truth but rather a product of power relations built in broader social and political arrangements. Also, security is never simply public or private, but part of a security dispositif where different elements come together as a contingent whole. Yet, I want to stress that there is no one-way cause and effect relationship nor a clear linearity between P/CVE and security. On the contrary, the security dispositif and its relation to the space of prevention is complex and messy. P/CVE is equally productive of and produced by security, and the racialised and gendered logics of prevention articulated in West-of-Doom can be limiting and simultaneously creating opportunities for actors to gain agency and thwart existing power hierarchies. Feminist ethnography as a methodology thus serves best to attend to the tensions and paradoxes forming around P/CVE, the logic of prevention, and on how security is understood, practiced, and performed.

I answer my research question by using the primary research data collected in and on the context of Kenya and, to a certain degree, Somalia. For the case selection, three criteria were considered: first, the presence of the GWOT in the given context through discourses, activities, and interventions; second, an already established and thriving industry of P/CVE programming; and third, an existing and ideally growing private security industry in the context. Although the three defined criteria would also apply to certain other contexts, such as Nigeria, Philippines, or Chad, Kenya marks the most pronounced context for these three criteria. In addition, the context of Kenya provided a persuasive advantage due to the factors of safety and mobility; as anticipated, I was able to move freely most of the time and in most spaces, which facilitated the data collection process of a subject matter often restricted and inaccessible in other contexts.

From September 2021 to June 2022, I lived in Nairobi, Kenya, to gather data on my project. As Kenya is a country of more than 580,000 $km^2$, the data collection phase focused on the Nairobi Region, the Coast Region (Mombasa, Kwale, and Lamu), and the Eastern Region (Isiolo, Garissa, and Wajir). With the help of a local research assistant, these regions were chosen due to the manifestation of violent extremism and correspondingly, P/CVE programming. A total of five fieldtrips to the mentioned areas (Mombasa and Kwale were one fieldtrip) were usually the length of three to five days, where we had a tight programme of

visiting communities, conducting interviews, and facilitating focus group discussions. In three particular areas my colleague and I were wearing appropriate garments, including a head-scarf.

Collecting my data within these regions, I investigate five different clusters that contribute to the security sector: private security, military, police, government/administration, and civil society organisation (CSO)/community. The category "Other" as reflected in Table 1 consists of data collected which do not match the other categories; the interviews and informal talks include people who are consultants, researchers, and diplomats. My sampling method was primarily based on access; it has been proven as extremely difficult to talk to security actors in the context, due to the sensitivity of the project and an undeniable suspicion towards researchers (see also Chapter 2). The sampling method applied was hence on the merits of non-probability—which means the selection centred non-random criteria (Acharya et al., 2013)—where access determined my selection of who and with which context I engaged. Once access was granted, I relied on snow-ball sampling (Weiss, 1994) of getting referred and recommended by my participants; a method which worked particularly well for the private security industry. Non-probability sampling such as snow-ball sampling is often criticised as containing a risk of "bias" since sampling units are not independent from each other and there might be a tendency of obtaining similar pieces of knowledge (Acharya et al., 2013). There are two remarks on this: first, a classical random sample would have not been possible for my project, given the nature of the security sector and the hesitance, and the resistance, to engage with me. Secondly, this project does not attempt to create "true" or "unbiased" knowledge, as stated earlier. Knowledge and its production are necessarily and inherently political. As many Black feminist and decolonial scholars (see for example Moraga and Anzaldua, 1983; Hill Collins, 1990; Mignolo, 2000) have argued, knowledge is always partial and in conversation with the geopolitical and body-political location of the subject that speaks (Shepherd, 2013; Grosfoguel, 2007).

My data collection methods consisted of interviews, participant observation including focus group discussions (FGDs), and informal talks. These methods are common in feminist ethnographic work (see Davis and Craven, 2016) and were indispensable for my project to receive the data I required to answer my research question. The interviews were primarily semi-structured and open-ended; while I started with the introduction to the subject matter, I let the participants guide me through their narratives and perceptions. This allowed for a participant-oriented conversation flow, which highlighted topics important to participants, ensuring their voices came through (Davis and Craven, 2016). Moreover, it facilitated a more relaxed

environment which resembled an ordinary conversation—a condition that was key for my participants, as the sensitive subject requested them to feel at ease and not subject of an interrogation. Most of the interviews, participant observation, and informal talks were not recorded, again due to the sensitivity of the subject. In these cases, I asked the participants for permission to take notes by hand while performing a close write-up on my laptop in the immediate aftermath of the interviews. Yet, there were a few interviews with participants of the private security industry where I felt the discomfort of my counterpart when I was writing things down—looking suspiciously at my notebook, sometimes even hesitating to continue or stopping to talk. In such incidents, I closed my notebook to create a more trustful atmosphere and relied on my memory for the write-up. While the interviews provide a lot of information and knowledge, they are insufficient to attend to power differentials and grasp the complexity of security as a political and social practice. Both, the participant observation as well as the informal talks—which can be considered as a form of participant observation—bridge this limitation by relying on detailed impressions and reflections. The informal talks consisted usually of one-on-one conversations without a formal interview structure and took place in informal settings such as dinner talks, café, or in an Uber. The participant observation method entailed the organisation of FGDs, visits to private security training sites, or conference and exhibition attendance. Most importantly, I wrote down ethnographic fieldnotes to reflect on all of these experiences throughout my stay in Kenya. Additionally, next to the field journal entries on situations and general observations about myself and the field I was situated in, I complemented each interview with an ethnographic note about my positionality and general reflections. A close reading of my reflexivity is provided in Chapter 2, where I discuss marginality, power differentials within the research context, and the impact of feminist ethnography on my research.

As reflected in Table 1, a total of 87 data points were collected for the purpose of this project. While these 87 data points account for interviews, participant observation, and informal talks, they do not include the field notes. The overall results are unexpected and very pleasing: while I had a hunch, a gut feeling, about the importance of the private security industry within P/CVE from the start of my research project, I was unsure if I would get access to an industry that desperately tries to avoid publicity and scrutiny by the public. The fact that I had 34 interviews and data points—the largest part of the data collection—from the private security industry is thus a major value-added of the research project. On the contrary, even though I was equally reluctant to assume accessibility to police and military officers, I was

surprised by the low turnout. Even with the research assistant facilitating contacts, it was difficult to get police and military officers speak with me. Yet, participants from the government/administration as well as CSO/community cluster were more open to talk and offered knowledge about the military and the police.

| | Private security | Military | Police | Gov / Administration | CSO / Community | Other | **Total** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Interviews | 23 | 4 | 4 | 11 | 12 | 1 | **55** |
| *Of which women participants* | *2* | *0* | *0* | *1* | *3* | *0* | ***6*** |
| Participant observation (incl. FGDs) | 5 | - | 1.5 | - | 4.5 | - | **11** |
| Informal Talks | 6 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 7 | **21** |
| Total | 34 | 5 | 6.5 | 12 | 21.5 | 8 | **87** |

*Table 1: Overview of data collection, September 2021 – July 2022.*

I transcribed the interviews and focus group discussions where I had the permission to record. Abiding to ethical and procedural safeguards during fieldwork, I obtained voluntary informed consent from the research participants prior to each interview and participant observation, informing the participants of all aspects and risks associated with participating in the study. In some circumstances, I used oral consent instead of written, given that asking for written consent is seen as mistrustful within certain communities. Also, all identifiable data of participants and their organisation have been anonymised unless the participants actively indicated otherwise, with an awareness of the possible risks they might face if their names are used, or if they are public figures who consent to their name being used. For the participants who chose anonymisation, the raw transcripts of their interviews are kept non-anonymous during analysis, but the raw data will be securely stored and only available to the research team. I further attended to the duty of care of conducting my research by receiving approval by the Ethics Commission of the University of Basel (UEK) as well as the Kenyatta University Ethics Review Committee. Furthermore, as a researcher in a foreign country, I have obtained a research license issued by the Kenyan National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation and was registered as affiliated researcher of the British Institute in Eastern Africa (BIEA).

Lastly, the tools used for the data analysis are yet again rooted in feminist ethnographic practice. Adhering to a critical discourse analysis (CDA), the socio-political-historical context of the data is included to the analysis, as well as the power differentials between the researcher and the research participants. As such, discourse is assumed as part of a larger network of power relations attending to knowledge, materiality, and history (Hook, 2001). This method enabled me to approach my data in an open manner, looking for previously unseen patterns. My analytical process was circular rather than linear, as I was re-reading and re-listening to the data multiple times. This circular motion of data analysis had one main objective: finding similar configurations of how security comes through in my data. I found four emerging patterns on how security is made meaningful in the context of Kenya (and to some degree Somalia):

1) Bodies and relation to self, referring to the subjectivities which played a role in the participants reasoning for what they do and how they do it. How is security understood in relation to the self? What logics of security are internalised? How are my own embodied identities signposting values of P/CVE?

2) Knowledge networks and values, denoting the privilege of who gets to speak security and what values are entailed in speaking security knowledge. Who gets to speak security? What is considered valuable knowledge?

3) Performativity, describing the creation of an institutional and cross-sectoral identity through actions and discourses. What logics, beliefs, and narratives are deployed and what activities centre around prevention? How are these different to conventional logics of counterterrorism?

4) Spatiality, symbolising the difference in how security is made meaningful across space and materialises in the periphery and within marginalised communities. How is security made meaningful across space? How does security materialise in the periphery?

To explore these four patterns of P/CVE materialising in the ontologies, practices, and performances of security, I choose feminist ethnography as a methodology to produce academic work which contributes towards a social justice vision which critically examines power structures such as colonialism, capitalism, militarism, sexism, and which is in service of the people, communities, and the contexts I study. In her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda

Tuhiwai Smith writes that "[t]he ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world's colonised peoples" (1999: 1). Remembering and identifying this history, I recognise writing as a process which is "political, emancipatory, hopeful, emotional, and complicated" (Chisholm, 2017: 122).

## Kenya: Histories of a global counterterrorism regime

My intervention on the nexus between P/CVE and security takes the case study of Kenya, which has proven to be an adequate context to gather data. The second iteration of the UNDP's report *Journey to Extremism in Africa* published in 2023 quotes a decisive statement by the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres: "If nothing is done, the effects of terrorism, violent extremism, and organised crime will be felt far beyond the region and the African continent" (Antonio Guterres cited in UNDP, 2023: 3). Terrorism and violent extremism have always been understood as global issues that could potentially spread and threaten countries of the Global North. Today, Africa is marked as the global epicentre of terrorism and violent extremism given the continent's upsurge in violent activities in the recent years (UNDP, 2023). Not long after the invasions in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S., its western allies, and international institutions have started to shift their attention towards the continent: in 2003/2004, the Bush administration launched the Sahara-Sahelian front to justify military intervention in the (oil-rich) northern Sahel regions of Mali, Niger, and Chad, which became known as the "second front" of the GWOT (Keenan, 2007). Later, in 2008, the U.S. established the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) as a new, independent, fully autonomous military combatant command (Keenan, 2010). Today, vast areas of the continent—usually referred to as sub-Saharan Africa—are considered to be the "front line" in the war against violent extremism, an "arc of instability" stretching from the Sahel in the West to Somalia in the East (Abrahamsen, 2018). The second iteration of the UNDP's report *Journey to Extremism in Africa* published in 2023 states the following:

> Sub-Saharan Africa has become the global epicentre of violent extremist activity. Worldwide deaths from terrorism have declined over the past five years, but attacks in this region have more than doubled since 2016. In 2021, almost half of all terrorism-related deaths were in sub-Saharan Africa, with more than one-third in just four countries: Somalia, Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali (UNDP, 2023: 14).

The "dramatic shifts" of violent extremism activity (UNDP, 2023: 14) from the Middle East and North Africa to sub-Saharan Africa meant a new direction within the counterterrorism regime which put the African continent at the very centre of endeavours.

The UNDP reports mentions three violent extremist groups responsible for the majority of fatalities: ISIS/Daesh, the Al-Qaeda affiliation Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wa al-Muslimeen (JNIM), and Al-Shabaab (UNDP, 2023). Established in 2006, Al-Shabaab—which is Arabic for "the Youth"—is considered to be the main threat in East Africa. The Salafist militant group first emerged as an urban militia in defence of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in Mogadishu, and later developed to a robust armed group based in Somalia and Kenya. Al-Shabaab adopts a cross-border military strategy across six countries in the Horn of Africa and effectively controls many rural areas in the South, as it pursues statehood aspirations in Southern Somalia. Next to targeting state militaries in Kenya and Somalia, the group is responsible for devastating civilian killings in the two countries (Anderson and McKnight, 2015; UNDP, 2023).

Considering the insecurities resulting from Al-Shabaab activities, Somalia's neighbouring country Kenya is considered as the key for stabilising the region. As a comparatively wealthy and politically stable nation, the country carries a geopolitical and economic importance which positioned Kenya as the main regional ally for the U.S. and other western countries in the GWOT and general counterterrorism strategies (Badurdeen and Goldsmith, 2018). However, Kenya's experience with political violence termed "terrorism" or "violent extremism" predates Al-Shabaab. The attack on the Norfolk Hotel in Nairobi in 1980 and the major U.S. embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar-es Salaam in 1998—the latter being attributed to Al-Qaeda—put Kenya on the map of counterterrorism activities (Crisman et al., 2020). In the years after 9/11, the rhetoric of the fight against terrorism spiked in the country, declaring the U.S. embassy bombing as an "act of terrorism" and giving rise to the establishment of new structures and institutions, such as the Anti-Terror Police Unit (ATPU), created in 2003, and the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) in 2004. With the rise of Al-Shabaab after 2006 and the backing of western allies, Kenya's counterterrorism regime became much stronger. In 2011, the Kenyan Defence Forces (KDF) launched *Operation Linda Nchi*, which means "Protect the Nation" and intended to prevent Al-Shabaab of spilling into Kenya (Anderson and McKnight, 2014). As a direct response to this military intervention, the country experienced an inordinate number of attacks by Al-Shabaab, two of them in the city of Nairobi (Cannon and Ruto Pkalya, 2017): the Westgate shopping mall attack in 2013, killing 67 people, and the DusitD2 hotel attack in 2019, leaving 21 people dead (Aroussi, 2020). Both

of these incidents—next to the Garissa University attacks in 2016—are crucial within Kenya's counterterrorism narrative, being cited and referenced the most, as they have rekindled the 9/11 discourse of combatting terrorism with all necessary means (Crisman et al., 2020).

In 2012, Kenya adopted the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA), which defines a terrorist act as

> an act or threat of action—which is carried out with the aim of (i) intimidating or causing fear amongst members of the public or a section of the public; or (ii) intimidating or compelling the Government or international organizations to do, or refrain from any act; or (iii) destabilizing the religious, political, Constitutional, economic or social institutions of a country, or an international organisation (POTA, 2012: 6f.).

Even though an amendment of the act excludes protests and demonstrations from the definition of a terrorist act, this definition is very broad and leaves a lot of room for security institutions to abuse this language to target, silence, and harm groups and communities which are marginalised, such as Muslim communities or civil society organisations. Moreover, the POTA resulted in the strengthening of the NCTC as a multi-agency institution which serves to "prevent, detect, deter and disrupt terrorism acts" (NCTC, n.d.). In close collaboration with the ATPU, the NCTC makes strategic use of the politics of fear to leverage its power to act. In 2014, the power of state institutions to act on terrorist threats were strengthened by the Security Laws Amendment Act (SLAA), which increased surveillance powers and criminalised radicalisation and the participation in terrorist training or instruction (Crisman et al., 2020). Terrorism as a possible and imminent threat has been used as a mode of governance since nearly the beginning of the post-9/11 period, providing a framework that justifies—and to a certain extent legalises—the excessive use of force by state security forces. As I elaborate in Chapter 4, Kenya's security institutions are infamous for their excessive use of force, crackdowns on minorities, and extrajudicial killings (Balakian, 2016; Glück, 2017).

Interestingly, Kenya has taken a pioneer role in pushing the agenda of P/CVE. As one of the first countries worldwide, Kenya adopted a National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism (NSCVE) already in 2016—just shortly after the Plan of Action on the Prevention of Violent Extremism was published by the UN Secretary General in 2015. The NSCVE as a guiding national framework includes nine pillars (media and online, psychosocial, education, legal and policy, arts and culture, training and capacity building, political, faith and ideology, and security) and predominantly puts the responsibility for the implementation on country governments and local civil society organisations who are encouraged to develop county action

plans (CAP) (Sharamo and Mohamed, 2020; Crisman et al., 2020). The Kenyan government's recognition of the "whole-of-society" approach and the importance of different interlocutors in responding to terrorism created space for numerous donors and a plethora of P/CVE programming—within the development sector, P/CVE has become the predominant frame of programming and receiving funding (Sharamo and Mohamed, 2020; see also Aroussi, 2020, and Mesok, 2022b for a close reading of P/CVE programming Kenya).

The close collaboration with the U.S. government as a main ally as well as the swift adoption and implementation efforts of the P/CVE agenda are two factors making Kenya the most suitable case for gathering evidence on the outlined research question, which investigates the manifestation of P/CVE in the ontologies, practices, and performances of security. The U.S. considers Kenya as a test bed for counterinsurgency strategies, a "space between war and peace in a complex, volatile, uncertain and ambiguous environment—an environment of 'adversarial competition with a military dimension, short of armed conflict' sometimes referred to as the 'Grey Zone'" (Bolduc, Puglisi, and Kaailau, 2016). The implementation of the global counterterrorism regime on the national and local level in Kenya is thus key for this project.

Kenya's counterterrorism regime is also closely tied to the growing relevance of private security in the East African country. After the Westgate mall attack in 2013, there was an exponential boom within the private security sector, catapulting it to becoming the biggest employer sector in Kenya (Zheng and Xia, 2021). In 2016, the Kenyan government passed the Private Security Regulation Act, which aimed to regulate foreign ownership, the services provided, as well as the cooperation with the national security institutions (Ramadhan et al., 2021). The biggest margin of the private security industry is taken up by the guarding subsector, yet, there is also proof of private security contractors taking up other tasks involving combatting criminality or training and capacity building (see for example the *Baseline Study on the Private Security Industry in Kenya,* 2019 by the Usalama Reforms Forum). While private security companies were founded against the backdrop of protecting a white upper-class, the military and police learned quickly that the private security sector is of crucial importance to them. In their report on the role and accountability of private security in countering violent extremism in Kenya, the Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies (CHRIPS) writes:

> There is more recognition by state agencies due to complementary roles that the guards play, especially in preventing and countering terrorist attacks. Private security companies provide the police with information from surveillance, and searches they conduct on people and cars entering buildings. Some of the companies hire police officers to accompany guards while conducting patrols and surveillance (Ramadhan et al., 2021: 3).

The importance of the private security industry in Kenya and its interrelatedness to the counterterrorism regime makes Kenya a compelling case to analyse the materialisation of P/CVE in formations of security along the public-private continuum.

## Chapter breakdown

The overall objective of this thesis is the exploration of how P/CVE materialises in the ontologies, practices, and performances of security. Relying on feminist and decolonial foundations, I trace the gendered and racialised productions of security along the four observed patterns of bodies and relation to self, knowledge networks and values, performativity, and spatiality—each pattern building on my theory West-of-Doom. As an extended analysis of my research methodology, Chapter 1 closely examines how my own positionality is linked to the workings of counterterrorism. Fieldwork as a physical as well as epistemological space, which is constitutive of knowledge production, is a site where the hidden transcripts of power are shaped, challenged, and created through the researchers' interactions. As such, I explore the identities I assumed during fieldwork and how these identities intersect with my interlocutors, ultimately influencing how I approached my research, my interviewees, and my data analysis. This chapter discusses two major moments of exposure of my positionality: first, the reoccurring theme of being read as a spy of western security agencies and as a donor, both inherently tied to my whiteness and the privileges attached to it. Second, by the assumption of a shared whiteness with my interlocutors, I describe how my body was gendered and sexualised beyond my will, including my subconscious replication of gendered and racialised power dynamics. Next to its methodological value, the chapter provides first glimpses into the racialised and gendered workings of counterterrorism.

In Chapter 2, I attend to the question of how the logic of prevention manifests in knowledge networks and their inscribed values. This chapter thus investigates the institutionalisation of networks of security knowledge and asks *who* is able to speak to matters of security and *what knowledge* is deemed valuable. By focusing specifically on the private security industry, I demonstrate how the logic of prevention allows for a manifestation of dominant colonial and patriarchal hierarchies through the redefinition of the imaginary public-private divide. Taking a deep dive in the existing security dispositif in Kenya, I explore the political nature of the organisation of labour where hard security approaches are associated with countries from the Global South such as South Africa and Israel and understandings of more

appropriate ways of performing security are closely tied to western countries—in particular, the U.K. and the inherent values of British militarism. I reveal that the private security industry plays a prominent role within the question of *who* is considered knowledgeable, with neoliberal market-logics enabling not only the transcendence of the public-private binary but equally protecting the people deemed knowledgeable based on their association with British militarism. Lastly, this chapter explores what I call the terminology of "British militarism plus", a concept that denotes less-aggressive, prevention-related approaches to security; forms of security which are deemed more acceptable and tied to a specific group of people within the Kenyan security dispositif.

Looking beyond the people and institutions who get to "speak" security, Chapter 3 demonstrates how security materialises within marginalised communities who are left in charge of their own security. I highlight the connection between the lack of state provision of security, the absence of a private security industry, and the commodification of security which leaves communities at the margins no other choice other than to invest their unpaid labour in the provision of security. Arguing alongside theories of feminist geography, the chapter elucidates how spatiality operates as a form of power. As such, I suggest that the prominence of community policing is distinctively tied to P/CVE and its exclusionary logics which manifests in spatial marginalisation. I observed two different forms of community policing in different spaces: *Nyumba Kumi*, a security initiative to contain violent extremism through reporting procedures in marginalised areas, and a private, informally-organised network of community policing that serves a racialised middle- and upper-class of Nairobi, who are regarded as "outsiders" and "non-Kenyans". These distinct forms of community policing are a combined product of oppressive power structures and agency as survival strategy of the communities at hand.

In Chapter 4, I build on the previous investigated (security) actors within the Kenyan security dispositif, from privileged to marginalised, by exploring how security becomes evident through security practices related to P/CVE, prevention, and my theory West-of-Doom. I apply Judith Butler's theory of performativity to trace the relationship between actions and discourse, analysing the complex, messy, and seemingly contradictory manifestation of security through prevention—both in the public and private security industry. Again, by stressing the artificiality of the public-private dichotomy, I purposefully use the analysis of both sectors alongside each other to consider resemblances, patterns, and interdependencies within the given security dispositif. I suggest that the logic of prevention rewrites acceptable forms of

security, centring less-aggressive and sequenced methods of security enactment. Importantly, the discourses surrounding these more acceptable forms of security are geared towards discourses of development and humanitarianism, conflating security and development. Both, the Kenyan police as well as actors of the private security industry, persistently utilise a development-oriented framing of their identity, mostly by capitalising on values surrounding reform, community engagement, intelligence gathering, and training. Yet, as I demonstrate, the discourses of a specific identity branded as "good" and "ethical" are seemingly in contrast with other actions taken by the same actors. The contradictory enactment of security by the police through police brutality on the one hand and community engagement on the other, highlights a discrepancy between a self-imposed discourse and actions taken on the ground. The theoretical concept of performativity helps to look beyond a certain "self-image" and to deconstruct and contest the subjects at hand. As such, I argue that the rewriting of security through the adoption of development-oriented discourses legitimises and supports the expansion of the security sector—yet remaining obscured and concealed as such. I prove that this expansion is highly gendered in the way security is enacted: stereotypical attributes of femininity, often linked to motherhood, are utilised to exploit services associated with prevention, creating new roles in the security sector specifically for women.

The last chapter of this thesis takes a closer look at the individuals, their identities, and their subjectivities constituted within the above-described space of rewriting security. Looking exclusively at a small and exclusive group of ex-military, white, and largely British men of the private security industry, I trace the different spheres of racialised and gendered identity production, analysing the interplay between public security and private security against the backdrop of neoliberal subjectivities. In contrary to the conceptualisation of private contractors being motivated by profit only, I prove that there is a strong connection to military virtues such as obedience, loyalty, and a deep sense of responsibility. I thus argue that there is a transference of military subjectivities to the private security industry, which is bound to the exceptionality of "being military"—and thus an exceptional subject. The exceptionalism of being military is crucial in understanding the reciprocity between the public and private security sector: while the sense of responsibility and the belief to have to be part of a "force for good" are values directly transferred from the military, the personalisation of this responsibility and the loneliness they experienced are products that speak to the private security industry. I further explore this in-between space of identity formation against narratives of Otherness. I suggest that such demarcation is an unavoidable part of exceptionalism that operates by distancing themselves

from the mercenary, and the *Blackwater-curse*, but also against the geopolitical Other. Furthermore, I analyse how demarcation operates within the confined racialised imageries of "Africa", where white, exceptional masculinities clash with perceived subordinate masculinities of Kenyan security personnel, holding on to binaries of the developed-underdeveloped, the skilled-unskilled, as well as the appropriate-subordinate. Chapter 5 thus offers a glimpse into how the conflation of security and development translates to revised masculinities, which entails the militarised, altruistic, and exceptional self.

# CHAPTER 1

## THE FIELD AS A SITE OF POWER: EXPLORING THE RACIALISED AND GENDERED WORKINGS OF COUNTERTERRORISM THROUGH MY BODILY EXPERIENCE

> The positionality I take up in these field trips […] is as an innocent student (who I actually am), who is happy to dress appropriately (which I am). I am student-Darja, not tough-Darja. Sensitive-Darja, not military-masculine-Darja (Field journal entry, 21 April 2022).

> We sat at a table together and ate something small (sandwiches which he paid for) and he didn't really let me introduce myself or let me ask proper questions, so it was more of a weird talk that I felt I didn't have any say in. I usually try to carefully think about my positionality in every interview and of course, the idea was here to have the same as with other private security guys (nice girl that has a bit of a security background herself, easy to chat with, but competent). It didn't work with Tom* at all, he made me feel like a young girl that doesn't know shit, and as it is so often, being put in this role I felt that I also behaved in this role. I didn't manage to change the direction of the talk or ask the questions I prepared and I said things that I afterwards thought 'why the hell did I say that' (Field journal entry, 13 July 2022, *name is pseudonymised).

The two introductory field journal entries serve as an illustration of how we as human beings function within a global "racial contract", where gendered and racialised identities are thoroughly tied to the researcher, the field, and the researcher within the field (Berry et al., 2017). Fieldwork, as both a physical as well as epistemological space, is constitutive of knowledge production and thus a site of power where the hidden transcripts of power are shaped, challenged, and created through the researchers' interactions. In other words, as Berry et al. referenced, "the field travels with and within our bodies" (2017: 540). As a doctoral researcher, I investigate how P/CVE materialises in the ontologies, practices, and performances of security. Being part of a research project, I was able to go to Kenya for ten months to collect data on the intersection of counterterrorism, P/CVE, and traditional as well non-traditional security actors. The prolonged stay of ten months—rather than getting in and out of the country for a few days or weeks—is necessary for ethnographic methodology. Both

the subject who writes as well as the subjects who are written about, have been largely omitted in academic research through the dominant value of objectivity and "neutral research"; (feminist) ethnography aims to re-establish this obscured subject (Davis and Craven, 2016). Since the poststructuralist turn, feminist interventions have stressed the importance of a dialectic relationship between objectivity and subjectivity of one's research by acknowledging the researchers' own identities as created, contested, negotiated, fragmented, and transformed (Makana, 2018). Feminist ethnography thus serves as an intervention and even corrective to neoliberal projects which centre an apolitical logic around individualism and objectivity (Davis and Craven, 2011). The purpose of this chapter is therefore to investigate my own positionality and how my bodily experience reveals the gendered and racialised workings of counterterrorism.

The growing prominence of women of colour feminism since the 1980s and 1990s had an enormous influence on feminist ethnography. Scholars criticised the prevalent practice of western feminism which constructed "third-world women" as a homogenous group; white, middle-class, and heterosexual women would assume a universal experience through the false homogenisation of women under the presumption of patriarchy as the biggest denominator of oppression (Abu-Lughod, 1990). In *Under Western Eyes*, Chandra Talpade Mohanty argues that "sisterhood cannot be assumed on the basis of gender; it must be forged in concrete, historical, and political practice and analysis" (1984: 33). Mohanty exposes the false assumption of universalism based on sameness and traces the monolithic notions of patriarchy to the hegemony of western scholarship. The importance of the researchers' own positionality is therefore undeniable in the analysis of the transcripts of power, which are shaped by and through the relations between the researcher and the environment around them. It is key to acknowledge difference in order to "better see the connections and commonalities because no border or boundary is ever complete or rigidly determining. The challenge is to see how difference allows us to explain the connections and border crossings better and more accurately" (Mohanty, 2003: 226). Feminist ethnography serves as an important tool to examine multiple forms of oppression without romanticising and universalising a shared women's experience. As such, women of colour feminism makes a critical contribution in connecting the uneven systems of power and privilege to people's everyday lives. Recognising and exploring the contradictory, difficult, and sometimes irreconcilable positions of the researcher in the field produces knowledge around power and privilege, a fundamental

requirement of the social studies' ambition to explain the world, or a phenomenon within the world we live in (Haraway, 1991).

It is important to acknowledge the colonial origins of ethnography as a research method, as it started off as a study of race and comparative human culture in the period of the "New World" colonisation—ethnography as part of anthropological investigation was therefore a steady part of colonial enterprise of travel (Rees and Gatenby, 2014). Feminist ethnography, on the contrary, strives towards the undoing of this erasure. Nevertheless, the colonial roots of ethnography points towards the deep-rooted Eurocentrism and whiteness within knowledge production, which delegitimises indigenous knowledge outside of the western realm. Following Grosfoguel, who writes that "we always speak from a particular location in the power structures" (2007: 2013), I attend to my own positionality as a member of a western university and recognise the location of my chosen research methodology. Accepting knowledge as *always* partial and *always* underpinned by power relations (Conway, 2004; Akena, 2012), this chapter provides insight into my own role in the production and curation of knowledge.

In my case, I investigate the complex racialised and gendered structures of the security sector produced through the Global War on Terror (GWOT) and the subsequent global counterterrorism regime, with a particular focus on the imaginary binary of the public and the private. Understanding the production and negotiation of my own identities within the field is a crucial puzzle piece in the exploration of power differentials in the security sector. As a white, middle-class, and unmarried woman who is in her early thirties, I took a particular space within the power construct in the field, which I negotiated depending on the racialised, gendered, and classed context around me. The experiences of having previously served within a peacekeeping mission of the Swiss Armed Forces yet being a doctoral student at a Swiss university, gave me a broad spectrum of leveraging different identities within the confines of my gendered and racialised self. From September 2021 to June 2022, I lived alone in a guarded apartment in the upper-class neighbourhood Westlands, Nairobi. As mentioned in the introduction, I primarily stayed in Nairobi with field visits to Isiolo, Garissa, Wajir, Mombasa, and Kwale, together with a Swiss research colleague and accompanied by a paid Kenyan research consultant, as sites to conduct interviews and participant observations.

Researching the subject of security and specifically counterterrorism from the starting point of the security sector itself meant that *access* was a decisive factor in my fieldwork. Within this question of access, the difference between studying "up" and studying "down" was something I pondered before going to the field. Who are the people I want to talk to? To whom

do I want to give a voice in my research? Whereas feminist ethnography has largely sought to raise up subjugated voices (see Davis and Craven, 2011), I did not feel comfortable with this approach in the setting of my area of research. Investigating "women" as a category within security dispositifs in Kenya as a white, western woman seemed like a pitfall to what feminist ethnography has been desperately and consciously trying to avoid. The idea of "saving sisters" from oppressive cultures and giving voice to the voiceless, inherently perpetuates colonial relationships through the dismissal of agency of the "voiceless", the ones to save (Nencel, 2014). Rather, out of comfort but also mainly due to given research interests, I wanted to focus on researching "up", namely studying those in positions of power. I sought to criticise a system that I am directly complicit in, a system which privileges whiteness as a first signifier and military masculinities as a second. Importantly, this early reflection of how I should conduct my field research, the question of research "down" versus researching "up", exposed my preference of inserting myself into an environment where I possess less power, which I imagined to be the easier way for me, both ethically and mentally. This uneasiness and discomfort of engaging in environments where past mistakes of white feminists could be replicated exposes my white privilege and the "ability to choose" (Saad, 2020), and as such runs the risk of upholding racialised hierarchies. The complexity of conducting research, the in-between spaces of studying "up" and "down", and the contradictions in the field necessarily get lost in such reflections. In the end, of the 87 collected data points, the largest share is comprised of interviews and talks with private security personnel (34) and the second largest with civil society organisations (CSOs) and community actors (21). While the results of studying "up" comprise the majority of my data, interactions with CSOs and community actors also constitute a considerable portion, confirming the complexity of field research and the oversimplified idea of an existing binary of researching up versus researching down. The chapter therefore attends to the tension between the different spaces of knowledge production as a researcher.

To this end, this chapter explores the bodily resonances of counterterrorism as a global security regime through my subjective and lived experiences. An analysis of my embodiment of different identities, and the (in)securities I have faced through this time, is not disconnected from the other empirical chapters—rather, my own subjectivity provides insight into the workings of counterterrorism as a manifestation and further corroboration of a colonial and patriarchal global system of power. At the same time, the close analysis of my own positionality within the field allows for a questioning of complicity with and reproduction of power. Therefore, a first section explores the different spaces of research and focuses on the assumed

identities in the interaction with mainly Kenyan security personnel as well as local CSOs and community leaders. I employ sociologist Ruth Frankenberg's concept of whiteness to understand how my positionality intersects with the implicit identities of being a spy and a donor. The second section investigates the completely different qualities and assumed identities in the research interactions with white, British, mostly ex-military private security personnel through the metaphor of the "honeypot", which denotes using sexualised notions of femininity as a tool to "lure" men into releasing information. The analysis of my identities as they intersect with the military masculinities at hand stresses the role of sexuality in signifying power. My positionality and the identities I assumed in the field are substantial in understanding how I approached my research, my interviewees, and my data analysis. It therefore not only produces knowledge about the structural workings of the racialised and gendered counterterrorism regime, but more so gives significant insight into the methodological accounts of this thesis and how knowledge was curated towards me.

## Spy or donor: Whiteness as a signifier of power relations

More than a month after arriving in Kenya for my fieldwork, I wrote in my journal: "There are so many things that I haven't addressed in a journal entry that need to be addressed. So many instances of institutional racism surfacing, so many instances (*read*: all the time) of where I'm confronted with my positionality, my inherent whiteness" (Field journal entry, 13 October 2021). The concept of whiteness is key in exploring my positionality, how it impacted my research and its entanglement to the counterterrorism regime. As Frankenberg argued in her work on whiteness, too often racism is conceived as something external to white people "rather than a system that shapes our daily experiences and sense of self" (1993: 6). Whiteness therefore needs to be understood as "a set of linked dimensions. First, whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a "standpoint", a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, "whiteness" refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed" (Frankenberg, 1993: 1). Deconstructing whiteness as assumed, learned, and most importantly, naturalised is crucial to recognise how my racial identity has a certain meaning in a given context. There are numerous examples and stories which highlight my whiteness during this time. To illustrate this, I focus on two particular aspects that surfaced during fieldwork: being considered as a spy and a donor, sometimes simultaneously, but mostly within different spaces. Both of these traits were offered more in

areas considered studying "down", where my whiteness was also directly connected to a position of privilege. As a white woman navigating the space of counterterrorism, my power was intimately tied to assumptions about the threat I posed to research participants but also to the resources I could possibly offer.

Investigating the subject of counterterrorism was often met with suspicion by Kenyans working in the security sector, mostly because there was an insecurity about my objectives in gathering information. I was directly confronted with disbelief that I would "simply" conduct a PhD, to the extent that people asked me without hesitation if I was a western spy—this occurred in numerous situations and different locations in Kenya. In an interview with a Nairobi-based Kenyan who created his own private security company, I was met with a lot of suspicion. After the interview, I wrote down the following paragraph in my field journal:

> Theodor* [the interviewee] mentioned a few times that he wasn't sure why he agreed to talk to me and he is still unsure why he is actually doing this. He explained that endorsement is everything and that Ralf* is not the best endorsement; he barely knows the guy and he is not even in security (he is of course, but not one of "these" security guys…). He said, had Jim* endorsed me, he would have had no problem, because then he would know that I have been vetted and that I'm ok. Because I could work for the enemy line, I could work for Al-Shabab and try to blow him up, or I could be a spy. He also said that he hates journalists […]. I reassured him that I am not a journalist, nor from Al-Shabab, nor a spy, but an actual PhD candidate who is interested in his work. He said that if I misuse his information, he will hunt me down and kill me (which was obviously a bit intense, to hear this). He was also very scared of me recording (which I didn't), I had the phone in my bag (Field journal entry, 3 June 2022, *names are pseudonymised).

This journal entry conveys the utter mistrust exhibited by people working directly in the security industry, giving insight about how endorsements and trust circles fundamentally operate to protect against an "outsider" who might have harmful intentions. Interestingly, even though all my interlocutors mentioned in the field journal worked in the private security industry, Ralf is not regarded as "real" security personnel; who gets to be in this trusted inner circle is therefore highly selective (see Chapter 2 for an analysis of whose perspective is considered valuable in the hierarchy of security). This inner circle of trust needs to be protected at all costs which in this particular interview was voiced through threats of killing me and hunting me down. I remember vividly how the conversation was structured by violence and implicit remarks to assert power over me. He was a heavy smoker and asked me at the very beginning of the interview if I am smoking. I replied that I occasionally smoked at parties to which he countered, "It's a party then", reaching out his hand with the cigarette pack and gesturing to take one. Although it was 10.30 in the morning and I had not yet eaten, I took a

cigarette and lit it on. This is just one out of many examples illustrating how he put me into my place, making sure I knew he was the one holding power. This power assertion cannot be read absent of my gender, and further exposes the intersectionality of identity—a topic I explore in the second section.

Even though I obtained a lot of valuable information from him, I left the three-hour-long interview feeling as an "outsider" who is not to be trusted. Moreover, I felt the power claims over my bodily integrity to be affecting me—both his fear of misusing the provided information as well his suspicion about my true identity seemed to be so deeply internalised that he would go to lengths to address them. I met this interviewee a second time, where he was much more at ease with the conversation, yet still vocalised that I could be a spy. In my field notes of the second visit, I wrote the following:

> Again, he said that he wasn't sure why he talked to me, making suggestive comments that I am a spy. I told him he could vet me and that I would also be happy to give my passport (which in hindsight, I wouldn't have been)—but I wanted to make him as easy as possible so that he trusted me. This was for my safety as well as for the purpose of getting information. He said that he vetted me and that it seemed ok, joking a bit about my alibi being waterproof (Field journal entry, 7 June 2022).

Even though the second interview was more relaxed, I could still notice lingering distrust towards me, this time voiced harmlessly through jokes such as the waterproof alibi of being a PhD candidate. Another interlocutor similarly accused me of being spy, by asking over and over what I *really* do for work. As an informal, more coincidental exchange, the interlocutor himself was not giving away what his line of work was, only revealing that it revolved around counterterrorism and Somalia. I was able to verify this aspect to some degree, without finding out what or for whom he worked. Whatever his line of work was, he was sure I was a spy and tried different routes to get me talking about what I am working on. In one of our conversations on Whatsapp, for instance, he used my legal middle name, which cannot be found online—making sure I understood that he knows who I am and that he is able to get information that is not easily accessible. This interlocutor's harassment took different turns and alternated between flirting, reasoning, texting and calling from various different numbers, and intimidation through pure anger and heavy insults.

In another interview, I was asked if I was spy as soon as I started to query about international security agencies being involved in Kenya. After I tried to de-escalate the discourse by playfully pointing out that the answer to this question in any case—spy or not—would be a "no", he stressed that it is his duty as a Kenyan to question my inquiries and to be

"on the lookout". Similar perspectives were explained to me by partner organisations from the civil society which, unsuccessfully, tried to organise interviews with high-ranking police personnel in Nairobi. One interviewee, who also helped to facilitate my research, explained:

> Like for example, I can tell you for sure, if you were not of white colour, if you were an African researcher, you would have finished, you would have been introduced by now, because they would look at you as one of their own. But because of the colour, for example, and the subject you are studying around, people begin to profile you, without saying that they do this. They begin to think about this lady must have been looking for some information that she wants to use. She wants to pass over to another person to use. So it becomes a big problem. You can imagine with the police, if we walked with you in a police station, start discussing P/CVE, you can imagine how the station commander profiles us. This seems to be, this lady must be spying on us (Interview with anonymous, 31 May 2022).

This statement strikingly exemplifies how my whiteness intersects with the topic of my research, namely the security sector and security strategies within counterterrorism. Importantly, I was specifically advised by an interlocutor trying to facilitate interviews with the police to omit my military background because it could fuel even more distrust towards my person, supporting the assumption that I work for a security agency of a western state.

This mistrust was aggravated in more rural and marginalised areas. My presence in these contexts and my research subject seemed out of place and without a comprehensible reason—why would a white woman come to these areas and ask about security-related topics? The answer seemed to be obvious: she must be collecting the information for a western government. After the field trip to Wajir in the North-East of the country, I wrote down the following notes in my field journal:

> [M]y whiteness was perceived as alien and, I think, unwelcomed. Particularly working on security actors such as the police, the military, and private military and security companies (PMSC), people in Wajir got very fast very suspicious about me and asked a lot if I am a spy. There were a few incidents that I can recall about this on my trip. For example, when I was in the car from Wajir airport to the hotel, the driver said because of tightened security due to recent attacks, security forces are much more aware of westerners coming in and being spies. [A member] of the police didn't want to talk to me at all and the National Police Reserve (NPR) guy I talked to only very briefly asked Mohammed* [our research consultant] if I was from the CIA (Field journal entry, 15 March 2022, *names and positions are pseudonymised).

Again, the suspicion against my whiteness is closely connected to the research topic of counterterrorism, and particularly to investigating security actors. Recent attacks in Wajir county further influenced the perception of my presence in the field; during the time of our visit, the county has been declared as a "no-go/red zone" by many organisations, allowing only

"local" people to travel to Wajir due to the risk of targeted kidnapping and attacks.[9] I therefore attracted even more attention, given that the presence of humanitarian workers was massively reduced in general. Being read as a spy was particularly exasperating in this situation, as I composed a threat to my colleagues—our Somali research consultant as well as my university research colleague, a woman of colour.

> Already then [in the plane] people asked Nur* what this white person is doing up in Wajir and if [my colleague] is Somali. This experience is valid for the whole trip; mostly, [my colleague] has been asked if she is Somali. (…) Due to this situation, I felt that I personally also risked [my colleague] and Nur* with my presence. (…)
>
> I felt sometimes that my presence added much more insecurity to the field, which then also meant having more security is needed for me as a white person. We did of course not have different security arrangements, but if I would have not been part of the fieldtrip, [my colleague] might have been able to move around in a different manner
> (Field journal entry, 10 March 2022).

The reflections illustrate how my whiteness and being read as a spy are connected to a position of power, which is considered unwelcome and dangerous—and as such, my whiteness constituted a threat to the people around me.

Whiteness must be grasped as produced through particular discursive configurations of the security sector which are bound to historical conditions (Owens, 2003). The association of researchers as spies is by no means new but has a long tradition in anthropological research. The case of four American anthropologists who abused their professional positions by conducting espionage during the First World War is only one example how ethnography in particular has been used as a means to collect information for security purposes (Price, 2000). Particularly during the Cold War era, anthropologist research and academic knowledge in general has increasingly been politicised and militarised (Gusterson, 2007; Lutz, 1999). The practice of hiring and training anthropologists by the U.S. Army to gain cultural intelligence in the Iraq war, the Human Terrain System (HTS), is a crucial example of how research was (ab)used for military purposes (Ghodsee, 2011). These historical and contemporary conditions are an additional, decisive factor in understanding how my whiteness is connected to the assumed identity of a western spy. My association with a western country, government, or university illustrates the power dimension inherent to whiteness, a coloniality of power, which

[9] This policy of INGOs, NGOs, and IOs can be described as an externalisation of risks, where "local" people carry the weight of being sent to a conflict zone. While this is not subject to the present chapter, it demonstrates the inherent racialisation of the humanitarian industry.

is also directly connected to the coloniality of knowledge. Both systems, security and academia, have a strong racialised hierarchy, which allows for an easy exchange and abuse between the two. Knowledge is assumed to be primarily produced in the west, and privileges only certain voices who are not from the margins (Mignolo, 2000). At the same time, this knowledge, particularly in the case of anthropology, is based on data extracted from postcolonial and less privileged countries. Counterterrorism, an even more sensitive subject within security, exaggerates the sensitivities around whiteness. My whiteness and the responses I experienced to it are therefore symbolic for the global transcripts of power, where the power privilege of whiteness is strategically used to extract knowledge for western purposes. The reinforcement of these power dynamics through my presence also meant the safeguarding of ethical considerations, such as my whiteness presenting a threat to other people I interacted with.

My whiteness was also associated with the aspect of being a possible donor. I encountered this association less frequently during my fieldwork as it mostly came up in the interactions with civil society actors, which were not the focus of my research. Yet, the theme of whiteness as a funding opportunity nevertheless came up throughout my experience. For CSOs, the dependency on funding is a big part of their existence and a lot of times, external funding is provided by the western governments or multilateral institutions. As many scholars have pointed out, this dependency on a western donor industry is directly linked to imperialism and as such, to whiteness (see for example Veltmeyer, 2005; Petras, 1999; and Moyo, 2010). Some interviewees directly asked for collaborations or explicit funding for projects. Given my position as a doctoral student with limited funding, my hands were tied. In one interview, a director of a small CSO working on security sector reform told me about the difficulties of getting funds for his organisation lately, and later on asked me if I could help him out through the University of Basel. After the interview, I wrote the following sentence in my field journal: "It also really showed the kind of power relations again that existed, even though I am a PhD student there is still the hope that there is funding from me or anything related to an opportunity" (Field journal entry, 19 May 2022). Importantly, my whiteness is the main identifying factor which signifies privilege and access to money; the identity markers of age (I was at least 15 years younger) and gender did not play a deciding role. What this illustrates is the amount of privilege inscribed into whiteness, much more so than any other identity marker. Moreover, it illustrates how the security sector specifically—and CSOs working within this sector—is dependent on western funding, with P/CVE being a majorly western driven agenda.

I further noticed that whiteness, through the mere presence of a white body, could offer a reputational advantage to people and institutions. For instance, at the beginning of my stay in Kenya, I attended a conference on private security and P/CVE which took place in a hotel located in downtown Nairobi. After the Uber I arrived in was searched for possible security threats, the private security guard said the following words to me: "You made my day, madam. We need more *people like you* at our venue" (Field research notes, 23 September 2021). Being the only white person attending the conference, I presume that this was a direct reference to whiteness considered as an asset within this given space.

The assumed identities of a spy and a donor are conflicting in terms of the lived experience, where in the one case whiteness presents a threat and in the other, it confers an opportunity. However, both identities are directly linked to whiteness as the main identifying factor of my position of power; not gender, nor age, or class. The conflicting yet complementary reactions to my person are both expressive of a global hierarchy which privileges whiteness.

## The honeypot: Negotiating military masculinities through sexualised identities

The focus on the private security industry in Kenya and its entanglement with the counterterrorism regime meant that I was speaking to mostly white, male-bodied people who have a background in public security. Given Kenya's history of British colonialism (1901 to 1963), the private security industry is heavily informed by British militarism, with ex-British soldiers making up a large part of the sector. The 34 collected data points on the private security sector are mainly informed by white, middle-aged men ranging from 45 to 65, sometimes white Kenyans of British descent, white South Africans and some white Americans. The research context therefore wildly varies from the spaces described in the previous section, with different dynamics regarding positionality and implicit identities. The (presumed) shared whiteness between me as a researcher and the interviewees elucidated the masculinities on display and the highly gendered—and sexualised—interactions with me as a female-bodied researcher.

Understanding the performance of masculinities, and military masculinities specifically, is therefore crucial for this section. Aaron Belkin's work on military masculinities is helpful in comprehending how authority, identity, and the military interlace regulatory practices of gender coherence. In *Bring me men*, he writes: "I conceive of military masculinity as a set of beliefs, practices, and attributes that can enable individuals—men and women—to claim

authority on the basis of affirmative relationships with the military or with military ideas" (Belkin, 2012: 3). This claim to authority is particularly important in my positionality. Having served in the rank of a sergeant in a peacekeeping mission, I tapped exactly into these authoritative identities which connect to the military; namely being part of a certain group, instilling belonging and trust. Through my past experience in a multinational peacekeeping force, I observed—and to a certain degree adopted—practices such as body language, narratives, and humour which were very specific to a military setting. I believed that my personal military experience would count as a facilitating factor in gaining access to the security industry, in particular to the private security sector which is even more clandestine than the public one. I therefore made a conscious decision to mention my military background with this specific group of interviewees when I introduced myself at the beginning or in the course of the talks. Through the active choice to tap into a certain masculine identity, I tried to be perceived as an ally, to some extent even as a peer, to gain insight and access to knowledge. As with my whiteness, I was very attentive to how I expressed my "military identity" and how it was noticed by my interviewees. One field journal entry reads as follows:

> He then mentioned that he already suspected that I have a security background. I'm not sure why, but it meant that I give off a security vibe, which I guess means I achieved my goal in this context—to be an ally, an insider, somebody who understands the context and has similar experiences (way too far-fetched, the similar experiences, but I lack of a better term…) (Field journal entry, 14 July 2022).

The critical nature of my research and the fact that I am applying a gender lens to the subject of research ousted me automatically as "progressive" within these circles. Even though gender as a topic of interest in militaries has gained international recognition through United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), it remains a subject that is highly contested and alien to most military personnel. Asking questions around gender, therefore, put me automatically in a certain corner within military identities, which needed to be navigated carefully. Yet, being aware of the ethical downfalls, I always answered truthfully when interviewees asked me about my research. With one interviewee, I had a conversation about decolonial feminism upon which I reflected later on in the field journal:

> He asked me about my work and the relation between gender and private security and I told him about decolonial feminism. Funnily, I was worried a bit about my positionality here, because I knew I could technically lose my ally status stating more about this (usually they know I'm progressive, but because I stress that I have been in the Army, I'm seen as less woke I guess and more as a friendly player) (Field journal entry, 24 May 2022).

What comes through in this sequence is the tension between being seen as "progressive" within a certain group—the security bubble—and being seen as an "outsider" who is critical against an institution. Attending to this tension, I brought certain preconceptions about the people who I was interviewing to the table and was often times surprised about interviewees who did not conform with what I personally associated as typical military masculinities. After an interviewee with a former British military official, who is now on the managing board of a major Kenyan private security company, I reflected on his performance as follows:

> Different from white security guys in a sense that usually they're very direct, not hiding their opinions, and the opinions being, let's say, different to mine. E.g. he acknowledged that he is a white old man, talking about diversity, and the way he talked about diversity showed that he knows how the discourse is shaped around these issues and what people want to hear (Field journal entry, 16 May 2022).

My own preconceptions on what is constitutive of military masculinities as well as my own performance of certain military masculinities were crucial in gaining trust to my interviewees. Importantly, access remained an issue for my fieldwork; to get more interviews, people had to directly recommend and connect you to the potential other interviewees. As a consequence, building relationships beyond just one interview as well as maintaining an active network was key to success. I quickly learned that my experience as a sergeant in the Swiss Armed Forces and the shared whiteness was not enough to uphold this network. Even though I understood certain references and practices, I did not share what was clearly a core virtue within the group: being a man.

In one of my very first interviews with a private security contractor, who called himself a mercenary, we talked about access upon which he responded: "They won't give you any information, but guys like to talk. Use your female assets, the honeypot" (Interview with anonymous, 18 March 2022). A few months down the road, another interviewee used the exact same terminology. I was curious towards the use of this expression and quickly learned how fitting the honeypot analogy was to my sexualised experiences during field research. The metaphor of the female body as a honeypot, a trap, or a decoy which gets men to talk speaks to the inseparability of gendered and sexualised identities. The invoked meaning in this statement is a binary understanding of men as sexually driven subjects, who cannot reason anymore if there is a woman at play. In contrast, women are the sexualised objects of (male and heterosexual) desire; they are cunning, manipulative, deceptive, and deeply sexual. This essentialist understanding reveals normative truths about power which are directly connected

to gender, sexuality, and sex. The common man is read as the passive victim who has an uncontrollable sexuality, portrayed with no agency; the woman on the other hand using her honeypot obtains a certain degree of power by weaponising her sexuality. This narrative has a longstanding tradition in military environments and is particularly evident in the debates around allowing—and sometime even encouraging—soldiers to engage with sex workers. The logic is that if the natural and barely controllable (heterosexual) sex drive of (male) soldiers is restricted through a denial of sex, the military faces several risks which includes the diminution in combat effectiveness but also rape of "local" women as a result (Higate, 2007). The image of warriorhood as "tough, invulnerable, and sexually potent" (Higate, 2007: 199) is what becomes evident in my interviewees suggestion of making use of my "female assets, the honeypot".

Interestingly, taking a glance at the definition at the noun "honeypot", Oxford English Dictionary includes the following definitions: "1. A pot in which honey is kept. 2. A person who or thing which very is attractive, tempting, or a source of pleasure or reward; *spec*. an attractive young woman" (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). Similarly, the digital open-access dictionary Wiktionary provides the following definition: "(*espionage*) A spy (typically attractive and female) who uses sex to trap and blackmail a target" (Wiktionary, n.d.). The suggestion to use "my female assets, the honeypot"—to entice and manipulate my interviewees—reveals the sexualised narrative about women in the security sector who are expected to use the "pillow talk" or so-called "sex espionage" to gather intelligence from a person of interest (Mijalkovic, 2014). The depiction of women in espionage as "rapacious sex addicts" (Cocozza, 2014) has a long tradition in popular culture; originating in the myth of Mata Hari[10] as a sexually aggressive spy, women who conduct espionage are written as seductive, mysterious, and beautiful in popular culture (Wheelwright, 2019)—as a *femme fatale*. The *femme fatale* is put in direct relation to "sexuality, femininity, danger, violence, and deceit" (Farrimond, 2018: 2) and "serves as a reminder that male sexual fantasy is a persistent thread in the constructed world of secret war" (Wheelwright, 2019: 16). Female power and agency within the security sector is thus inevitably bound to sexuality. Engaging in a highly masculine and militarised setting, my gendered positionality in the interviews with private security contractors was to a large degree sexualised, as most of the interviewees within this particular group either explicitly or implicitly showed their interest in me—particularly of sexual nature. The personal "sexualised visibility", as

[10] Mata Hari was convicted and executed in 1917 by the French for passing information to the Germans as a spy-courtesan. Her figure has constantly been reinvented and as a result, her persona was frequently sexualised (Wheelwright, 2019).

Dulini Fernando, Laurie Cohen, and Joanne Duberley (2019) termed it, suddenly became the most central aspect of my female-bodied identity within the militarised, male-dominated setting.

The gendered interactions and the connected negotiation of my sexualised identity was a significant challenge for me throughout the fieldwork. In contrast to my idea of choosing the identity of "military-masculine-Darja", I did not consciously choose this sexualised aspect to be part of my identity. I believed that I could insert a certain playfulness to my positionality which would bring me greater access to my field research. Yet, I quickly learned that I could not control certain aspects tied to an identity; whereas I intensely reflected about my whiteness and my masculine traits before and during the fieldwork, the sexualised component came, to a certain degree, as a surprise. It might seem curious that even though I previously served in the military and accordingly had experiences in a masculine dominated militarised environment, I was still caught off guard by the sexualisation of my persona and the experienced harassment and transgression of my boundaries. While my gender, being one of few women within the peacekeeping force, was an important marker, whiteness was what guaranteed access to the "male" privilege; rendering gender less salient within this context (Kallmann, 2019). In her work on gender and race in the Peace Corps, sociologist Meghan Elizabeth Kallmann writes that

> [s]pecifically, [w]hite women volunteers receive some degree of "male" privilege because of their race (though that visibility renders them vulnerable to sexual violence), while some volunteers of colour are afforded a degree of "[w]hite" privilege because of their nationality (although their race may also render them vulnerable to violence) (2019: 567).

With whiteness was a key to access multiple spaces, I did not recognise the role of my complicity with the patriarchal system in the sexism and physical assault I experienced during serving in the military. As such, my compliance with military masculinities also meant adapting and accepting the prescribed femininities within the military. Interestingly, this pre-learned belief system culminated in the field, subconsciously; while making the choice to adapt certain military masculinities, I subconsciously and unknowingly reinforced my own sexualisation without being aware that these two are inherently connected. It is a script I have learned to perform, a narrative I have internalised, which resurfaced again being immersed within this militarised field. The naivety going to the field not expecting to be sexualised centres my "ability to choose" (Saad, 2020) backed by my privilege of whiteness, but also elucidates my (emotional) blind spot towards how military masculinities are inherently tied to the sexualisation of women.

I only recognised this pattern and the subconscious role I played within this by choosing the military-masculine-Darja after returning from the field; in the field, I could only feel that something felt "off" and that I did not feel comfortable, yet I continued to embody military-masculine-Darja.

The sexualisation of my body within the field was at points subtle, and in other occasions explicit. After one informal exchange, one interlocutor texted on Whatsapp, which read: "I must confess you knocked the wind out of me when you felt I was shallow in reference to thinking and saying that you are a beautiful woman and seeing no further. I know and knew you had a lot more than just your looks" (Whatsapp messages, 19 May 2022). With this message, he ascribed action to me where none had been taken, as if I had accused him of being shallow, which I did not. He then continued with a poem, which if you google it, can be found online.[11] It starts with the following paragraph:

> Stunned by your elegance, your beautiful in every way. The very scent of your fragrance burns through the skin like sun rays. From the feminine in your walk to the sexiness in your talk, even a slight glance from your eyes can send sparks and liven up the day (Whatsapp messages, 19 May 2022).

I did not reply to these messages. Another interviewee texted me after the interview to ask me how I am and what's new. The conversation reads as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Darja: | Nothing new.<br>Was just down in Dolhom today.<br>Thanks for sending over the report by the way. |
| Anonymous: | Don't go back<br>Stay here |
| Darja: | I don't really have a choice ☺ |
| Anonymous: | *Sticker with hands holding out red roses.*<br>Please don't go |

(Whatsapp messages, 20 May 2022).

The conversation ended with this, as I did not engage anymore with this interlocutor. Yet another interlocutor texted after a meeting "You are beautiful, sexy, and engaging" and then added "Sorry if any of the above offended ;)" (Whatsapp messages, 6 June 2022). There are plenty of examples of written, spoken—such as a contact who was helpful in giving me

[11] The poem has the title "Beautiful, Strong, Intelligent, Women," and can be found on AllPoetry.com: https://allpoetry.com/poem/9567937-Beautiful--Strong--Intelligent--Women.-by-Aaronstotle (last accessed on 29 January 2024).

background information calling me "babe" more than once—and physical encounters that point towards this sexualisation.

My naivety around sexualised identities at this time intersected with the problem of access to data. Reflecting on the question of access, I wrote the following in my field journal:

> Information sharing and contact sharing is a business. What do I have to offer to the stakeholders connecting me? Nothing, it's pure goodwill. So far, I have encountered that women are more willing to share contacts. However, since this is clearly a male-dominated area of study, it's is vital to have some male allies within this (Field journal entry, 29 January 2022).

What I have not felt so strongly at this point was the presumed connection of access to my sexualised identity. A few months later, after having talked to a number of private security personnel, I wrote the following passage after an informal talk with an interviewee:

> Funnily enough, he also asked me if it's feminist to watch porn. This statement is also a good guideline for the whole talk, which ranged between in-depth conversations about topics close to my research (and to my heart) and topics which are very suggestive in nature, keeping up the flirtish vibe (his side, but I didn't do anything to stop it). All in all, the night was interesting and most importantly for me, I have established a contact that is deemed useful to me (Field journal entry, 28 June 2022).

The description of a sexualised environment is directly followed by the priority of having established a contact "deemed useful to me", thus illustrating the connection between access and sexualised identities. In other circumstances, I would not continue upholding such relationships; within the confinement of my research, however, I felt that it was necessary to maintain the network, due to a fear of losing access and referrals to other people within the industry. The informal rules of the private security industry seemed to apply the above-mentioned honeypot idea: if you want information, you need to endure conversations and encounters of sexualised nature; a clear trade-off, a tit for tat. In the case of the interlocutor who wrote me a poem, I did not choose to meet with him again or rely on his contacts. After insulting me as a "whore" and later deleting several messages, he wrote:

> Darja, I wish you would have understood that it's a two-way street and everything is based on trust and integrity. It was a real honour meeting you and I take this opportunity to wish you the best of luck.
> Please don't make any more meeting kindly and respectfully that you can't show up for with the leads I gave you (Whatsapp messages, 26 May 2022).

The articulation of a "two-way street" in the information game spoke to my insecurities: why would anyone just give up valuable and secret information for me? The implication was that I

owe him now and that I was not holding up my side of the bargain, exposing his assertions over my person and my body as part of this "two-way street". I was trying to set certain boundaries in the talks; yet, these were often times overstepped and I reacted by being casual about it or laughing it off. In one of my field journal entries, I wrote down the following reflection:

> Again, Theodor* was very intense during the whole talk, but I was much more prepared for him than last time. Aligned with the above stated, I think he seemed to be interested in me. He mentioned at one point that I should postpone or cancel my flight, leave my boyfriend, and spend time with him instead, saying it is sad that we only met at the very end of my stay (Field journal entry, 19 July 2022).

Besides the statement of leaving my boyfriend for him—note that this man was around 20 years older than me—it is the phrase "I was much more prepared for him than last time" that illustrates how I mentally steeled myself for these meetings, knowing that I am in an environment where I am at disadvantage and at risk of physical and emotional harm. The power imbalances between me as a researcher and the interviewees, with the private security men holding a power privilege, were clearly communicated through the sexualisation of our talks. The structural violence against women surfacing through sexist and degrading comments and through the near constant even if unspoken threat of violence were mixed with my personal feeling of obligation to maintain the relationships, and thus enduring situations where personal boundaries were crossed. The gendered and sexualised interactions left me with a feeling of belittlement and no agency; a feeling that needed to be tolerated in order to obtain relevant data and produce valuable academic research.

In order to be let into the inner circle of the (private) security industry, I had to build relationships and gain the trust of my interlocutors so they would refer me to their colleagues. Instead of just meeting once for an interview, I actively aimed for something close to a friendly relationship, which meant in addition to the interview I included methods of an informal character such as lunch meetings, coffee breaks, and dinner gatherings. While this format fostered the risk of being sexualised, it also left me confused and torn regarding to my own authenticity and ethical standards towards some of my interviewees. In contrast to the description above, I have also met people who were genuinely nice; I thus actively decided to not write up every encounter since it felt "transactional". In a field journal entry in July 2022, I reflect on the transactional nature of ethnography:

> Do I need to write down every encounter I have with people? I haven't done it properly also because I like interacting with people and with this method, you treat people as data

> → transactional → as if I would only talk to the people because I need them, but they are humans and I like interacting with them on a personal level, because they are interesting souls (Field journal entry, 19 July 2022).

I had one particular interviewee who specifically asked me if I am "honey-trapping" him, using this specific expression. As a former British Army official, this interlocutor was really helpful in terms of information, but I was also able to connect with him on a human level and enjoyed his company. His concern about being honey-trapped illustrates the resistance and fear of him of being utilised by me and reflects the different tensions around my sexualised positionality—converging in the intersectionality of my race, nationality, gender, and my sexuality.

As mentioned before, the archetypal warrior figure is structured through aggressive heterosexuality (Higate, 2007). It is therefore crucial to acknowledge how heteronormative beliefs were conferred through these sexually connoted talks. One of the interviewees said that he vetted me and the subject of gender came up significantly in his background research. The information he found led him to belief I must be a lesbian (*read*: feminist=lesbian); seeing me for the first time, however, invalidated this belief. This confers stereotypical beliefs about how a queer female-bodied person has to look, with my feminine appearance not fitting the picture. Due to the interlocutor's sexual advances towards me (see field journal entries with *Theodor), his remarks illustrate how he is deciding who is deemed appropriate for his sexual advances, no matter the persons' identity nor sexual preferences.

Importantly, this bodily experience illustrates how the essentialist idea of the honeytrap is immensely harmful and expressive of a deeply patriarchal system, with the gendered assumptions about a passive male victim and the female aggressor being used to cover sexist beliefs. My gendered and sexualised experiences in the field thus provide insight to power dynamics within a certain environment, which was white and male-dominated, and point towards the complexity of identities and positionality beyond an assumed status of "insider/outsider".

## The complexity of doing fieldwork

My positionality and the formed identities are central in understanding the bodily qualities of my fieldwork and how this in turn informed my data analysis. Rather than the presumed duality of "insider/outsider" in ethnographic research, the experienced identities were much more complex. As such, my positionality of being read as a spy and a donor through my whiteness is

directly related to the sexualised identity of the so-called honeypot. While all the different identity markers intersect simultaneously, whiteness is the marker that connects privilege: first through being associated as a spy or a donor and second, by assuming a shared whiteness between the interviewees and me which allowed access to my bodily integrity through imposing a sexualised identity. The distinctive components of my positionality are further shown by the reoccurring theme of being read as a spy; a spy of a western security agency who possesses certain privileges, and a woman spy who conducts "sex espionage". In both scenarios, I posed a threat to the interviewees, with power (seemingly) in my hands. The contradictory positionality and multiple identities—also in terms of how I have been read in comparison of how I experienced certain situations—impacted how I approached my research by shaping who I was speaking to, how I was speaking to them, what is being said to me, and how I make sense of the information offered to me. Consequently, the data gathered is heavily influenced and informed by my positionality.

The significance of whiteness surfaced also when it came to the issue of safety. Towards the end of my fieldwork, after being successfully immersed within the private security scene, I had a few encounters that were difficult to assess in terms of my personal safety. With a lacking support network in this environment, I was unsure who to ask for advice and support on this matter. Eventually, I decided to reach out to one of my interviewees, a white, male, British security expert operating in the private security industry. I trusted this person the most in terms of knowledge but also in terms of well-meant and genuine intention towards me. However, this incident revealed the power structures I immersed myself in, seeking safety within this hypermasculine domain first. The perception of the sanctity of white womanhood, hereby, comes in again as a major marker of power dynamics, where I myself reinforce certain beliefs about knowledge and power. Furthermore, it exemplifies that as a privileged white woman, I have different possibilities, opportunities, and securities within the field than women of colour and Black women conducting fieldwork (see for example Berry et al., 2017). Whiteness is also a theme that surfaces in the upcoming chapters, as a signifier of who gets to speak knowledge as well as in the subject formation of contractors, who rely on a white superiority. The detailed discussion of how my data was produced and how I engaged with my interlocutors is thus a prerequisite to understand the subsequent empirical analysis.

The analysis of the complex and intertwined identities in the field is illustrative of the workings of power and privileges within the counterterrorism regime. My whiteness was the deciding identity marker which gave me access to privileged data in a hypermasculine

environment. Yet, my body has been gendered and sexualised by this exact environment beyond my will, including my subconscious replication of gendered and racialised power dynamics. The description of this hypermasculine, sexualised context of the private security industry provides another decisive glimpse into what I later describe within the following empirical chapters, predominantly highlighted in Chapter 5 on the masculinities of an exclusive group of private security contractors. The mutual constitution of gender, race, class, and sexuality and the mixture of lived (in)securities of my own bodily integrity were difficult to endure. The tension between my whiteness and the gendered violence I have experienced was particularly perplexing; recognising my privilege, my alleged right to safety through my whiteness, and the observation how lives are inscribed with diverging value made it challenging for me to comprehend violence directed towards me—and how this violence is connected to the military masculinities I purposefully adopted as a strategy of field research.

# CHAPTER 2

## KENYA'S HOUSE OF SECURITY: BRITISH MILITARISM PLUS, WESTERN SECURITY KNOWLEDGE, AND THE PRIVATE SECURITY INDUSTRY

> There is an obvious historical connection: the Kenyan security sector is heavily influenced by the U.K. system. They have the same structure, the same military doctrine (Interview with anonymous, 29 June 2022).
>
> It doesn't matter which PMSC you work for. You're in with the government, you have ties to the current governments (Interview with anonymous, 18 March 2022).

In Nairobi, security is particularly visible through the bodies of local private security guards. Moving throughout the city, I noticed that lower, middle- to upper-class neighbourhoods all have one thing in common: guards. Guards in front of the building, guards at the entrances of malls, guards at the front doors of a restaurant. This observation is undoubtedly connected to my position of privilege of a western person living in Kenya; how I move around the city is impacting the way I experience security. A Kenyan young man living in Eastleigh, for example, would notice the manifestation of security differently, with more police and military presence, less private security guarding. Nevertheless, this relative ubiquity of guards placed all over the city and the ever-growing private security sector in Kenya made me wonder: what is the relation of the private security guards to the rest of the security sector? Who holds power to speak security: is it them? If not, who else? What types and ideas of security knowledge are considered valuable? To me, the guards seemed like a symptom, an expression of something bigger—the tip of an iceberg.

The purpose of this chapter is therefore to look past the security elements that are visible and to draw a more nuanced picture of who has the power to speak security knowledge and what values and belief systems are prevalent within this "iceberg". Kenya's security sector is messy and murky, with a range of diverse actors, public and private, who have different interests and who are resistant to talk about their truths and activities. In their book *Transforming World*

*Politics: From Empire to Multiple Worlds*, Anna M. Agathangelou and L.H.M. Ling (2009) analogised the field of International Relations (IR) with a colonial household:

> The House of IR exhibits a […] politics of exclusion and violence. It clearly identifies who's "in," who's "out," and who's precariously "on the border." It also stratifies who's "upstairs" and who's "downstairs." This hierarchical division of space reflects the House's participation in and complicity with material relations of production and its uneven distribution of social wealth (Agathangelou and Ling, 2009: 49).

The analogy of a colonial household, the simplicity, and yet explanatory power it contains is compelling. I lean on Agathangelou and Ling's concept to investigate Kenya's security sector; the house represents the beliefs and values of what constitutes security; inside the house are the ones who hold power to speak, practice, and perform security in Kenya. Then there are security actors at the border, who adhere to the belief system and values of the house but do not own or only marginally wield power, and actors outside of the house who do neither adhere to the rules of the house nor hold power within this reality. I theorise the house of security as produced by colonial patterns of racial domination, marginalisation, and hierarchisation: the coloniality of power.

As described in the theoretical framing of this thesis, the coloniality of power and gender are crucial in shaping and defining the epistemic hierarchies, with western knowledge, rationalities, and lifeworlds oppressing marginalised and subaltern realities (Grosfoguel, 2007; Mignolo, 2014). Samantha Balaton-Chrimes and Victoria Stead write the following:

> The coloniality of power is a system in which race serves as the most basic criterion for the social and economic classification of peoples, and the consequent hierarchies serve the expansion of western capitalism, and entrench the subordination of people of colour through unjust divisions of labour. It is a system aligned with other hierarchies, in particular of gender and sexuality (Balaton-Chrimes and Stead, 2017: 9).

The coloniality of power inherent in security also entails a division of labour along racial and gendered lines; answering *who* gets to perform *which* notions of security is thus a crucial indicator to answer the question about who holds power within Kenya's house of security. Importantly, the house includes actors inside and outside of the state. As previously discussed, constructing the state as a monolithic, unitary, and coherent performer of security neglects the ambiguous and complex nature of the security dispositif (Galvan-Alvarez, Laursen, and Ridda, 2020). Recognising the state as modular and heterogenous allows us to bring attention to the division of labour and to the potential disruptive agency of actors from the private security industry. As scholars such as Maya Eichler (2013), Jutta Joachim and Anrea Schneiker (2014), and Amanda

Chisholm (2014, 2015, 2023) highlight, racial and gendered practices continue to produce divisions of labour and labour hierarchies in the private security industry. This is particularly evident in the case of third-country nationals (TCNs) within the private security industry, who are hired as security contractors from the Global South. The structural discrimination of TCN contractors often manifests in the invisibility of their labour and the racialisation of their skills and activities, which is informed by a superiority of western knowledge in performing security. In her work on the Gurkhas, Chisholm poignantly writes that the "market cannot be reduced to economics, but remains a hybrid space in which social relations and understandings of self are constituted through a blending of nationhood, military affiliations, capitalism, neoliberalism, and colonialism" (2014: 355). Conceptualising the market as a hybrid space opens up room for critically examining the public-private divide and how this imaginary binary influences the private security industry. The invisibility of TCNs is closely aligned with what is traditionally understood as the private, whereas the prominence of western security contractors is linked to the public—the binary of public-private therefore is not bound to state and market but squarely runs through the private security industry, by marking the public visible and the private invisible (Joachim and Schneiker, 2014).

I suggest that militarism—and in particular British militarism—is key in the hierarchisation of Kenya's house of security, as it operates as signifier for the racialised and gendered division of labour. There is a long tradition of postcolonial and feminist scholarship which critically engages with militarism and militarisation (see for example Enloe, 2000; Ahall, 2015, Basham, 2018). Militarism describes a belief system which is directly tied to military institutions, soldiering, and practices of warfare and signifies the more obvious practices that are rendered visible in a society; in contrast to militarisation, which characterises the not-so-obvious practices, relationships and politics of militarism in the everyday (Burke, 2012). Militarism is therefore a set of material and discursive practices that "manifest in how bodies culturally and socially matter differently as a result of how they are sexed" (Chisholm and Ketola, 2020: 274). As such, militarism and patriarchy are inherently linked to each other, with patriarchal structures at the very roots of militarism rather than merely an outcome of it (Enloe, 1983). Jasmine Gani's terminology of a racial militarism builds on previous, predominantly feminist scholarship on militarism and includes the significance of race in the constitution of militarism. She defines racial militarism as "an ideology, meaning it operates both as a *theory* of civilisational supremacy and a *practice/policy* of chauvinism, exclusion, and dehumanisation for the purpose of enacting violence" (2021: 547, emphasis in original). Gani's work highlights how

militarism is operating symbiotically with race and is equally co-constituted by it, reproduced by the construction of racial hierarchies and imperialist civilizational schema. Militarism is thus not only bound to the institution of the military, but rather operates as a practice which is accessible to security actors along the public-private continuum.

This chapter theorises the co-constitution of militarism and security as a means of defining who is able to speak to matters of security and specifically P/CVE in the context of Kenya. Over the course of three sections, I tease out how British militarism operates as a signifier of the Kenyan house of security and how it manifests visibly and invisibly along the public-private continuum. The significance lies within the continuum and the in-between of well-established binaries such as the public-private, the coloniser-colonised, and the centre-periphery. I suggest that British militarism and what I call "British militarism plus", a term with which I denote the less-aggressive, sequenced, and prevention-oriented approach to security, transcends the imaginary binary of public-private and manifests through the dominant colonial hierarchies. The dichotomy of public-private is thus rendered inadequate to address the power and knowledge hierarchies in Kenya's house of security. To speak to this argument, the first section explores how the value of British militarism is institutionalised in Kenya's private guarding industry by specifically examining the practice of wearing uniforms and by certain habits such as parading. The second section scrutinises how this British militarism informs the division of labour in the given security dispositif, investigating who is regarded as knowledgeable and highlighting the political nature of the organisation of labour with different foreign—public and private—actors on the ground, critically questioning who gets access and power in matters of security. In the final section, I analyse how neoliberal market logics function as a way to transcend the public-private divide. Exploring the secrecy of Kenya's house of security further allows us to understand how British militarism plus as a superior value system gets transferred easily between sectors, exposing the public-private divide as artificial yet significant as to upholding and reinforcing gendered and racialised hierarchies.

## Of parades and uniforms: The infusion of British militarism in the guarding industry

As a post-colonial state which has gained independence from the U.K. in 1963, Kenya's security apparatus has been massively influenced by its colonisers. The way security is performed (see Chapter 4) and how the security sector is assembled is a product of colonial

histories. In Kenya, the first formal police unit was established in 1907—the British Colonial Police Force. James Crow, a U.S. Army Lieutenant who wrote on the importance of the Kenya police during the Mau Mau revolt[12] noted the following:

> Each colony developed its self-contained police force, responsible to the Governor and paid for from the funds of the territory; yet, collectively, these forces were part of the Colonial Police as a unity in itself. This emphasis on police might be explained in the words of the British Report of the Police Commissioners in 1839—which states that the police are "the primary constitutional force concerned with the maintenance of order, the enforcement of the law and the protection of individuals in the enjoyment of their legal rights" (Crow, 1971: 11f).

The maintenance of order—the governing of the colonised subject—and the protection of private property were the central aims of the British imperial "divide and rule" policy. This imperial strategy worked through segregating and parting the colonised subjects on the basis of religion, ethnicity, race, and linguistics, with the idea to nurture a certain group of people, the loyalists, through a preferential system for loyalists while concurrently marginalising the rest of the population (Xypolia, 2016; Karari, 2018). Between 1952 and 1956, the British colonial authorities executed a brutal military campaign against the Mau Mau revolt, declaring a state of emergency and applying ruthless methods of murder, torture, land dispossession, and villagisation[13] (Karari, 2018). In the years between the defeat of the Mau Mau and Kenya's independency, the colonial authorities sought to balance the precarious position of securing their economic, security, and strategic interests while simultaneously offsetting pressure from African nationalist (Percox, 2001). Central in this endeavour of shaping Kenyan post-colonial politics was maintaining access to land[14] which was previously appropriated by the British colonial authorities—supporting political allies who would protect the interests of white settlers was therefore crucial within the time period just before and in the immediate aftermath of Kenya's independency (Karari, 2018).

Related to these colonial histories and post-colonial ties such as the Commonwealth, the U.K. has a long-standing tradition of intervention in Kenya since its independence.

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[12] The Mau Mau revolt largely took place between 1952 and 1960, with members of the Kikuyu tribe revolting against the white settlement in Kenya. The accumulation of resentments and grievances due to heavy discrimination by the white settlers against the Kikuyus bore brunt in the Mau Mau revolt, which resulted in heavy violence by the British colonial authorities (Newsinger, 1981).

[13] The colonial authorities established a villagisation programme, which aimed at confining natives in concentrated villages. As Peter Karari writes, "[c]lose to 100,000 Kikuyu were forced into fortified settlements under 24-hour curfews, leading to massive starvation disease, and over 50,000 deaths" (2018: 9).

[14] The Crown Land Ordinances of 1902 and 1915 appropriated 7,5 million acres which equalises 25 percent of farm land in Kenya (Anderson, 2005).

Particularly U.K. security institutions hold a certain authority of knowledge and power in the Kenyan security dispositif; the British Army Training Unit in Kenya (BATUK) based in Nanyuki and Nairobi, for example, was established just after World War II and is up to date one of the most important training sites of the British Army. With the permanent unit in Nanyuki and a small element in Nairobi, BATUK keeps roughly 100 military personnel permanently based in Kenya with another 280 on short tour (ARMY BE THE BEST, n.d.; Gbadamosi, 2023). On the Ministry of Defence (MoD)'s Army website, it states that:

> Outside the U.K., the largest number of U.K. Armed Forces deployments are currently training or on operations in Africa. The U.K. has deployed many short-term military training teams to help build the capacity of national military forces, ensuring a number of states across Africa can respond appropriately and proportionally to the security threats they face, including terrorism, the illegal wildlife trade, violations of human rights and emerging humanitarian crises (ARMY BE THE BEST, n.d.).

The defence partnership between the Kenyan government and the U.K. is worth about 8,6 million USD, which converts to approximately 40 million USD directly and indirectly contributing to the local economy (Gbadamosi, 2023).

The prominence of the colonial histories in Kenya's house of security not only holds true for the public sector but also for the private security industry: the first private security companies to be set up in the country served the purpose of securing property of white settlers after independence and were owned by British ex-police and military officials. The mistrust of white settlers in the post-colonial Kenyan security institutions served as the foundation for a parallel, private security system which is bound to the idea of land ownership and property rights—taking security in their own hands to protect their land is thus an important founding pillar of the Kenyan private security industry (Dobson, 2018; Ramadhan et al., 2021; Mkutu and Sabala, 2007). Many companies who were established in the 1960s and 1970s still dominate the industry as of today; Securior, for example, was established in 1969 and was later merged into G4S; similarly, KK security was created in the 1960s by an Irish man who previously served in the Kenyan police force and is now one of the biggest security companies in the East African nation (Dobson, 2018).

As mentioned in the introduction, Kenya's private security industry today is the largest private sector employer in the country. A first growth spurt of the sector happened in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as Nairobi grew in size and with it, its middle class and crime-related activities (Dobson, 2018). The sharp fear of terrorist activities after the U.S. bombing in 1998 and in particular after the Westgate incident in 2013 translated into a higher demand for private

security services, predominantly for international clients such as embassies, aid organisations, and associated staff members who live in high-end areas (Usalama Reforms Forum, 2019). A 2015 study explains the surge of hiring private security services with Kenya's middle and upper-class's growing feeling of insecurity as well as the perceived lack of an adequate security response by the local public police—thus translating into a feeling of being unprotected against a higher threat level (Kiama Githimi and Bor, 2015). How big the industry in fact is remains unknown as many companies are not officially registered, even though the Private Security Regulation Act (2016) requires formal registration of each company. The "Baseline Study on the Private Security Industry in Kenya" authored by Usalama Reforms Forum in 2019 estimates there are 300,000 to 400,000 private security employees and 500,000 non-registered people in the private security industry, with a further estimation of a total of 2,500 companies. Another report published one year later similarly talks about "over 2,000 security companies operating in the country" (Ramadhan et al., 2021: 8). On their publicly available website, the Private Security Regulatory Authority (PSRA) lists 709 companies registered and licensed as corporate private security service providers in Kenya, as of 9th June 2023 (PRSA; n.d.).

Generally, the private security sector is divided into three tiers of security companies: tier one holds large and reputable companies who provide a diverse range of services at a high cost—often labelled as risk management companies; tier two is representative of a large amount of companies which offer guarding services and technological knowledge; and tier three includes small or even unregistered companies in, which offer mostly guarding at very low prices (Ramadhan et al., 2021). Defined by manpower and demand, guarding companies make up the largest proportion of the private security industry. This relates to the above-mentioned surge of the private security industry after narratives of terrorism and violent extremism entered the national discourse—the idea of prevention by protection has exponentially increased and spread particularly in urban areas (Kiama Githimi and Bor, 2015). The frontline security guards, securing mostly premises, are important in two regards when it comes to counterterrorism: firstly, the security guards—unarmed in the context of Kenya—are the primary responders to a threat in the event of an attack. Their role is to inform the police immediately through a pre-installed panic button at each guarding post and *not* to engage in the use of force. Secondly, standing at the gates of a mall, an office building, embassies, schools or private houses, the guards are supposed to observe their environment and report suspicious behaviour. A security guard of a tier three company explained in an informal conversation that you can recognise a terrorist by "the funny way they behave and walk" and added "you can

see it in their eyes" (informal conversation, 10 October 2021). With this frontline position, the security guards acquire information about people going in and out of the buildings, which is valuable to public security agencies within the space of pre-emption.

The hired companies are licensed to provide security guards as a means of protection of infrastructure and/or people and are contracted by private and public entities alike. Making up the large part of the private security industry and standing at one's doorstep, guarding companies are highly visible. I engage with this visible aspect of guarding companies and analyse how the structures, norms, and values inherent in their institutions provide us with an enhanced understanding of how security manifests in the private security industry. During my field research, I observed the guarding industry which was particularly present in Nairobi, and less existent if not completely absent in the marginalised and as in-secure labelled places of Kenya, which I visited on field trips (see the introduction's section on methodology). Next to daily observations and ethnographic notes over the period of ten months, I also had the chance to interview representatives of four of the biggest (and oldest) guarding companies in Kenya and visit the training sites of two of these companies. I discovered that guarding companies are heavily reliant on and informed by British militarism and found that they are consciously trying to associate with British militarism by two particular modes: requiring guards to wear military-informed uniforms and applying training standards modelled on the British Army.

The most visible aspect of British militarism in guarding is their use of uniforms. Every private guarding company has their own uniform, with the rule of the higher the tier, the fancier the uniforms. Uniforms in general serve the purpose of demonstrating a belonging and identity by promoting a sameness of appearance. For example, military uniforms specifically designate a belonging to a certain country and entitle you to the status of prisoner of war under international humanitarian law (Pfanner, 2004). To not conflate this status as an official combatant, it is forbidden by international law but also by the Kenyan national legislation to use uniforms that resemble uniforms "worn by any disciplined forces or any national security organ in Kenya" (The Republic of Kenya, 2016: 22). Yet, a lot of companies in Kenya require the wearing of uniforms that resemble the ones of any military, with combat boots, trousers, tucked-in shirt, practical pockets, and a hat. While visiting one of the training sites of a larger private security company, I saw a picture on the wall of how to dress appropriately. I asked the instructor who showed me around about the meaning of this picture and he proudly revealed that the trainees—the soon-to-be-security guards—are thoroughly trained on the dress code, with checks during and after training, including the issuance of a penalty in case the uniform is

not worn correctly. This close association of militarism through uniforms—not only by simply providing them but moreover by coupling discipline as a value to it—helps to encourage employees to feel part of a group, to identify with the company, and more so, to suggest a certain seriousness, a certain power, to a given self and an outside viewer.

Moreover, British militarism as a core value within the private security industry manifests in the institutional beliefs, values, and norms which are *taught* to the personnel employed in a private security company. Training is required by law, yet many companies sidestep this obligation. A CEO of a major regional East African security company told me that:

> By law it [training] is required but by practice, not all companies train. So that is a big gap we have in the market where the law does need to be implemented. So that's because in the law, in the [Private Security Regulation] Act it's mandatory for every security officer to not only be trained but also be examined and then certified. And then after the certification is the licensing and that license expires. And for you to have your license renewed means that you have to go back for a course, for a refresher course, which now again, improves your skills. So at the moment, the companies need to see the value, they need to see the training as an investment, not a cost. So we still have many companies that don't train, very many that don't train. […] There's that leeway to just not do it (Interview with anonymous, 3 December 2021).

A reason for this "leeway" is that there are no universal training standards in Kenya's private security industry. Tier 1 companies tend to use a similar composition for training, which consists of a basic introductory training, a refresher course for the guards after their yearly annual leave, and targeted trainings for special deployment posts. In the basic training, which runs for 15 days, the focus is on dressing appropriately, learning on how to military parade, go through obstacle courses, and to attend several theoretical and practical classes on possible threats and risks as well as on the use of force. The basic training ends with a parade, which is the guard's "ceremony" of becoming a part of the company. The structure of the basic training resembles a short and softer version of a common military basic training, which serves the purpose of "'a rite of passage', a period of identity reformation and the forging of a 'new self-identity', specifically a shift from a civilian identity to soldier identity, from boy to man" (Welland, 2013: 889). In the British military, the basic training consists of 14 weeks, with discipline is at its core. Interestingly, the British Army course also ends with a parade which signalises the recruits becoming soldiers (Welland, 2013).

As a courtesy to one of my visits at a training facility, the company's Head of Training organised a demonstration of parading by members of the current training course who have

already absolved 13 days, therefore soon-to-be-released guards. Standing on a small parking space, I witnessed a class of approximately 20 people marching in, with the effort to walk synchronously, imitating a military march, gliding arms at their sides. Meanwhile, a training officer was yelling military commands in English such as "stand at ease" or "attention", including the proper way of shouting these commands, with a high pitched, hurried, and supressed ending of the words. The grand finale of the demonstration was the pledge, where the trainer yelled a few words which were then repeated in unison by the security guards. Again, the performed parading illustrates a heavy analogy to military drill, which uses marching as a tool to instil a high level of discipline and to subordinate the individual will to the group (Kurtz and Turpin, 1999). Marching is therefore an essential component within the military. The British Army takes marching a step further by setting a tempo:

> Setting a tempo is essential to instil fundamental discipline on the parade ground where a person is taught to react individually to an order, similarly in a group, bus as one in a set tempo. Recruits march at 120 paces to the minute in the Army and the RAF. For trained personnel the quick marching tempo is uniformly 116, and slow march at 65; these tempi are used from the onset of training by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines (BBICO British Band Instrument Company, 2019).

Militaries regard drill and discipline as vital, even indispensable, qualities to successfully navigate and operate in a battle. As Michel Foucault writes, "the soldier has become something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed; […] in short, one has 'got rid of the peasant' and given him 'the air of a soldier'" (1975: 135).[15] The disciplining of private security guards through common military tools such as drill and parading thus aims to produce mass bodies capable of performing security, by subordinating their individual will. After the parade, I asked the Head of Training about the strong military analogy and he responded—with a startled face that showed surprise about me raising this "obvious fact"—that they rely profoundly on British military structure in the development of their training structures (Participant observation, 6 May 2022). The intention of the training within the Kenyan guarding industry is therefore to create a mimesis, an imitation of military practices, to generate "the air of a soldier". Homi Bhabha's concept of colonial mimicry explains the "desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, as *a subject of a different that is almost the same, but not quite*" (Bhaba, 1984: 126, emphasis in the original). Mimicry centres ambivalence between the representation and adoption of normalised knowledge of the colonial

[15] A close reading of subjectivities, discipline, and docile bodies can be found in Chapter 5.

power and the simultaneous threat to disciplinary powers by doing so. While imitation is central to the concept, colonial mimicry operates as a crucial factor in the decolonial process through acts of subversion (Galvan-Alvarez, Birk Laursen, and Ridda, 2020). Acts of subversion, the aim to deceive or camouflage certain intentions, did however not ring true in the case of private guarding companies and their imitation of British militarism. Rather, I argue the visible display of British militarism is a post-colonial mimesis, "an open attempt to imitate" (Hoehne, 2009: 254) which serves to adhere to a value system that is regarded as powerful (Hoehne, 2009; Ingiriis, 2016). As will be elaborated in the next section, it is mimesis rather than mimicry as private security guards are located outside of Kenya's house of security rather than within the house or even at the doorstep; they do not attempt to subvert or revolt against the power system but instead leverage the power of the existing value system.

Interestingly, the pledge at the end of the parade included the core values of the company, including respect, honesty and integrity, excellence, being a pioneer—and service to the customer above all else. This small add-on at the end centring customer service is crucial as it points towards the in-betweenness of the private security industry. While British militarism is at the core of the industry, the ultimate difference to militaries is the revenue-oriented nature of private security which operates as a key value. An interviewee in the managing ranks of a large guarding company referred to this problem as such: "security is struggling very much to be seen as a business. […] We are still in a business of customer service, customer satisfaction, listening to the customer's needs" (Interview with anonymous, 3 December 2021). The ethos of British militarism is strongly conveyed through the wearing of uniforms, the parading, but also the pledging—values that are not only inherent in the institutional setting but also strived towards. Furthermore, small adaptations tailored to the needs of the private security industry, such as the added value of customer focus, give away the mimesis of this endeavour. The adoption of British militarism thus serves as a point of leverage, where the aim of the imitation is to be read as serious security actors, as important, as valuable to the industry. The materialisation of economies such as guarding in response to terrorism and violent extremism allows for a space of post-colonial mimesis, where colonial and patriarchal norms, practices, and beliefs are sustained and corrupted to match the specific needs of the industry.

## A racialised and gendered division of labour: British militarism plus and the superiority of western security knowledge

Having analysed the visible aspect of security through guarding, it is crucial to explore if this visibility translates to an actuality of power. This section thus asks: who lives within Kenya's house of security? By analysing who is situated in positions of power, we gain an understanding of how security dispositifs work within a certain time and space. Since day one of my field research, I investigated what actors are working alongside or past the Kenyan government on matters of security as well as the dominant logics, discourses, and narratives of security. It quickly became clear that as a country of geopolitical importance, Kenya has served as a space for intervention to many global players: international, national, private, and public competitors are on the ground aspiring to get a piece of a seemingly fragmented security state. The secrecy regarding foreign national involvement was palpable throughout my interviews; people reacted surprised and sometimes startled that I would openly ask questions about different foreign involvements—the threat of one interviewee of hunting me down and killing me if I misused his information (see Chapter 1) is a textbook example of how serious and treasured this silencing is. As explained previously, I do not attempt to fully outline the entirety of lived and performed security in Kenya, but rather highlight the narratives around security and the related understandings of *who* is deemed a security expert and *what knowledge* is being valued within the context of Kenya.

Private security guarding: Visibility without power

The ubiquitous presence of private security guards did not correspond with their value within Kenya's house of security. Most importantly, I noticed a huge discrepancy in terms of power and value of carrying security knowledge when it comes to the frontline security guards and the management positions within guarding. As a well-resourced, western person in the context of Nairobi, I lived in two different apartments during the time of my fieldwork—the first secured by tier three and the second by tier two—and I frequented in restaurants, malls, and cafés which were mostly guarded premises. Through my ethnographic insight, the participation observation of two tier one guarding companies and their training site, as well as informal talks with security guards, I have gained an understanding of frontline security guards in Nairobi as mostly Kenyan citizens from rural and more marginalised parts of the country, with little educational background. While there are some minor differences in terms of working

conditions between the different tiers, they are inadequate and substandard throughout the whole industry, with little to no support to facilitate the work of frontline guards (see also The Baseline Study by Usalama Reforms Forum, 2019, for more information about the working conditions). The day and night shifts of the security guards almost universally consist of 12 hours in Kenya (6am to 6pm for the day shift and 6pm to 6am for the night shift) with wages paid directly at the minimum wage or a lot of times below this mark. The modest money the security guards earn are often not enough for them to pay the *matatu*[16] to get to work, so they have to walk from their home—which, due to economic reasons, is usually in the outskirts and marginalised areas of Nairobi—to their guarding posts, which are located at the wealthier parts of Nairobi close to the city centre. One guard told me that he walked one and a half hours each way to get to his station in Westlands, which results in a 15-hour-work-day. Furthermore, in most cases, there are no breaks during these shifts, not for food nor for sanitary reasons.[17] The expectation for guards is thus to be in a specific place for 12 straight hours; in combination with the frequent inaccessibility to sanitary facilities this inevitably leads to a lack of consuming food or water.

The meagre economic benefits of being a private security guard are reinforced by a social stigma around the profession, with a clear social hierarchy between different security jobs. Even though public security institutions such as the police and the military suffer from a considerable trust problem in Kenya (as described in more detail in Chapter 4), these are much more desired professions because they are considered to hold "real power", in comparison to the private security guards who are regarded as passive and with no authority. One reason for this lack of association to power is the fact that private security guards are unarmed. In rural parts of Kenya, private security guards are sometimes called *Askari gongo* which means in Kiswahili "guard with a stick", satirising their inability to carry a "proper weapon" and implying a merely inexistent effectiveness of responding to an attack. This association of *unarmedness* with a lack of power and authority is closely connected to an understanding of how security should be performed.

While power through arms is not an uncommon association, this relation of power can be directly traced to the colonial state formation as a violent project by the U.K. In October 2021, I took an Uber in Nairobi to get to *Karura Forest* and engaged in a conversation with the

[16] *Matatus* are privately owned mini-buses that serve as a way of public transport.
[17] It is crucial to note that work breaks and access to sanitary facilities are highly dependent on the tier of the company as well as on the premises of deployment. In some postings, there is access to washrooms available.

driver. After he started to ask me about the military, the police, and the weapons (small arms) we use in Switzerland, he announced that he was in fact a police officer who is "ubering" to get extra cash next to his day job. He disclosed that forced discipline such as beatings is widely used within the Kenyan police and military, mainly as a method of training with the intention to apply "negative motivation", as he termed it. Through the forced discipline, soldiers and officers are trained to risk their lives, obey commands, and respect the military hierarchy. He continued to explain that recruits are beaten to a degree that that they will "know their place" and will not object any orders. He connected these security values directly to British colonial rule, explaining to me that they have a Kiswahili name for the British colonisers which translates to English as "the ones who beat/the ones who imprison". Importantly, he did not necessarily value this negatively, but accepted these forms of authorities and performed security by making a direct comparison to the perceived inferiority of former French colonies on the African continent by their lack of violence inscribed in the performed security.[18] His description of police and military brutality as directly related to colonial violence is crucial: the British imperial policy of indirect rule in Kenya and other African colonies was upheld through the "menacing threat and the deployment of actual violence by the colonial police and military forces" (Ruteere, 2014: 164). These violent values of colonial rule are engrained in the security apparatus in Kenya, with the police and the military being built on and through British militarism, ultimately translating to the hierarchical value inscription of armed officers and unarmed guards.

A CEO of a smaller risk management company criticised the conditions for private security guards with a particular focus on training:

> What happens if a terrorist attack takes place? The guards press a button and run away. The expectations on private security guards are unrealistic and they are either the first ones to die or the first ones to run—they lack training on how to deal appropriately with the threat of a terrorist attack (Interview with anonymous, 31 March 2022).

This statement reveals that private security guards are not considered adequate, or adequately trained, to respond to terrorist attacks; the very reason the industry has expanded to its current size. Thus, even though private security guards are highly visible, they are not in positions of power. The ambiguity within visibility is what is interesting here: the mimesis of British

[18] The comparison of French and British colonial rule on the African continent has been widely used to explain different postcolonial outcomes, mostly centring the British indirect rule in comparison to the French rule of assimilation (direct) (see for example Lange, Jeong, and Gaudreau, 2022, or Lee and Schultz, 2012). While this comparison is not of importance here, it is crucial to acknowledge that the French were by no means less violent in their rule than the British.

militarism through guarding is due to a belief that imitating colonial and racialised practices help to attain power. Yet, this imitation is not enough to give the guards access to the interior of Kenya's house of security, which holds the people who are privileged to speak security. The lack of power associated with private security guards is thus connected to the colonial structures found within Kenya's security dispositif; Kenya's house of security is infused with British militarism which values being armed, able to handle weapons, and executing force if needed.

This low social and economic status of frontline security guards is even more pronounced in contrast to the money involved in the private guarding industry as it is one of the fastest growing service industries in Kenya (Usalama Reforms Forum, 2019) as well as in comparison to the managers' wealthy and socio-economic position within the society. There is a significant disparity when analysing who is managing the guarding companies; throughout all my interviews, there was either a white person at the management level and—mostly it was *and* sometimes also *or*—a person with a security background (military or police, foreign or national) in charge. This intertwining of personnel from public security institutions such as the armed forces and police services and the private security industry has been labelled as a so-called revolving door phenomenon, due to its specificity to the private security sector (MacLeod and Van Amstel, 2021). The interlinkages of the public and private security institutions and the established connections within these spaces give the private security industry influence over public businesses and additionally contribute to making the private security industry a cutting-edge industry by bringing in military and strategic expertise (Leander, 2005b).

Significantly, this fluidity between the private and public security sector is true *only* for the management level in the guarding companies, indicating the racialised order within the security dispositif. Understandings of authority and power are therefore exchanged between the top level of the organisation and the public security institutions, with British militarism at the core of the colonial logics within the security system. In the two tier one guarding companies I have visited, both exemplified this discrepancy between top managerial levels and frontline security guards. One was a family-owned business which was founded by a former, white police officer shortly after Kenya's declaration of independence. The other interviewee, a high-ranking member of the second guarding company, was a former member of the British Army. The division of labour of Kenyans of socioeconomic weaker status at the bottom of the structure and white, mostly western people at the top speaks to a reproduction of power structures informed by colonial and hence racialised hierarchies in the security industry.

A global cycle of privilege

Similar to the guarding companies, I also noticed the pattern of the revolving door phenomenon within large risk management companies. Despite their smaller presence in terms of numbers within the private security industry, risk management companies[19] materialise as the most powerful actors, living in the house of security. Influential multinational companies such as Constellis, GardaWorld, or Saladin, but also smaller national risk management companies, have an international background and compete for clients that need assistance within the area of counterterrorism. While their portfolios are covering a wide range of services, also depending on the client's needs and demands, they are the ones primarily capitalising on the services of intelligence gathering and training, as I further elaborated in the following section. Whereas the power divergence within these companies is less pronounced than with guarding companies, due to reasons of company size and offered services, the top levels of risk management companies are similarly a mirror of the revolving door phenomenon. Most of my interviewees ticked both of the boxes (white *and* public security background), with former U.S. or British special forces such as the Special Boat Service (SBS) or the Special Air Service (SAS) starting new companies after retiring from the military. Of the 15 interviews I have conducted with managerial personnel of tier one risk management companies in Kenya, only one interviewee did not match this description—a Kenyan of Asian heritage who however voluntarily told me that he is usually read as a white person by the Kenyan government.[20] All of the others have either a U.S. military (mostly U.S. Marines) or a British military background (similarly, British Marines being the most common denominator). Moreover, *unarmedness* as a signifier of disenfranchisement was again significant within the managing ranks of the private security industry; even though the PSRA of 2016 clearly states that private security personnel are not allowed to carry arms, almost all of my interviewees who are in managing positions had a licensed fire weapon—privately owned, but carried sometimes to work assignments. This privilege first of all illustrates how laws can be circumvented by people in power but moreover

[19] I use the terminology of risk management companies for a specific company type within the private security industry, which offers services around the analysis, monitoring, and mitigation of risks for their clients. I noticed in my field research that the distinction between guarding and risk management companies in terms of the overall definition of private security companies is important to analyse their activities. There is a lot of complexity when it comes to the labelling of the activities within the industry, as there are for instance also companies that offer both services. The categorisation of risk management versus guarding companies are thus by no means clear-cut nor exhaustive.

[20] I have not asked the interviewee nor made any conversation in the direction of how he has been read by society or how he himself understands his position within the private security industry. In connection to telling me about one of his assignments, the interviewee mentioned this on his own, elaborating that he has never really been part of the Kenyan society even though he is a born and bred Kenyan.

how the earlier described association of power with arms holds true for the whole industry. The analysis of who holds and operates in management positions speaks volumes on how power is distributed within the private security industry. The valorisation, favouritism, and legitimisation of particularly British, and sometimes U.S., security knowledge needs to be understood within the broader ties of the global counterterrorism system to colonial structures which are deeply entrenched in today's security industry and thus contest the local, national, and international as separate, distinguishable spheres.

Interestingly, next to former U.K. or U.S. marines, I have also encountered a number of white Africans operating at the top levels of the private security industry, mostly South Africans, but also white Zimbabweans, Kenyans and Burundians. A lot of times, due to the colonial history and power privileges still inherent in a lot of East- and South African countries, white Africans are able to go through the British school system and often enlist themselves in the British military. This in turn gives them advantages based on their racialised and gendered identity as white, male-bodied Africans and puts them at the top of power structures in the context of Kenya. A member of the British Army stationed in Kenya acknowledged this, as I term it, global cycle of privilege in the following words:

> A lot of people in the private sector are not necessarily Brits, but actually white South Africans and Zimbabweans that go through the British system in terms of schooling and military service. At one point in my military career, it wasn't uncommon to hear Afrikaans as a language most spoken in the unit—it was this common to have people from this part of Africa in the military structure (Interview with anonymous, 29 June 2022).

The cycle of privilege favours British militarism as a source of expertise and knowledge, therefore upholding colonial domination through the reinforcement of existing power hierarchies. The shift from public to the private sphere further reveals an artificial binary construction which is merely a rearrangement of power while upholding patriarchal and racialised beliefs. The traditional conceptions of militarised masculinities are at the heart of this system and get replicated within the private security industry. This fluidity between the public and the private sector is also illustrated by the value of the network; one of my interviewees, who was serving in a U.K. military unit deployed in Kenya at the moment but was by this time already in transition to the private security sector, termed this with the saying "your network is your net worth" (Interview with anonymous, 29 June 2022). Connections and a solid network are regarded as key for succeeding in the private security industry and thus, having a previous public security background is almost inevitable for making a start in the private security

industry. This is a classic case of an "old boys' network," which is the reproduction of labour market inequality through networks as capital. This capital is exclusive and relies heavily on racialised and gendered norms of *who* gets access to this old boys' network (see for example McDonald, 2011, or Jaffe and Diphoorn, 2019). Within the scope of my research, I found that more often than not, such connections were formed at Sandhurst, the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst RMAS. However, these connections do not have to be created directly from person to person, as it is sufficient to know somebody that knows somebody who went there, as a basis of recommendation, and to some degree, as a basis for vetting. Most of my interviewees from the private security industry in Kenya knew each other well or at least by name, something I termed "one happy bubble of security peeps" in one of my field entries, noticing the interrelatedness. This ultimate loyalty towards people with a similar background speaks to a specific identity that is inscribed into going through the elite military academy Sandhurst, almost like an initiation ceremony of becoming a distinguished member of the old boys' network. The valorisation of this knowledge network as well as the existence of the revolving door phenomenon in the security dispositif in Kenya create a value- and knowledge-based community with British militarism at the core. As demonstrated, this community favours male-bodied whiteness, rendering the distinction between public and private irrelevant and reaffirming existing gendered and colonial hierarchies that produce appropriate and subordinate masculinities.

### The "right way" of doing security: British militarism plus and the discrimination of third-country nationals

The gendered and racialised market logics that define the nature of the organisation of labour within security is also evident when looking at which players are present in Kenya's security dispositif and how their labour is valued. The different foreign (public and private) security players materialising as the most powerful were from Israel, South Africa, the U.S., and the U.K., coming up during interviews but also in desk-based research, informal talks, and participant observation. Russia was sometimes mentioned by my interviewees, particularly when I started to ask questions about the private security sector. Most of the times, they used the Wagner Group as a reference to illustrate that this group could never operate in the context of Kenya given the tight grip of the Kenyan government. Two interviewees mentioned that the Russians are training parts of the National Intelligence Service (NIS), but also relativised their influence in Kenya by comparing them to "smaller fish such as India or Canada" in terms of

influence and power (Interview with anonymous, 18 May 2022). In contrast, South Africa and Israel were often mentioned as actors existing on a different level. These two countries have often been associated with aggressive approaches to security, performing the "dirty work", both in terms of activities conducted by the public and private security institutions.

South Africa[21] is infamous for their mercenaries[22]—white, male-bodied security personnel who commonly did not find their place within the state's security institutions after the end of Apartheid—and for their technological advantage when it comes to private security solutions. My visit at a security expo in Nairobi, *SecurExpo East Africa*, in Spring 2022 illustrated how much the private security industry relies on knowledge from South Africa. In a huge event space, private security companies occupied stalls and presented their work to possible customers. Almost all of the stalls were inhabited by South African security companies such as Pyro-Tech Security Suppliers or Frontier Security International, providing technical solutions for protecting properties—from CCTV solutions, alarm systems, smart security to electric fencing. However, a lot of interviewees offered their scepticism against South Africans, both in terms of their knowledge on technological solutions as well as in terms of providing security personnel for any given mission objective. Even though the Kenyan private security industry is majorly informed by South Africa's technological solutions and supplies, I heard interviewees dismissing their knowledge and expertise by stressing the difference in terms of wealth divide between South Africa and Kenya. This scepticism has been much more pronounced when it comes to frontline security services provided by South Africans—either through private security companies or private military companies. One interviewee went as far as terming South African contractors as "dodgy" and "cheap", conducting frontline services in an aggressive, inappropriate manner (Interview with anonymous, 24 May 2022). Another one, a white Kenyan-British citizen, made a direct link to the end of Apartheid and how since then the country allegedly spiralled downwards: "It's communism there now. It was a good country once, but unfortunately that is not the case anymore. I don't trust the South Africans" (Interview with anonymous, 29 April 2022). Interestingly, his racialised views on the end of

[21] After South Africa's independence, soldiers from the former South African Defence Force (SADF) participated in several conflicts on the African continent, such as Angola and Sierra Leone. The company Executive Outcomes (EO) is most infamous for its involvement in these conflicts and is regarded as one of the largest mercenary group during the 1990s (Howe, 1998). The more recent example of the South African military company Dyck Advisory Group (DAG) in Northern Mozambique and their indiscriminate attacks on civilians in 2021 (Amnesty International, 2021) is yet another example of South Africa's reputation when it comes to mercenarism and private military contractors.

[22] The terminology of mercenary commonly refers to the marketisation of soldiering, where professional soldiers freelance their labour to participate in a foreign conflict. Chapter 5 provides an elaborated definition of the mercenary.

Apartheid translates to the South Africa's security sector and renders nationals of the country incapable of delivering the appropriate security, placing them at the doorstep of Kenya's house of security.

Similar to the case of the South Africans, the Israeli also have a reputation of a more aggressive approach to security. From the very early days of arriving in Kenya, I heard rumours about Israeli special forces but also about one particular Israeli private security company doing business in Kenya: the International Reserve Group (IRG). On their website, they offer the following company description:

> IRG-Special Security Projects was established 15 years ago in Israel and was introduced in Kenya eight years ago by the Security Service and Special Forces officers, who have a unique and wide-range operational experience. (…) Our clients include government and federal institutions, public companies, oil and mining companies, telecommunication companies, maritime industry, banks, emergency services and hotels (IRG, n.d.).

The conscious blending of private and public security through the mention of the Security Service and Special Forces officers illustrates how the company directly associates with government security forces and wants the clients to do likewise. In all of my interviews, I inquired about Israel and the IRG. Yet, I did not get access to any Israeli source and my interlocutors only gave me bits and pieces of information, never confirming the IRG's work, either holding back or not knowing more. As an example, one interviewee mentioned a "weird Israeli connection of the Kenyan government" but quickly added that he does not know a lot about that (Interview with anonymous, 29 June 2022). However, the information that was presented to me gave away two particular characteristics of the Israeli (public and private) presence in Kenya's house of security. First, even though there is sometimes distrust offered towards them, they are frequently more respected in their approach to security due to their uncompromising ways of fighting. Particularly Israeli's strong counterterrorism approach against the Palestinian people in the occupied areas of Gaza and the West Bank has been frequently mentioned as a marker for their qualifications and their enactment of security; their appreciation as a valuable actor, even if as a brutal one, is due to the reputation of not hesitating to use violence. Second, I have found Israel's state security institutions as well as Israeli private companies to be present in terms of providing training to Kenyan government institutions and to (non-western) private companies, particularly in regards to K-9 experience and training dog handlers. I spoke to several dog handlers who confirmed having received training by Israelis; an example for this are the dog handlers at the entrance of the Riverside complex, which is a

gated community encompassing restaurants, offices, apartments, and the infamous DusitD2 hotel where the attack in 2019 occurred.

Both Israel and South Africa have a large presence in Kenya, yet their involvement stands in stark contrast to the value inscribed within their work. While there is a difference in perception of South Africa and Israel security, with Israel's hard security approach being more appreciated, the difference in measuring security standards—in particularly in the case of South African security—speaks to the structural discrimination of third-country nationals and the division of labour running along the North-South divide, as discussed by Joachim and Schneiker (2015, 2019) and Chisholm (2014, 2015, 2023). Importantly, both Israel and South Africa are often defined in contrast to the U.S. and the U.K., which are regarded as the most important and valuable protagonists in Kenya when it comes to security.

The geopolitical significance of Kenya is hereby central for western involvement in the Horn of Africa. Given the historical ties to the U.K. and the current military power of the U.S., the Kenyan government works closely with these two countries. The U.S., in comparison to the U.K., has much less of a stronghold in Kenya, as they have neglected the African continent as a priority for U.S. interventions and collaborations. The AFRICOM bases in Mombasa and Manda Bay, both positioned at the coastal region of Kenya, serve as a starting point to enlarge the U.S. presence in Kenya. Moreover, Biden's announcement early 2022 to redeploy several hundred ground troops into Somalia (Savage and Schmitt, 2022) has a direct influence on the Kenyan context, since Kenya serves not only as a base from which to enter the context of Somalia but also as a major ally in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. In one of the interviews, a member of the U.K. Army stressed Kenya's relationship with the U.S.: "There is of course an engagement with AFRICOM. The Americans come with weight; it would be foolish not to have a good relationship to them" (Interview with anonymous, 29 June 2022). The U.S. and the U.K. are also both involved in training Kenya's security institutions such as the Special Forces and the NIS and likewise offer the opportunity for members of Kenyan security institutions to go abroad for certain training courses. A former captain of the Kenyan Defence Forces (KDF) confirmed that the "the higher ranks are trained by the British or the U.S." (Interview with anonymous, 11 March 2022). This is also discernible when investigating the most prominent attacks in the Kenyan security discourse: Westgate 2013 and DusitD2 2019. In both attacks, there were unidentified British people spotted at the scenes of the attacks—armed and in conversation with the local security forces. Through interviews with people involved in both scenes, I learned that the British actors were deployed by the British

Army to Nairobi to do capacity building with Kenyan Special Forces, which included training and teaching. Whereas one had already left the Army at the time of the attack, the other one was an SAS officer with an ongoing capacity building mandate.[23] This training endeavour by the British Army is by no means public knowledge; rather, there are lots of speculations which are also reflected in newspaper articles and rumours around this subject. Some of my interviewees mentioned that they had to sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) for the government, which is not unusual within this highly secretive security space.

This well-defined division of labour is accentuated by the divergence between countries from the Global North. Northern countries such as Sweden and Norway are present in Kenya's security dispositif through donor work and aid agencies; the development side. The U.S. and the U.K. in comparison, are seen as the players covering security grounds (Interview with anonymous, 21 July 2022). The entanglement of the security sector with the development sector through development-oriented security approaches is further discussed in Chapter 4.

Interestingly, the British system of security in particular is juxtaposed against the Israeli and South African one by associating their performance of security more to the idea of prevention. The former KDF captain mentioned in relation to the British and U.S. training that "they are trained not to shoot. It's a no shoot to kill policy" (Interview with anonymous, 11 March 2022). Another interviewee termed the British way of doing security as

> a less-aggressive approach to security with the goal to avoid the problem in the first place. CPOs [close protection officers] are not allowed to carry guns in the U.K., so it's crucial to have a non-violent approach otherwise you're fucked. If you are trained by the Israeli way and you go to Britain, you will not be able to do your job, because you don't have a gun. Israel really stands for a hard security approach. It is ideal to start with the less-aggressive approach and then go to the Israeli approach if needed (Interview with anonymous, 4 July 2022).

The less-aggressive approach and the sequencing of violence is key to what has been described as the British approach to security and directly connects to my theory West-of-Doom and the logic of prevention: violence enacted in the name of prevention in comparison to reactive violence is deemed justified, honourable, and redeemable—starting with a subtle, preventative approach before using "aggressive" security. It not only stands for British military practices

[23] The SAS officer at the scene of the DusitD2 attacks in 2019 is active on Instagram under the pseudonym Christian Craighead and appears on several podcasts and military Youtube Channels (his real name is known to me). He intends to write a book about his involvement in the response to the attacks, but the U.K. government stopped the publishing of his story by legal measures. On 27 April 2024, he wrote on his Instagram page that "[h]owever, a source of frustration to me is, I and others know the real story and my role in it is much more BRUTAL than what people think happened."

such as drill and discipline, but also conveys crucial markers of how this militarism is supposed to be carried out. The association of the U.K.—and the U.S. to some degree—with respectable and appropriate enactment of security aligns with the racialised logics of prevention; my deployment of British militarism plus is thus a building piece of West-of-Doom and its inherent truths about prevention and security. Again, delineating South Africa and Israel as "brutal" and "aggressive" supports the racialised constructions around prevention versus reaction. The prestige around British training has been further stressed by one of my interviewees:

> The problem is that they send people to the training who don't need to be there; they send commanders and high-ranking people, not the people who are on the ground and would need the training. It has something to do with prestige, so the highest and well-connected people get to go to trainings. It's nepotism (Interview with anonymous, 4 July 2022).

Being trained by the Brits, therefore, is associated by receiving the highest possible security standards within the Kenyan house of security. This is key in understanding what knowledge is accepted and valued in the context of Kenya: whereas countries providing security services such as Israel and South Africa are understood to be "different", doing the "dirty work" and are therefore less valued in a power hierarchy of security knowledge, the U.K. and the U.S. as major forces invested in the security sector in Kenya are deemed appropriate as primary owner of security knowledge—inhabiting the upper floor of Kenya's house of security.

## Leveraging power by capitalising on the public-private divide

Even though British militarism and British militarism plus is a value of highest regard in the security dispositif of Kenya, this value does not necessarily include the U.K.'s public institutions. With BATUK stationed in Nanyuki and the British Peace Support Team Africa (BPST) in Nairobi, Kenya is the hub of the U.K. Armed Forces in Africa, implying a close collaboration between the Kenyan government and the U.K. on these matters. Yet, as my interviews have revealed, the relationship between the two governments is heavily strained, mainly due to historical reasons. The Kenyan government wants to limit their former colonisers' influence in the country, while upholding a functional relationship to access monetary funds and support when needed. Thus, their presence is tolerated rather than actively encouraged. Cases of murder, sexual abuse, and other human rights violations by BATUK soldiers and an associated impunity with these put a further strain on the relationship between the two governments

(Kimeu, 2023; Gbadamosi, 2023).[24] A member of the British Army told me about the difficulties of working together, highlighting the mistrust of the Kenyan government towards the British: "It's very hard to work with the Kenyan government because they always think we are spying on them or using something for operational intelligence" (Interview with anonymous, 29 June 2022). He continued by providing an example of a recent conflict, where the U.K. wanted to evacuate high ranking people from the conflict scene in Tigray via Kenya, which was denied by the Kenyan government. Another interviewee, an ex-soldier of the British Army who is now working in the private security industry, talked about the Kenyans as forward leaning and honourable people who are happy to receive help, but that they hated colonialism and the "idea of the big white man coming in" (Interview with anonymous, 15 June 2022). On the other hand, the U.K. government has a lot of "post-colonial guilt", as the first interviewee termed it, which according to him further hinders fruitful relations.

The strained relationship between Kenya and the U.K. seems however less relevant when it comes to British private security companies, which occupy the largest share of foreign representation in the private security industry in Kenya. I have encountered an openness and willingness of the Kenyan government to work with or alongside private security companies owned by British people, which was particularly surprising in contrast to the reluctancy towards the British government. The idea that certain countries provide certain services was offered by an interviewee, stressing that there is a long history of private military support from the U.K. (Interview with anonymous, 29 June 2022). In another formal talk, a British person working within the private security industry offered the following insight:

> Working with the government makes the Kenyan government feel under-empowered and embarrassed whereas with private security, it is a specific service you need, you are responding to scenario. It is not a threat to your ability and capacity. You really don't want the U.K. High Commissioner telling you what to do. Private security solutions don't threaten the higher command (Interview with anonymous, 14 July 2022).

The close relationship of the Kenyan government with the private security industry, with a strong preference towards British owned companies, demonstrates a shift of the preferred actors in the Kenyan security dispositif, yet without changing the knowledge and norms at its core. Central to this proximity to the private security industry is the inherent market-based logic of

[24] The Kenyan government launched an investigation against the misconducts of the British soldiers in Kenya in September 2023. The 2012 murder of Agnes Wanjiru, whose body was found close to the military barracks with multiple stab wounds, is expected to play an important role. While a 2019 inquest concluded that British soldiers were responsible for her murder, no one has been charged at the time of writing (Kimeu, 2023; Gbadamosi, 2023).

obtaining and providing certain security services. While there is a superiority of British security knowledge within the Kenyan security dispositif, this dominance is specifically exposed by the interaction between the private security industry and the Kenyan government. The assumption of an entrepreneurial approach by seeking "business opportunities" therefore functions for the Kenyan government as a key to value and access security knowledge by purchasing a market good rather than relying on a state institution, thus allowing Kenya to tap into the valued knowledge without compromising their pride. Ultimately, as suggested in the previous sections, British militarism plus is closely tied to racialised and gendered hierarchies which transcend the binary of the public and private.

Within this security dispositif, the Kenyan government has an important role as an active agent. Valuing the security knowledge centring British militarism plus through a market-based logic, the government is recognised for having a tight grip on their security sector; private and public. The more volatile security situations in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, or the Central African Republic (CAR) have been cited as in direct contrast to Kenya, stressing that such a chaos of different actors meddling on the ground—particularly private military companies such as the Wagner Group—would never occur in Kenya because the government would not allow it:

> There are many private security guys that come in and think that this context is Afghanistan and Iraq, but it's actually quite different, you can't just turn up and do shady things. (…) There are some that tried to bulldoze their way in as *Mzungus* [Swahili word for foreigner, usually a white person]. (…) The Kenyan government saw right through this and they failed miserably. (…) It's really good and important for Kenya not to have these warmongers in the country (Interview with anonymous, 15 June 2022).

The description of private security people as warmongers is further discussed in Chapter 5. Essential to this statement is the agency of the Kenyan government in actively choosing the knowledge they want to engage with and what actors they tolerate on the ground.

As mentioned, a lot of information in the private security industry is obscured or sealed in NDAs, even more so than with the public sector. Due to oversight procedures, governments need to be more accountable than private security companies, granting the private security industry leeway to circumvent certain laws and customs. The lack of transparency in the private security industry in general, but also specifically in Kenya, can be exemplified by trying to trace the genealogy of companies operating within the given security dispositif. Rebranding companies through changing the name, fusions of companies, takeovers of smaller companies into large multinational ones, or creating new companies without changing the purpose,

philosophy, nor the employees are all tactics frequently used in the private industry which makes it extremely challenging to keep an overview of who is providing which security service. I want to reference three examples in the context of Kenya which illustrate the above-described patterns.

First, the infamous company Blackwater: from the very beginning of my stay in Kenya, I heard rumours about Blackwater's presence in Nairobi. As one of the most notorious companies in the industry (see more details about the so-called *Blackwater-curse* in Chapter 4 and 5), I wanted to find out more about their presence and activities within the context of Kenya. What I found was a messy picture of different companies and people involved within a tight network of private security. Blackwater was established by ex-Navy Seal Erik Prince in 1996, and was renamed twice—to Xe Services in 2009 and later Academi in 2011. In 2014, the company merged with Triple Canopy—also infamous for their human rights abuses—to be merged into the company Constellis. As one of the biggest private security companies on the Kenyan market, Constellis bought a company called Olive Group, which was set up by yet another former Special Air Service (SAS) member in Kenya who also co-founded Salama Fikira, a British-Kenyan private security company. Erik Prince meanwhile founded (and directed until 2021) a new company called Frontier Service Group (FSG), a Chinese-Africa company providing security, aviation, and logistics solutions. The company had two posts on the African continent, in Cape Town and Nairobi. Another case is the company Saladin Security, a multinational company based in London, which offers a range of security services including military-related activities. In Kenya, they have offices in Mombasa and Nairobi and deliver particularly risk management services to oil and gas companies as well as to international NGOs. Having a closer look at this company, it can be found that Saladin Security is the sister company to the Keenie Meenie Services (KMS). I first heard of KMS in an interview as somebody casually but also mysteriously namedropped them, telling me to "look them up" without giving me further information on them (Interview with anonymous, 21 July 2022). This person has been previously involved with Control Risk Group, a company often associated with mercenaries and which I also found to have ties to KMS. KMS was founded by SAS veterans of the British Armed Forces in 1975 and operated for more than ten years in several contexts, amongst others in Sri Lanka where the company trained the Sri Lankan police commandos. KMS is not well known, but thanks to the recent investigative reporting of Phil Miller, more facts about war crimes perpetrated by KMS have surfaced (Miller, 2020). They have also been involved in the context of Kenya and David Walker, ex-

SAS member and founder of KMS, is still active in Nairobi. Saladin Security has been founded alongside KMS and, after the shutdown of KMS, has been used to continue the work they have been doing under a "clean" name. A third example, and related to the second one, is the Northern Rangeland Trust (NRT). The NRT is a non-profit organisation which helps to build and develop community conservancies. Conservancies in Kenya are highly politicised and are often times in the hand of white owners (Dempsey, 2022). Due to historical and current land grievances, conservancies are a playing field for a lot of public and private security actors. The NRT has been popping up on my radar because of their collaboration with the Kenyan Police. I particularly wanted to know if the British government is involved with the NRT as a way of policing certain communities. What I found, however, is that a company called 51° is training the NRT staff. 51° is a private security company of relatives of the family who runs Lewa Conversancy in Laikipia County and has been set up by an ex-SAS member. In Phil Miller's book on the KMS, he mentions that David Walker, founder of the KMS, provides armed guards for an anti-poaching in Kenya called the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy (2020: 288). Adding one and one together, the ex-SAS person who is involved with 51° mentioned to me by an interviewee, must be the founder of the KMS.

These three examples illustrate the practices of the private industry to obscure and diffuse knowledge about their past activities, yet revealing a vast network of interrelated actors which all can be traced back to one source: a non-written record of some kind of western-informed security knowledge, mostly as former military members of the British Forces or the U.S. Forces. The examples are insightful as in who gets the "permission", the acceptance by the Kenyan government to be on the ground in Kenya's security dispositif. The elaborated division of labour provides us with knowledge on who is able to speak security on the grand scheme of national and foreign actors involved in the security dispositif in Kenya: whereas hard security approaches are associated with countries from the Global South such as South Africa, understandings of more appropriate ways of performing security are closely tied to western countries; in particularly to the U.K. and the inherent values of British militarism plus. Moreover, the adoption of private guarding practices which heavily rely on British militarism reveal a post-colonial mimesis, leveraging a value system to gain authority, yet remaining effectively without much power in Kenya's security dispositif. An exclusive male, white, and largely British group of people within the private security industry inhabits a prominent role within the question of who is considered knowledgeable, with neoliberal market-logics enabling the protection and promotion of British militarism plus within the Kenyan security dispositif.

The subsequent chapter takes a turn towards people, institutions, and communities who are not considered to be located inside of the described house of security, yet still produce—and are products of—security practices.

# CHAPTER 3

## SECURITY AT THE MARGINS: COMMUNITY POLICING AND THE NEED FOR COMMUNITIES TO "OWN THEIR PEACE"

> And that's why national centre for counter terrorism have no office, no regional presence here. (…) These are people who are passionate about their community. They are ready to sacrifice and at least defend their community, more than others who comes from other places (Interview with anonymous, 7 March 2023).

> It's the Asian community coming together. We organise ourselves and respond to anything and everything that affects the Hispanic and Asian community (Interview with anonymous, 18 May 2022).

Disembarking the airplane in Wajir, a town in the Northeast of Kenya, I quickly noticed the distinctive security environment: the large presence of soldiers of the KDF at the airport collided with the earnest facial expressions of people getting off the plane and attempting to obtain their luggage—if security had a smell, you would notice a transformed fragrance. The airport resembled more of a military base than a commercial airport; driving out of the airport you had to pass checkpoints with barrels which aim to hinder an easy drive-through for hostile cars. This did not come to much surprise: Wajir is often referred to as dangerous, high-risk, a "no-go zone". In 2021 and 2022, western travel advisory put out a strong "do not travel" advice for Wajir, even prohibiting their national government personnel from visiting those areas (see for example Government of Canada, n.d., or the U.S. Department of State, n.d.). Wajir county borders to Somalia and is predominantly populated by ethnic Somali. As Al-Shabaab operates along the Kenyan-Somali border, the county has frequently been subject to insecurities and attacks—often times caught in the crossfire of two militarised forces, the KDF and Al-Shabaab. The situation in Wajir is similar (in some respects) to other counties I was able to visit as part of my field research, such as Lamu, Garissa, Isiolo, and Kwale. All of these regions are under heavy scrutiny by the Kenyan government for their potential links to terrorism and violent extremism: in terms of sympathy, recruiting scenes, as well as attacks and insecurities.

The field trips and interviews I conducted there elucidated that P/CVE—and how P/CVE-related security is understood, experienced, and practiced—manifested differently to the previous described image of the people designated as security personnel within the public and private security industry, with or without uniforms, armed or unarmed. I noticed communities and community actors being much more involved in, and responsible for, the safeguarding of their own security and a reliance on informal, but well-established security structures. Interestingly, private security as an industry of primarily guarding and risk management companies was almost non-existent and rarely visible in the fieldtrips to the Northeast region. The absence of private security is connected to the systematic economic and social marginalisation of these regions which was impelled by the government over decades; a marginalisation which left communities considered "at risk" in charge of their own security through models such as community policing. In this chapter, I thus explore these different material forms of providing security and their manifestation along spatiality.

Self-organising community initiatives on security reveal an important logic: the manifestation of security as a commodity, which rests on the morality of individual responsibility, either by purchasing the commodity or by investing unpaid labour to secure "the product". This stands in contrast to the liberal tradition of the abstract formulation of security as a universal good, a right even, accessible to all. Rather, security is only "universal" through the abstraction of difference and the ample neglect of historical exclusions; the claim to universalism is thus only accessible to a few by the very disavowal of the material constitution of different political subjects and the manifestation of their rights (see Wendy Brown's *States of Injury* (1995) for a close reading of liberal freedom). Neoliberalism as a dominant governing form reinforces liberal notions of security by capitalising on security as a commodity. Mark Neocleous writes in his work on security, commodity, and fetishism that "[t]he commodity is thereby given a mystical value, a value that arises not from its use-value, but which generates the fetishism that attaches itself to the products of people's labour" (2007: 349). The production of security commodities is thus linked to the neoliberal logic of outsourcing risk. Within this logic, security as a commodity is accessible to the privileged and wealthy; yet, by moralising security as an ethic outside "its use-value", it gets inscribed in the commodified social relations of the marginalised who do not have the privilege to "buy" security. As such, we need to look beyond the private security industry and the *selling* of security as a good on the market and understand how neoliberal governmentality and security is tied to spatiality as a way of structuring power. This chapter thus asks the following question: how is security maintained,

reproduced, and expressed in marginalised spaces, where the private security industry is largely absent?

Studying the human environment, society, and geographical space, feminist geography centres gender in the constitution of space and social relations, understanding it as an analytical and organising sociospatial category (Rose, 1993; Johnson, 2009). Importantly, the combination of the "violence of racism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, and capitalism constitute a spatial formation" (Mollett and Faria, 2018: 566). Structural oppression is maintained through particular places and as such experienced unequally by the people within such sites. Space adds therefore an important category of analysis to the power structures explored in this thesis—complicating the "geographic fixities of power" (Mollett and Faria, 2018: 267) is key to further unpacking how P/CVE operates as a form of power. The spatial manifestation of counterterrorism practices in Kenya are deeply connected to the logic of "suspect" communities (see Breen-Smyth, 2014; Kundnani, 2015; Meier, 2020, 2022), where predominantly Muslim communities are indirectly as well as directly targeted and treated as potential terrorists or violent extremists—replicating and reinforcing the dominant post-9/11 discourse that connects Islam to terrorism (Khan, 2021; Kundnani, 2015; see also Introduction). The construction of Muslims as so-called "suspect" communities in Kenya portrays Muslim communities as enemies from within, echoing fears about insurgent colonial populations within the British Empire and secessionist rebels after independence (Whittaker, 2012). Samar Al-Bulushi (2021) introduced the term "citizen-suspect" in her work on policing in urban Kenya; she explains how the "citizen-suspect" in Kenya is situated within the history of racialised suspicion and criminalisation of the colonial subject under British rule. The "suspect" communities and the idea of the "citizen-suspect" converges in the security dispositif in Kenya—counterterrorism logic and its understanding of "suspect communities" is an extension of colonial tool of governance. Similarly, Wangui Kimari (2021) writes in her work on urban spatial management in Nairobi about "ecologies of exclusion", which denote the organisation of space and spatial governance. The colonial planning of neglect and force has been reinforced over time and generates an exclusion based on a specific spatial form. Contemporary practices of policing and safeguarding certain communities from groups are therefore based on colonial legacies and continue blurring the categories of "citizen" and "suspect".

The spatial manifestation of counterterrorism practices and the "ecologies of exclusion" are inherently tied to neoliberal governmentality. Brown describes neoliberal governmentality as:

> not simply a set of economic policies; it is not only about facilitating free trade, maximising corporate profits, and challenging welfarism. Rather, neoliberalism carries a social analysis which, when deployed as a form of governmentality, reaches from the soul of the citizen-subject to education policy to practices of empire. Neoliberal rationality, while foregrounding the market, is not only or even primarily focused on the economy; rather it involves *extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and social action*, even as the market itself remains a distinctive player (Brown, 2003: 39, emphasis in original).

While neoliberal governmentality helps us to understand as to why certain spaces get marginalised (a lack of profitability in market terms), it is in itself the cause of exclusionary practices. Moreover, neoliberal governmentality reconfigures the social through market values by catalysing all social action, public, private, or voluntary, into action which serves to solve problems of communities (Leander and van Munster, 2007). Based on this theoretical backdrop of ecologies of space and neoliberal governmentality, I noticed the prominence of community policing as a security practice distinctively connected to P/CVE, which emerges exclusively within marginalised spaces such as Wajir and Garissa, but also within the urban setting of Nairobi, in disenfranchised neighbourhoods like Eastleigh.

Community policing is a broad term which gets interpreted and implemented in different ways, such as through a Neighbourhood Watch or a policing style closer to communities by creating consultation meetings for a police-community exchange (Fielding, 2005). However, the basic elements central to all community policing approaches are a decentralisation of authority, police-community partnerships, as well as committing to a problem-solving approach (Somerville, 2008; Davis, Henderson, and Merrick, 2003). Very often, the idea is to empower "communities to help solve their own crime" (Davis, Henderson, and Merrick, 2003: 286). Early initiatives of community policing materialised in the U.S. and the U.K. in the 1970s and has since become a globalised phenomenon, with adaptations and interpretations of community policing in countries all over the globe (Mastrofski, Willis, and Kochel, 2007). The idea of reducing crime by making citizens the first line of defence has been aggravated by the GWOT and its penetrating counterterrorism policies. Engaging communities is regarded as an effective way of coping with terrorism—the aforementioned British programme *Prevent* involves targeted community engagement and capacity building with Muslim communities, creating "suspect" communities in spatially confined neighbourhoods.

Particularly in a response to terrorism and violent extremism, gathering community intelligence is even more central to the approach of community policing (Spalek, 2010; Mastrofski, Willis, and Kochel, 2007; Kundnani and Hayes, 2018); a narrative reminiscent of the security practices by the Kenyan police which I elaborate in the subsequent chapter. While community policing has been replicated on the African continent, such as in Tanzania, South Africa, or Kenya, it is crucial to highlight that community policing as such is an Anglo-Saxon concept; the implementation of community policing looks, feels, and reads differently in diverse contexts (Diphoorn and Stapele, 2020).

As I explore in this chapter, I noticed two different forms of community policing in different spaces: *Nyumba Kumi*, a security initiative to contain violent extremism through reporting procedures in marginalised areas, and a private, informally-organised network of community policing that serves a racialised middle- and upper-class of Nairobi, who are regarded as "outsiders" and "non-Kenyans". These distinct forms of community policing are a combined product of oppressive power structures and agency as survival strategy of the communities at hand. This chapter is therefore devoted to the spatial dimension of the described security dispositif by analysing security at the margins, focusing on how people excluded from the Kenyan house of security and living in marginalised communities navigate within the logic of prevention, carving out their own space in a system of oppression. By exploring security in Nairobi and in the marginalised areas of Wajir, Isiolo, and Kwale, I suggest that community policing emerges as a security practice tied to the spatial logics of neoliberal governmentality, which renders security as a commodity in the responsibilities of communities—if necessary, through their unpaid labour. A first section studies the community policing initiative called *Nyumba Kumi*, active predominantly in the Northeast part of Kenya, and its interrelation to marginalisation and "suspect communities". The second part of the chapter investigates a second form of community policing, bound to more traditional ways of security provision. Tracing the history of the National Police Reserve (NPR), I highlight how community policing translates to active security provisions in rural areas as well as in middle- and upper-class neighbourhoods in Nairobi. I describe the arising community policing initiatives within urban spaces as a private, government-independent form of providing security for their own security. Both forms of community policing are a result of a lack of security provision by the Kenyan state, neoliberal governmentality which renders security as a commodity, and communities seizing agency alongside existing power hierarchies.

## Marginalised geographies: Containing "suspects" through *Nyumba Kumi*

Amidst rising crime rates, intercommunity violence such as the 2007-2008 post-election violence, and the terrorist attacks by Al-Shabaab, most notably the Westgate attack in 2013, the Kenyan government initiated a devolution of capacities to guarantee peace and security at the local level. As such, local peace committees (LPC) were introduced after the post-election violence to solve conflicts through arbitration; five years later, the community policing initiative *Nyumba Kumi* was presented as a direct response to terrorist threats with the idea of providing surveillance measures within communities (Kioko, 2017; Ndono, Muthama, and Muigua, 2019). Almost exactly one month after the attack in 2013, President Uhuru Kenyatta held a speech which included the following words: "Security is a shared mandate of all people living in Kenya. The first rule of security is vigilance […] we must all embrace *Nyumba Kumi*" (Uhuru Kenyatta, 2013, cited in Kioko, 2017: 4). The issue of security was thus directly delegated to the responsibility of "all people living in Kenya", establishing the necessary tool to implement security as a morality. Anchoring community policing at the household level, *Nyumba Kumi* operates through clusters of households—the initiative's name in Kiswahili translates to "ten houses"—consisting of stakeholders and local residents. The household clusters are headed by local chiefs and sub-chiefs, a structure set up by the colonial system of the provincial administration, and are expected to meet at once or twice a month to exchange information. Based on a community policing initiative originated from a Tanzanian experiment during socialist rule, the crux of the *Nyumba Kumi* is the passing on of the desired information to relevant authorities at the national administration (Diphoorn and Stapele, 2020; Kioko, 2017). An interviewee based in Isiolo described *Nyumba Kumi* as follows:

> The community is put together. We have the villages and then the village is again divided again into clusters. And those clusters, there's a chair or the cluster in this particular chair. (…) Those are the teams, commissioners, stuff like that. The community comes in like this. They're supposed to gather information, information that is good in security aspects, and then pass it on to the police and the local administrators and chiefs (Interview with anonymous, 2 February 2022).

The mission of communities is explicit: observe other community members and pass (relevant) information to the national authorities. While the community policing initiative does to a certain degree reflect an independent nature of dealing with security issues, it is clearly meant as a complementary surveillance tool to existing police efforts. A community leader, peace

champion, and member of a *Nyumba Kumi* committee from Eastleigh described the initiative as a "system of anchoring community policing initiatives at the lowest levels. (…) The Nyumba Kumi was conceptualised so as to complement government efforts (…). It's not about competition [with the police]" (Interview with anonymous, 4 May 2022). Along similar notions, a high-ranking police officer in Wajir stated that community policing helps to bridge mistrust between the police and the communities, stressing the partnership aspect of this initiative (Interview with anonymous, 8 March 2022a).

The *Nyumba Kumi* initiative not only emerged as a counterterrorism measure, but was also later on anchored within the developed P/CVE initiatives in Kenya. Importantly, counties were expected to write a County Action Plan (CAP), based on the National Action Plan on P/CVE but with adaptations to the local specificities. A lot of times—as for example with the case of Isiolo and Wajir—the CAPs specifically refer to *Nyumba Kumi* as an active strategy of P/CVE. The CAPs establish so-called County Engagement Forums (CEF), which are headed by the County Commissioner, a national administration position and subject to rotation, and the governor of the respective county; information arising from *Nyumba Kumi* should feed into the sub-county level and then into the CEF at the county level. The community policing initiative has however only been established in some places, particularly marginalised counties or low-income neighbourhoods (Disphoorn and Stapele, 2020; Otieno Andhoga and Mavole, 2017). In Nairobi for instance, *Nyumba Kumi* is only established in neighbourhoods such as Eastleigh, a neighbourhood in the Eastern part of Nairobi sometimes referred to as "little Mogadishu" or the "Somalia in Kenya" due to its approximately 100,000 inhabits from Somali communities (Herz, 2008). However, the initiative is not present in wealthy or upper-class neighbourhoods. After asking a community leader in Eastleigh about the presence of the community policing initiative in other neighbourhoods, he replied laughingly:

> Karen is a high-end area; those are posh places. You will never find Nyumba Kumi in posh places. Nyumba Kumi you will only find within the informal settlements or even in settlements such as Eastleigh where people know of it and interact with it. (…) In neighbourhoods like (…) Karen, people don't know their immediate neighbours, but for us we interact on a day-to-day basis (Interview with anonymous, 4 May 2022).

Karen is a high-end neighbourhood in Nairobi primarily inhabited by Kenya's privileged, often white communities (Baraka, 2021). His reference to Karen illustrates how community policing as it is understood in *Nyumba Kumi* is unthinkable in wealthier neighbourhoods or counties. The shared responsibility of security demonstrates a dispersion of security where traditional security

actors pass on certain tasks—mainly information gathering—to non-traditional security actors such as community members, thereby producing an intimate surveillance tool to gain more grip and oversight in marginalised communities, places that are often perceived as "hotbeds" for terrorism (Naji and Schildknecht, 2024). In contrast to middle- and upper-class neighbourhoods which do not involve "suspect" communities there is no need to get information from these communities, nor to find a tool to access the regions.

This distinct spatial implementation of *Nyumba Kumi* is to be understood in direct relation with the systemic marginalisation of communities in Kenya. In my interviews in the counties of Isiolo, Wajir, and Garissa, the subject of such marginalisation, particularly of the Upper East and Northeast region, came up as a consistent thread. A government official of the county of Isiolo mentioned the historic reasons for the strained relationship with the national administration:

> I think, you know, if you look at the history and specifically at the history of this region, you know, the upper east and they north-east, these are predominantly pastoral areas. If we look back at the history of this region, you know, it's a region, that has been marginalised by the subsistent governments since independence. And, the region is underdeveloped relative to other areas, as a result of this marginalisation. And, you know, we also have immediately offended the government after the independence and the other period of insurgency, because, you know, there are people who want to say we want to join Somalia, and others said, we want to be part of Kenya (Interview with anonymous, 1 February 2022).

In his statement, the interviewee makes a direct link to the *Shifta* wars, taking place from 1963 to 1968, where many ethnic Somalis and people from the Northeast region wanted to secede from Kenya and join the state of Somalia. Their call for their right to self-determination was preceded by an economic and political marginalisation by the colonial state (Whittaker, 2008).

Just one year after independence, in 1965, the Kenyan government released the Sessional Paper No 10, titled "African socialism and its application to planning in Kenya" (Government of Kenya, 1965). This paper laid the foundations for a widening economic, social, and political divide by giving preferential treatment to the Kenyan elite. As such, article 133 states the following in terms of priorities given to certain areas:

> One of our problems is to decide how much priority we should give in investing in less developed provinces. To make the economy as a whole grow as fast as possible, development money should be invested where it will yield the largest increase in net output. This approach will clearly favour the development of areas having abundant natural resources, good land and rainfall, transport and power facilities, and people receptive to and active in development (Government of Kenya, 1965: 46).

The approach of investing only in areas which are considered to generate a return for the economy built further on the previously established marginalisation by colonisation; Kenya's developed provinces were the ones which already profited under colonial rule and were usually inhabited by the political elite. Arid and semi-arid provinces such as the Northeast, on the other hand, were deemed unimportant and massively marginalised under this economic premise; as a result, poverty levels rose massively (Mwangangi, 2021). The same interviewee as mentioned above, continued his statement by putting the Sessional Paper into perspective:

> They're saying the government decided as a punishment for the insurgency, to punish them with that special paper. So you see in this region, we don't have schools. We don't have hospitals. We don't have roads. Everything basic communities will have (Interview with anonymous, 1 February 2022).

The interviewee not only recognises the historic marginalisation by the Kenyan state, but also makes a direct link between the *Shifta* wars and the Sessional Paper, where the Kenyan government strategically used economic marginalisation as a tool of "punishment" against the claims for their self-determination. The absence of critical infrastructures in the Northeast region of Kenya is a direct result of this systematic marginalisation by the Kenyan government. While the devolution in 2010 through the adoption of a new constitution intended to address the regional imbalances and give more powers of self-governance to the people, the history of marginalisation runs deep and has not been overcome yet (Kanyinga, 2016; Ngigi and Busolo, 2019).

The economic marginalisation by the Kenyan government is joined by social and political marginalisation of particularly Somali communities in Kenya. For instance, obtaining an Identification Document (ID) is notoriously difficult for ethnic Somalis in Kenya—up to today. A Kenyan-Somali interlocutor told me that you need to have connections at the government to get your documents, particularly if you have a Muslim name such as Mohammed, you might get it also without connections, there is however a gamble to it and can take years. This illustrates how ethnic Somalis as a group are at the mercy of the government of Kenya and systematically side-lined. An official representative from Isiolo county mentioned the ID problem in a similar fashion:

> Maybe you will not be given an ID document. (…) You know, we are being treated like second-class citizens from this country. You know, there are a lot of issues around access to justice, the issue of arrests, the issue of forceful disappearances (Interview with anonymous, 1 February 2022).

The treatment of certain communities as second-class citizens of Kenya is further aggravated by the high significance of IDs in defining of who is deemed a "suspect" for terrorist and violent extremism activities. Sophia Balakian explains how within the counterterrorism narrative and "[i]n official government rhetoric, the national ID became the marker of legitimacy—authentic proof of both citizenship and non-suspect status" (2016: 96). The perversity of this policy is blatant as it operates as a cycle of marginalisation which a large part of the Kenya's population—the "suspect" communities—cannot withdraw from.

The systematic marginalisation of the Northeast area of Kenya is directly connected to P/CVE: there is a general absence of government within these areas and most of the time, the contact with government institutions, particularly the police, is marked by the brutal use of force—as described in Chapter 4. Moreover, the national administration often takes a unified approach in treating the marginalised regions as a terrorist haven, where all of the people living are considered to be sympathetic to, or supporting Al-Shabaab. The Wajir CAP writes about the "forgotten people" and reference a "collective punishment" approach by the Kenyan administration:

> There is for instance constant reference to collective punishment as was the case with the Wagalla Massacre in 1984, and recently in Bojigaras in 2018. These references still inform the perception that the entire county is either in support or sympathetic to terrorist groups like Al-Shabaab. During the stakeholders' meeting, the residents explained how some members of the National Police Service and Kenya Defence Forces cordoned off certain locations within the county and arrested about 43 people. During these operations, reports of random and collective punishment of men who were bearded or/and wore kanzus [a garment traditionally worn by Muslim men] were reported. Overall the brutal and collective punishment approaches have created "mistrust" between local residents of Wajir and the State. The law enforcement officers reported numerous cases in which local residents either deliberately failed to report or provided safe passage to suspected terrorists. Because of such incidences, the state and some law enforcement officers concluded that some residents could be part of or sympathetic to violent extremists (Wajir County Action Plan, 2018: 6).

In the relatively recent Bojigaras attacks, eight security officers were killed after their car ran over an Improvised Explosive Device (IED); the incident was followed by indiscriminate security operations, where any information available was used against the population (Wajir County Action Plan, 2018). The collective punishment approach by the Kenyan government speaks heavily to the adherence of "suspect" communities, bound not only to ethnic markers but also to spatial entities.

The systematic marginalisation of "suspect" communities is also visible within Nairobi, where neighbourhoods experience diverging enactments of security by the Kenyan

government. As mentioned above, Eastleigh is an illustrative case how space manifests in different security practices (Glück und Low, 2017; Naji and Schildknecht, 2024). Talking to a community leader in Eastleigh, he explained how *Nyumba Kumi* receives a lot of suspicion due to the government involvement:

> At first there used to be a negative perception about the Nyumba Kumi initiative. Especially young people viewing Nyumba Kumi as a spying agency. You see? They used to view it as a spy agency which was out there to criminalise young people because with Nyumba Kumi they have to share that information (Interview with anonymous, 4 May 2022).

This fear of spying points towards the strenuous relationship between the government and communities and the grievances against the government due to historical and current marginalisation. Being part of *Nyumba Kumi* often times poses a risk for the people involved, as it suggests a certain government aligning where they are seen as informants or even traitors (Interview with anonymous, 4 May 2022).

The fear of government proximity is related to the absence of the Kenyan state within marginalised regions; historically, the government has only been involved if they needed something out of it, usually by extractive—and brutal—measures. The conscious absence of the Kenyan government in these counties therefore creates space for Al-Shabaab to come in and provide basic services to communities. In Wajir, a government official noted the absence of government in the following statement:

> So about the concept of extremism. It's about creating terror, fear so that the tension is high and people run away and they don't provide services. And when that happens, the extremists have met their agenda, like what is happening sometimes at the borderlines [inaudible] in this county, all our social amenities are closed, the facilities closed, schools were closed, locals have run away so that now we cannot provide basic services to the local population. And once this happens, it's the feeling that the government is not in control. And these other guys have the power (Interview with anonymous, 7 March 2022).

What is striking in this passage is the description of how communities are left to themselves: they can either try to run away, to save themselves, or stay and be subject to the power of Al-Shabaab. The Kenyan government, besides sending troops to combat Al-Shabaab, is not present to help communities or support them in any way; "the government is not in control". And this is exactly where *Nyumba Kumi* comes in: the community policing initiative creates a gate for the Kenyan government to access communities and information from marginalised areas, where they usually do not have access to; yet, without much involvement and leaving

security up to communities. The same official as quoted above continued with the following statement:

> And that's why the National Centre for Counterterrorism [National Counter Terrorism Centre, NCTC] have no office here, they don't even have a regional presence here. (…) Work is being done by local organisations. (…) These are people who are passionate about their community (Interview with anonymous, 7 March 2022).

Again, the absence of the Kenyan (security) state is remarkable; the duty to care for their own communities is left at the hand of local organisations, particularly because others would not have an incentive to do so. This reinforces the notion that communities within these places are not considered worthy of protection, nor as a part of the Kenyan state; they are "suspect" communities who neither receive "security" by the state, nor do they have the privilege to "buy" security from a private provider. The example of *Nyumba Kumi* thus exposes the idea of security as a universal right and dismantles it as a commodified good. To secure this commodity, the communities within the described marginalised areas comply with community policing initiatives through their unpaid labour; while *Nyumba Kumi* serves as a surveillance tool by the government, it also provides a means to protect them—from the government and Al-Shabaab equally—and as a means to care for their own security needs, because what is at stake is no less than their lives.

Interestingly, within this framework of community policing, women take up a particular role to fulfil. A government official in Isiolo county talked about the importance of women in *Nyumba Kumi*:

> Women are those grassroots groups, they're able to penetrate the local community faster and easier than the men would. (…) They are able to pass on that information. Again, they're the mothers in this particular, in their family. The mother is a good source to know. For example, what is happening is in a family is easier for her than for a father. They spend more time with their families, spend more time with their children. And they're able to detect events, changes in behaviour, faster than a father would do. They are also affected more, for example, when their young men are being radicalised and they, the young boys are passing over to Somalia, who is more affected? Their mother. Psychologically, they become more disturbed (Interview with anonymous, 2 February 2022).

In this logic, women are the key to societies as they are mothers who spend time with their families and children; they are supposed to know and feel things that go on within their community. The interchangeable use of women and mothers is striking in this sequence, where women as mothers are more affected than fathers by the radicalisation of their children. The belief that mothers are considered more capable than men translates to a specific, women-

targeted training within P/CVE initiatives and community policing. The government official continued her statement, including the following explanation for training:

> As I said earlier, we did that training for the women leaders who are involved in community policing. Then, these women leaders that we trained from the county commissioner's office where also supposed to go back into their villages and train their women on issues of P/CVE. (…) When you're looking at a woman, you are looking at our society. Once I have been able to empower one woman, she's able to pass more information to the community. At the same time, she becomes more conscious of what is happening in her family and in the community and able to participate more on issues of P/CVE (Interview with anonymous, 2 February 2022).

The training of women specifically on P/CVE and how they can engage in the prevention through *Nyumba Kumi* points towards a specific—and very limited—role of women within prevention: as caretakers and informants. Along the narratives of the global counterterrorism regime, women are instrumentalised for a specific purpose and reduced to informants who pass on intelligence on their sons, daughters, and husbands (see also Aroussi, 2020; Ní Aoláin, 2013; Rothermel, 2020). While being part of "suspect" communities, women are considered passive and peaceful, and thus not as a threat but rather as an instrument to achieve the goal of accessing and containing communities within certain geographic spaces. Considering security as a commodified good, where communities are expected to offer their unpaid labour work, women are thus deemed suitable to provide this work, which is inherently connected to the gendered and racialised politics of care.

*Nyumba Kumi* provides an example of how neoliberal governmentality works through defining security as a commodity. West-of-Doom and its gendered and racialised logics of prevention are reproduced and expressed in geographical spaces which contain "suspect" communities, leaving them no choice than to care for their own security. These "geographic fixities of power" (Mollett and Faria, 2018: 267) run along wide spatial references as in Kenya's North-eastern arid and semi-arid counties, but can also be found within the urban spatiality of Nairobi through marginalised neighbourhoods such as Eastleigh. Power structures are maintained through a historical marginalisation which manifests through the absence of the state, economically, socially, security-wise, as well as through the deficiency of a private security industry, revealing a glaring discrepancy between liberal notions of security as a universal right and the everyday lived experiences of communities.

## Taking charge: From police reservist to private community policing within ethnic groups

*Nyumba Kumi* is the most prominent and well-known community policing initiative in Kenya, especially as a remedy to prevent terrorism or violent extremism. However, community policing as a concept was introduced in Kenya long before *Nyumba Kumi* and can be traced back to the 1990s. In 1997, an annual report of the police service writes about community policing as follows: "[T]he concept involves recruiting civilians as police reserve officers and the construction of police offices and residential houses on a *harambee* basis" (Kenya Police, cited in Ruteere and Pommerolle, 2003: 595). *Harambee* is Kiswahili for "all pull together" and denotes the idea of a collective effort (Mbithi and Rasmusson, 1977). Equally to *Nyumba Kumi*, the distributed and collective responsibility of security is at heart. Yet, instead of focusing on the principles of community engagement and trust, this version of community policing is about recruiting civilians to the police to maintain order. Interestingly, the referenced police reserve is still a significant concept when it comes to understanding how community policing is implemented in Kenya. The Kenyan Police Reserve (KPR) was established by the colonial government in 1943 as a voluntary force, with the intention that the recruited people deal with security issues in places which the government had limited access to such as rural areas as well as in regions considered "troubled" (Njuguna, Ndung'u, and Musoi, 2015: 4). While the government disbanded the KPR in urban areas in 2004, they remained active within rural areas, particularly in arid and semi-arid regions. In 2010, the KPR was renamed to National Police Reserve (NPR) along the major police reforms creating one singular National Police Service (NPS) (Njuguna, Ndung'u, and Musoi, 2015). Similar to *Nyumba Kumi*, the NPR as a form of community policing is only implemented in marginalised, rural spaces.

The NPR operates through the recruitment and arming of civilians by the police. However, they are usually not trained and display a lack of control mechanisms, which led in many cases to problems of accountability, poor professional standards such as the misuse of firearms, and to problems of manipulation of the NPR for other purposes, such as of economic gain (Njuguna, Ndung'u, and Musoi, 2015). In Wajir for instance, the subject of NPR came up during some of the interviews and I was able to speak to one member of the NPR—only very briefly and with a lot of suspicion towards me. He told me that the police operate via chiefs to recruit people from communities, the chiefs then decide who should be recommended for such postings. In Wajir county, he revealed, there are up to 200 armed NPR's, mostly men and a

handful of women. He continued: "We are mainly here for intelligence. We are the ones knowing the context best, we know our streets, where we can move around safely, we know the people" (Interview with anonymous, 8 March 2022b). They are paid a regular (small) salary and do not have any intention to be integrated into the wider NPS—however, they collaborate occasionally with the KDF, the ATPU, and other governmental security units (Interview with anonymous, 8 March 2022b). The recruitment by the police via local elders as well as the fact that their main purpose is to gain and pass on information to the police speaks to similar traits as the *Nyumba Kumi* initiative, yet in a completely different format which includes being armed and able to use force. A government official from Wajir mentioned the following in regards to the NPR:

> I would prefer to be gathered by the NPR rather than the police. I know they are very thorough and they are very, very passionate and responsive on their duties, but these other guys [the police or the military], once hear the first bullet, they will all leave you; they won't die for you. So that shows the community prefers the community policing system, as the most pragmatic way and successful way of eliminating extremism. The national government beliefs, that their security is always the one to override the other one which is just meant to provide some kind of complimentary services in the absence or by the gaps of security (Interview with anonymous, 7 March 2022).

Next to *Nyumba Kumi*, the NPR is mentioned as a community policing system, which works best for the rural communities, as the "most pragmatic way". Given the above-described background of these marginalised spaces, they are left alone to deal with their security. Mostly, it is the better option than the Kenyan police due to their brutal and indiscriminate use of force. The NPR as a local institution, which recruits people directly from their own communities, are less brutal in their provision of security and are the "ones knowing the context best". The same interviewee also explained that members of the NPR "will always be ready to sacrifice and at least defend their community, more than others who comes from some other places, who only makes sure they don't die" (Interview with anonymous, 7 March 2022).

The proximity of the NPR to the community, particularly through the recruitment system, positions them in an in-between space of the two fronts of the security forces and the communities. The role of "translating", as a police officer termed it, between these groups is hereby the key mission of the NPR. In this police officer's logic, the police can only react to security problems, if they have knowledge on the issues prevalent in communities, at the grassroots level (Interview with anonymous, 8 March 2022c). As with *Nyumba Kumi* and the described geographical marginalisation in arid and semi-arid areas, communities are expected

to care for their own security—given the absence of the NPS and other state agencies. The NPR therefore provide a certain security to their communities at the local level, while maintaining a minimal relationship to the police. Interestingly, one report mentions that the "lack of an operational mandate […] has led to the treatment of the NPR as a private security agency for local businesses, NGOs, and wildlife conservancies" (Njuguna, Ndung'u, and Musoi, 2015: 6). The payment of a, albeit small, salary renders the NPR in close range to the private security industry, making security available to "buy" as a commodity. While the difference to *Nyumba Kumi* lies in paid versus unpaid labour, the NPR illustrates how security as a commodity is formed in the in-between spaces of the public and private sphere, where security is not accessible, and as such rendering the community responsible for their own security provision.

The subject of community policing materialised not only during the fieldtrips to the Northeast, but also came up in two interviews with private security providers in the city of Nairobi. Whereas the majority of the interviews within the private security industry were with white, usually British ex-soldiers, there were two notable interviewees who delivered insight into different understandings of the provision of private security—being part of the Kenyan Asian community and tying it to community policing. One of these two interviewees started his journey in the security sector as a police reserve officer and told me that he was engaged in community policing for years "where we did a lot of covert missions" (Interview with anonymous, 3 June 2022). The community policing project he was referring to was called Operation Reserve Confidence (ORC), which was an initiative by the Visa Oshwal community to uphold their safety at the first multiparty elections in 1992: "We had to come up with our own security system in place, we had to keep our own community safe" (Interview with anonymous, 3 June 2022). A community of Indian-Hindu origin, the Visa Oshwal community came to East Africa, and Kenya, in the late 19th century to seek business. Today, the community is regarded as an important contributor to Kenya's industry, not only economically but also in terms of providing critical infrastructure (Nabende, 2023; Nation Africa, 2020). After a successful election with no major security issues for the Visa Oshwal community, they decided to keep the community policing project up and running—changing the name to Operation Reduce Crime and by that keeping the previous, already known abbreviation of ORC.

According to the interviewee, the ORC is still in place today: "It's the only community policing scheme that is running since 1992" (Interview with anonymous, 7 June 2022). Interestingly, as I have previously stated, the NPR was disbanded in urban areas because "various city units had become corrupt and unmanageable" (Njuguna, Ndung'u, and Musoi,

2015: 4). The existence of the ORC in an urban neighbourhood of Nairobi therefore points towards a remarkable fact: while official community policing initiatives tied to the police, such as the NPR, have been dispersed in Nairobi, self-organised community policing initiatives persisted—and function as some kind of private and informal security system. While there is a certain partnership with the police, the ORC is unilaterally funded by the Asian community through donations. The services of the people providing security are however not paid and as such, it remains a voluntary engagement for the community. The funds are instead used for fuel, cars, and other logistics—as well as for "the brown envelope" to pay off the police: "The ORC has two police officers on their payroll, they buy them dinner, paint the police station, buy them new printers, and so on" (Interview with anonymous, 7 June 2022). Paying off police officers to be on their watch is not an uncommon phenomenon, it usually serves to obtain cooperation by the police for planned operations. According to the interviewee, the ORC has armed officers to provide security. It is prohibited by the Kenyan law for private security personnel to carry a firearm. The ORC might use similar tactics of privilege when carrying a gun as described in Chapter 2—paying off the police officers in their neighbourhood might however be another way around it. Yet, the ORC is not only providing security services to their community, but also offers services beyond this, including delivering emergency tents and food in case of an incident, as they did in the case of the Westgate attack (Interview with anonymous, 7 June 2022; Howden, 2013).

As with all community policing initiatives, spatiality is crucial in defining the area of intervention: "The ORC is mainly operating in Gigiri and part of Westland—this is why the ORC was a responder at the Westgate Mall attack, but not for the DusitD2 attack" (Interview with anonymous, 7 June 2022). The ORC as a successful community policing initiative has been replicated in various other neighbourhoods of Nairobi. Interestingly, the interviewee mentioned that the Kikuyus and other tribes do the same, but that in these cases, the community policing initiatives turn to be "militias" at one point—taking the example of the *Mungiki* (Interview with anonymous, 7 June 2022). The *Mungiki* started out as a youth movement in Kenya in the early 1990s and is a highly disputed subject, with labels ranging from "youth movement", "militia", to "vigilante group". The group is infamous for extortion and violence and their brutal involvement in the post-election violence in 2007. Since 2001, the *Mungiki* are banned by the government and subjected to persecution by police death squads (Rasmussen, 2010; Henningsen and Jones, 2013). While it is debatable if the group ever started out as a community policing system, they do however correspond to conventional norms of civil society

agents which provide social services to communities such as access to water and electricity. Acting mostly in low-income neighbourhoods and informal settlements, the *Mungiki* provides an alternative to communities who cannot rely on the government for providing services nor afford to buy services from the private security industry (Henningsen and Jones, 2013). Importantly, there is a fine line between community policing initiatives as the one just described and community-based armed groups such as *Mungiki*. Yet, in these two cases, the provision of security as a main and sole commodity to communities notes the difference of the ORC from the *Mungiki*—there is no political agenda, no social movement behind it, but rather it simply serves the purpose of providing a minimal level of protection to their own communities.[25]

A similar community policing/private security initiative is headed by the Ismaili community in Nairobi through the Aga Khan network. The Shia Muslim community is headed by the Aga Khan, currently by Aga Khan IV, Prince Shah Karim Al Husseini, leader of the community and their imam. While the Ismaili community is ethnically diverse, they are largely of Asian descent in the case of Nairobi (the.ismaili, n.d.). The second interviewee, an Ismaili, is a member of a private community security initiative in Nairobi as part of the Aga Khan community, volunteering for the Aga Khan local risk management—he did however not refer to it as community policing but consistently used the terminology of "first responders" (Interview with anonymous, 18 May 2022). Similar to the interviewee above, he was a reservist at the Kenyan police before they got abolished in Nairobi. He continued his volunteer engagement for security through the Aga Khan network, which provides social services as well as security for their own community. As such, he is part of a volunteer, unpaid team of first responders in case emergencies such as a terrorist attack or a natural disaster. For both attacks, Westgate and DusitD2, the Aga Khan community provided a first response to the scenes. To be properly prepared, they conduct their own trainings and rely on a very clear command structure. Furthermore, to guarantee the safety of their community, these first responders are armed—exactly like the ORC. The interlocutor explained the purpose and vision of the community policing initiative as follows: "It's the Asian community coming together. We organise ourselves and respond to anything and everything that affects the Hispanic and Asian

[25] Moritz Schuberth (2015) developed explanatory frames for ideal types of community-based armed groups (CBAGs) as part of the larger definitional category of non-state armed groups (NSAGs). He distinguishes between the ideal types of vigilantes, militias, and gangs which are distinct to each other by the dimensions of security, political, and economic. He lists the *Mungiki* as a militia which is majorly motivated by the political rather than security. However, his definition of vigilantism as "crime control and/or social control directed at members of the own community, and in measures to defend the community against external threats" (2015: 303) is close to the observed community policing forms in Nairobi—yet, emerging out of a different context of government-imposed measures rather than being completely self-organised.

community" (Interview with anonymous, 18 May 2022). Both examples, the ORC and the Aga Khan network, elucidate crucial formations of community policing, namely continuations of community policing in form of private, independent self-policing by wealthier, yet to a certain degree marginalised, communities. The difference to the private security industry is twofold: the initiatives are driven by donations and funds which are not used to pay a salary (non-for profit)—instead of selling services—and they are geographically bound to a certain jurisdiction, usually running along ethnic lines.

Both, the Aga Khan community and the Visa Oshwal community are wealthy communities in Kenya and possess a lot of economic influence (Nabende, 2023). In Kenya, communities of South Asian descent make the largest part of Asian communities, generally referred to as *muindis*, Kiswahili for Asian, designing people with a background form the Indian sub-continent (Verjee, 2017). Up to day, Kenyans of South Asian descent are subject to exclusion and marginalisation due to their ethnic background and are often regarded as "non-Kenyans". The first interviewee who is a Muslim of South Asian descent raised the subject of belonging and exclusion a lot:

> I am a third generation Kenyan. I am Kenyan through and through but I have a lighter skin colour [pinches his arm]. Because of my skin colour, I was never really accepted as a Kenyan—they don't see past my skin. But I am truly an African (Interview with anonymous, 3 June 2022).

In 2017, President Uhuru Kenyatta announced that "Kenyan Asians" are from this time on recognised as a formal tribe in Kenya, Tribe 44 (Verjee, 2017). This comes after a long history of discriminating against *muindis*, leaving "Kenyan Asians" politically side-lined. Mostly, their history and role within colonialism is central to understand the subject of non-belonging. While Asian communities migrated to Kenya long before colonialism, the British colonial rule employed Punjab troops to serve in Kenya. Moreover, the construction of the Kenyan-Uganda railway under British rule, starting in 1896, led to a massive influx of Asians to Kenya, with approximately 40,000 Indian labourers being brought to the country to build this railway. This came at a high price, as more than 2400 people died due to the dire working conditions in a challenging environment. After the finalisation of the railway, the workers were presented with the choice of returning to India or stay in Kenya, with a lot of the workers deciding on staying. Yet, the racial prejudice against Asians prompted the British rule to limit the immigration of Asians into Kenya and stop their settlements in the Kenyan Highlands. The Devonshire White Paper of 1923 included that "Kenya was primarily an African country, and thus Asians had to

accept that they did not have equal rights to citizenship as the Africans" (Nabende, 2023: 52). While the designation of *muindis* as the 44th tribe of Kenya involves a crucial and meaningful change towards "Kenyan Asians", it is also to a certain degree performative and was used as a political move by Uhuru as part of his election campaign (Verjee, 2017).

The marginalisation and prejudice against "Kenyan Asians" by the Kenyan government continued to be present during my fieldwork, leaving these relatively wealthy communities under pressure to provide for their own security. One of the two interviewees put it bluntly: "The ORC is needed because the police are not working. Would the police be doing their job, there would be no such initiatives of community policing" (Interview with anonymous, 7 June 2022). With the NPR being discontinued in urban areas and the government absent, unable, and unwilling to provide security to marginalised or "non-Kenyan" neighbourhoods, the communities are left to themselves. While low-income neighbourhoods in urban areas do not have the funds nor donations to finance a private, informally-organised system of self-policing, middle- and upper-class communities can pay for a volunteer system that provides a certain form of community policing, without strings attached to the government. As I elaborated above, we find *Nyumba Kumi* initiatives in low income, marginalised neighbourhoods of Nairobi such as Eastleigh. At systematic disadvantage, the only means of protection they can get is by adhering to community policing such as *Nyumba Kumi*, which collaborates loosely with the Kenyan police, yet provides an option of taking charge, even if it is without the traditional resources of security provision.

The two different forms of community policing display similar forms of "taking charge", in absence of the state, and work along spatial formations of power. Yet, they also display crucial disparities to each other: while the NPR and the private, government-independent forms of self-policing initiatives provide security for communities, *Nyumba Kumi* serves as an extension of the Kenyan government and is based on information-sharing—a passive form of security provision. *Nyumba Kumi* illuminates the workings of West-of-Doom through the marginalisation of "suspect" communities formed along geographies which collides with an outstanding absence of government—yet, community policing initiatives serve the purpose of allowing the government access to desired communities. Importantly, the tensions around *Nyumba Kumi* as a government tool are complicated by the communities' adaptation of the system for their own good. An official from Wajir revealed that "[c]ommunity policing is good because it leaves the community in charge of their own security, they have the decision" (Interview with anonymous, 7 March 2022). As an interviewee in Isiolo described it, "taking charge of their own security",

(Interview with anonymous, 1 February 2022), is related to the idea of self-policing, where order is maintained by the community themselves. However, in contrast to the private forms of community policing—independent of the Kenyan police and in shape for more traditional provision of security—*Nyumba Kumi* is much more than self-policing, it is also a mechanism to protect communities from the government brutality where no other options are available. Ultimately, both forms of community policing expose how neoliberal governmentality works through establishing security as a commodity, which is *harambee*, a collective effort, leaving communities no choice other than to designate unpaid labour for their own protection.

# CHAPTER 4

## THE PREVENTION CORRECTIVE: THE GENDERED EXPANSION OF ACCEBTABLE FORMS OF SECURITY PRACTICES

> Women are better analytically than men, so they come often for jobs in the border force, the FBI, or the police, but often the [white] ladies are not treated like white women but actually like Kenyan ladies in terms of salary and respect, so they don't get enough money to get by and be happy with the job. I knew a lady who was brilliant but unfortunately didn't make it in this environment. She gave up and went back after a while (Interview with anonymous, 15 June 2022).

> Not many are aware of risk management services and the roles that women can play within it. They again have this perception of security as guards, fighters, masculine. They don't get that there are various other roles in security such as collecting information, do management et cetera. It's really the brain that is needed not the physical (Interview with anonymous, 31 March 2022).

As I got into the car towards Kitisuru Estate in Nairobi to an interview with Lady Askari, a female-oriented private security company, I was overly excited. Out of 55 formal interviews, only six were with women and out of these six, merely two were representatives of the private security industry. My curiosity was accompanied by a nervous, almost anxious feeling for the interview; Lady Askari's approach of performing security suggested a potential missing piece of how gendered security strategies operate and manifest within the broader security dispositif. Since starting my research, my main goal was to investigate the gendered strategies that move through and are enabled by P/CVE—and how the private security industry fits into this picture. Lady Askari, with their slogan "Redefining security one lady at a time" (Lady Askari, n.d.), seemed to be a unique case of how security is performed within the very niche of prevention and private security. Driving up the hills of Nairobi to the interview location, a variety of questions circulated in my head: how does Lady Askari fit into the highly gendered and racialised house of security, which favours white men with a security background? What

strategies and narratives does it apply in regards to gender and the female body when it comes to security? How do other security actors relate to such approaches—are there corresponding trends or crucial dissimilarities? During my field research, I noticed that particularly the security actors who are privileged within Kenya's security dispositif—the police and a certain segment of the private security industry—displayed similar narratives and discourses in their enactment of security. As such, I recognised that Lady Askari's gendered story of "redefining security" is not unique to the private security sector, but stands for a larger transformation of security linked to the logic of prevention. The presented chapter thus explores how security becomes evident through security practices related to P/CVE and prevention.

To do this, I apply Judith Butler's theory of performativity to trace the relationship between actions and discourse, analysing the complex, messy, and seemingly contradictory manifestation of security through prevention—both in the public and private security industry. Again, by stressing the artificiality of the public-private dichotomy, I purposefully analyse both sectors alongside each other to explore resemblances, patterns, and interdependencies within the given security dispositif. The enactment of security is one puzzle piece to how security manifests as a tangible concept in the everyday. Security is not a pre-ontological or "given" subject, a neutral body or way of being uninfluenced by social processes. Rather, logics, beliefs, narratives, and activities shape how security materialises in a given subject. Butler's (1990) theoretical concept of performativity provides a useful tool to deconstruct power structures that form a subject, a body. As such, Butler explains in their book *Gender Trouble* how there is no pre-discursive sexed body, but rather,

> [g]ender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of *repeated acts* within a *highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance*, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of gender ontologies, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender (Butler, 1990: 25, emphasis added).

By emphasising the "repeated acts", Butler defines gender as "doing" rather than "being"; a process, a verb instead of a noun, which is confined to a "highly rigid regulatory framework" underwritten by cultural inscription and power structures. They continue to explain that "[t]here is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results" (1990: 25). What we know as gender is thus always discursively constructed; bodies, and the people that such bodies belong to, are only intelligible as subjects through discourse.

Butler's theory of performativity is informed by J. L. Austin's (1962) and Jacques Derrida's (1972, 1976) theorisation of language as they argue that every system is socially constructed and assembled and only come into being through the institutional and cultural structures that start from the textual. The material effect of repeated acts, read within a discursive field, produces the very subject we aim to investigate. The way Butler describes the performativity of gender to be "mapped onto sex" (Higate and Henry, 2009: 68) offers a theoretical foundation to grasp how social processes define the outcome of any subject, any state of being: security as such a subject must therefore not only be understood as discursively produced but also as coming to existence through a certain set of repeated acts. Furthermore, by applying performativity to the materialisation of security, we gain a deeper knowledge on how gender works as an organising principle and as a process of symbolic coding. Consequently, if we analyse the "repeated set of acts" and the attached discourses of actors within public and private security, we learn how these actors come into existence by establishing their meaning and identity.

Paul Higate and Marsha Henry (2009, 2010) make use of the concept of performativity to explain how everyday security is constructed through the performative acts of peacekeepers. They write that "[t]he effects of a constantly repeated performance—for example, patrolling—is productive of identity such that peacekeepers come to embody security in and of themselves through their work" (2009: 68). Exploring the peacekeeping missions in Haiti, Kosovo, and Liberia, their work provides one of the most comprehensive applications of performativity on security. Peacekeeping, they argue, is about performance, symbolism and rituals, and about how the individual peacekeepers choose to present themselves to their "beneficiary" audiences (Higate and Henry, 2009: 11). Conceptualising security as performative and only legible through cultural inscription brings us closer to understanding capabilities, activities, and narratives *as already security*. However, the equation of performativity with security has also been criticised. Elke Krahmann for instance explains that:

> the definition of security as performative activities and capabilities not only moves to the margins alternative (conceptions of) security outcomes, such as the frequency and impact of hostile attacks or the subjective perceptions of security among mission staff and local populations, but also neglects the socially and culturally constructed relationship between security services and their outcome (Krahmann, 2017: 542).

In her investigation of U.S. security contracting, she suggests that the performative turn in academia led to a focus on performance assessment and performance-based legitimisation

within the contracting business—instead of separately measuring the outcome. I raise this criticism because it proves an important point to my theoretical engagement with security; the theory of performativity contests the very notion of a pre-discursive subject. I am not investigating performances per se, as this presupposes a pre-existing subject, but rather performativity, as the process by which subjects come into being. The performativity of security includes both activities and capabilities as well as security outcomes—both coming to existence through discourse and the repeated actions of bodies. Analysing the complexity and messiness of the interdependent relationship between words and actions supports the theoretical framing of security as relational, multi-layered, and constituted by various social and political processes. The investigation of security practices through activities and narratives brings forward *one* way how security materialises and reminds us that there is no ontological truth to security.

The purpose of this chapter is therefore to explore security as a process by analysing the different discourses, narratives, and activities of the dominant security actors constituting Kenya's house of security—beyond the public-private binary (see Chapter 2). Tracing the performativity of security enacted by the Kenyan police as well as by privileged actors within Kenya's private security industry allows us to recognise resemblances, patterns, and interdependencies within a security dispositif. I argue that there is an overall trend in the security dispositif towards rewriting security towards development-oriented discourses that denote more acceptable forms of security. These prevention-related security practices legitimate the continuation and expansion of conventional security practices. Decisively, this expansion is highly gendered as gendered narratives and women's material bodies are essential in supposedly softer, more feminine approaches to security. The enactment of feminine coded security practices operates as a process to remasculinise security practices.

To support this argument, the first section of the chapter investigates the Kenyan national police service, their use of police brutality, and the creation of an identity which centres around community engagement and police reform. The contradictory enactment of security by the police through police brutality on the one hand and community engagement on the other, highlights a discrepancy between a self-imposed discourse and actions taken on the ground. The performativity observed within the Kenyan police is however not unique, but similar to dominant narratives and security performances in the private security industry. In a second section, I thus explore the role of non-traditional security actors, such as private corporate and private security companies, in reimagining themselves towards development-oriented security practices. The private security industry's rebranding of security towards development and

humanitarianism is marked by an expansion which capitalises on services required in connection to prevention, such as intelligence gathering and training. Interestingly, the private security industry's expansion materialises through gendered narratives which advertise for a "female security". The chapter concludes with a discussion on how the investigated security practices relate to each other, exploring the gendered nature of the expansion of security.

## Clashing identities: Police brutality, police reform, and coercive security practices

The Kenyan National Police Service is a crucial actor in Kenya's security dispositif. With their slogan "Service with Dignity", their mission is to "upholding the rule of law for a safe and secure society" (National Police Service, n.d.). Coming to the field, I knew how important it was for me to grasp what activities the police are conducting under the banner of P/CVE and how these activities relate to their other conducts. Furthermore, exploring the performativity of the Kenyan national police provides insight into how governments perform security and what discourses are prevailing within Kenya's overall policy and practice of security. Starting with the investigation of the police automatically leads to the private security industry, which is highly informed—and to a certain degree reliant—on public security policies. Governments are to a large degree the ones who contract private security entities and decide how security should be enacted as well as what services are needed (see for example Cusumano and Kinsey, 2022; Biegon, Rauta, and Watts, 2021); the commodification of security through privatisation thus relies to a certain degree on the capabilities, activities, and discourses of national security forces. My very first interview was with a high-ranking police officer based in the police service's headquarters in Nairobi downtown. What followed were three other interviews with Kenyan police members, eleven interviews with government/administration members, and twelve representatives of civil society organisations and communities who all talked about the practices, activities, and narratives applied by the police. The present section therefore traces how the police operate in Kenya and how they specifically engage with P/CVE, highlighting the discourses and desired "self-image" regarding police brutality and community engagement initiatives.

In the name of national security: Kenya's brutal police regime

In Kenya, so-called hard security approaches, which include excessive use of force, crackdowns on minorities, and extrajudicial killings, have been a vital part of the security system. As previously described, Kenya's security sector is heavily influenced by the violent colonial state formation of the U.K. between 1901 and 1960. The violent values of colonial rule are engrained in the security apparatus in Kenya, with the police and the military being built on and through the belief system of British militarism which manifests in superiority of western security knowledge in what I conceptualise as Kenya's house of security. In particular, the rhetoric of the fight against terrorism, facilitated a greater use of police force and brutality under the banner of terrorism. The idea of terrorism as a possible and imminent threat has been widely used as a mode of governance since nearly the beginning of the post-9/11 period, providing a framework that justifies—and to a certain extent legalises—the excessive use of force by state security forces (Ní Aoláin, 2016; Naji and Schildknecht, 2021). Fear is hereby a common tool by governments to govern and control the population with the goal of legitimising certain action as a response to an imminent threat—a tool particularly leveraged in the wake of the GWOT and the counterterrorism regime. Importantly, such politics of fear function through the exaggeration and dramatisation of an actual threat which does not correspond to the probability of an attack (Ahmed, 2003; Neocosmos, 2008). One of the interviewees operating in the context of Kenya termed this as the "overstatement of the likelihood" of terrorism, which in turn leads to deliberate and quick assumptions where almost any violence is labelled as a "terrorist act". He emphasised that this negates other reasons for engaging in violent acts such as family disputes or land grievances (Interview with anonymous, 16 May 2022). Terrorism as a narrative therefore appropriates discourses about violence and justifies "extraordinary" and incisive responses by the government.

One infamous example for Kenya's brutal security approaches to respond to the threat of terrorism and violent extremism is the Operation Usalama Watch (*usalama* means safety in Swahili) in 2014, where security forces of the Kenyan government conducted an indiscriminate crackdown on people living in the Nairobi neighbourhood of Eastleigh, which is predominantly inhabited by economically disenfranchised Somali communities. Lasting a few months, the operation included demolitions, arrests, police raids, forced relocations, and deportation of refugees, as well as the detainment of hundreds of people under inhumane conditions in the Kasarani stadium (Balakian, 2016; Glück, 2017). As communicated through public outlets, the operation was a direct response to Al-Shabaab attacks that happened in the months before,

most infamously the Westgate shopping mall attack in September 2013. However, the mission was known internally as Operation Sanitization Eastleigh (IPOA, 2014), referring to Eastleigh as a spatial entity that needs to be "sanitised", targeting specifically Somali communities (Herz, 2008; Glück, 2017). This highly racialised approach of security under the banner of counterterrorism points towards a certain understanding of who is believed to be a "terrorist".

More recently, an investigative documentary on Kenya's police killing epidemic uncovered the police murders connected to the 26 bodies found in the *Yala* River which is located in Western Kenya (VICE News, 2021). In interviews with undercover police officers, the journalists expose the brutal tactics applied by the police in order to fulfil a given mission, frequently resulting in the death of the suspect without any trial or sufficient evidence at hand (VICE News, 2021). These recent documentaries, but also the interviews conducted in the field, show that security tactics of brutal force, and particularly extrajudicial killings by the police, are engrained within the security system in Kenya; they are an essential part of how security is performed and understood. In many interviews I conducted, the relationship between the police—in particular the ATPU—and the communities has been described as "violent" and "brutal", where police forces were accused of killing especially young people, of enforced disappearances, and the torture of relatives of suspects. One member of a civil society organisation (CSO) said in conversation about abductions and extrajudicial killings the following:

> Actually last week, I saw a family crying in Mombasa that their son was just a religious teacher. Literally the wife was crying because the moment that you are abducted, the chance of you being found alive is almost, you know, zero. There are very, very unique cases where people have been abducted and then released. But when you try to interview the guys that have been released, some of them do not even want to talk. You don't really know what might have been done to them (Interview with anonymous, 3 June 2022).

These security practices are marked by brutal and disproportionate use of force and have come hand in hand with the stigmatisation of Muslim communities. One community leader from the coastal area in the North of Kenya, a predominantly Muslim area, stated that he has been suspected of being a terrorist and has been jailed a number of times, very often just due to his appearance: "Why? Because I just have a long beard and I look like a Somali" (Interview with anonymous, 27 May 2022). Another interviewee put it this way:

> It's a big problem for most of us, if you are a Muslim by faith, you are already a terrorist, so the only thing that they trying to do, is to make sure they can either arrest you or follow you. If you are a Muslim and you walk into a police station in *Kisumu*, the police say we are

> in danger here. So that's very bad, it's profiling an individual based on what they see (Interview with anonymous, 31 May 2022).

The targeting of Muslim communities within counterterrorism is neither new nor unique to the case of Kenya: as explained in the introduction, the conflation of terrorism and Islam is a defining feature of today's global counterterrorism regime, guided by the racialised logics of the U.S. empire (Li, 2020; Bakali and Hafez, 2020). The racialisation of Islam as "a universal and uniform religious tradition, a force in international politics, and a distinct object in a discourse of civilisation" (Aydin, 2017: 3) reduced Muslim communities to "suspects" of terrorism. The idea of "cleansing" the Kenyan state from Muslim communities is therefore directly connected to the bodies deemed prone to conduct terrorist acts. As illustrated with the Operation Usalama Watch, but countless other interactions with the police, the racial profiling and targeting of Muslim and Somali communities is at the heart of security practices.

Police misconduct is also a topic of highest political debate in Kenya. President William Ruto who assumed office in September 2022 affirmed that he intends to end police brutality by mandating a taskforce which investigates misconducts: "We want to break away from the tendencies of the past administration whose reign was characterised by intimidation and fear-mongering" (Justice Truth Dignity, 18 October 2022). This quote by the Kenyan President highlights two very crucial aspects: first, by connecting misconduct to the past administration, police brutality is not only highly politicised, but defined as an event that occurs within a certain time and space, namely bound to a certain administration. This negates historical and geopolitical factors as well as the systemic nature of police brutality, and the use of it against certain communities, which reaches far beyond one single government administration. Secondly, the decidedly loaded words of "intimidation" and "fear-mongering" are not only representative of a political strategy of blaming an opposing party, but also of how acceptable and well-known police brutality is in public conversations. As a matter of fact, police brutality in Kenya is handled as an open secret, which everybody understands to be a problem.

In the context of Kenya, but also within the bigger scope of counterterrorism, the acquisition and verification of intelligence is at the centre of security strategies, no matter if "hard" or "soft" strategies. One interviewee, a former KDF member in the rank of a captain, described that particularly the ATPU's main goal is to get information for the sake of national security, through the capture and interrogation of a suspected person, without being afraid of killing this person. Intimidation by show and use of force is hereby a strategic objective of the unit. The same interviewee rationalised the ATPU's brutal policing with the following words:

"the goal is that they [the population] are afraid" (Interview with anonymous, 11 March 2022). He continued to explain that due to the strict justice system and the resulting difficulty in submitting substantial evidence for a conviction, a suspected person will likely be free again by bail and in turn constitutes a great national security risk. The rationale offered by the interviewee was that the extrajudicial killings perpetrated by the ATPU are justified in order to protect society from a bigger threat. This anonymous account has been validated by different accounts from human rights organisations such as Amnesty International, but also by the interviews I conducted with members of the civil society and local governmental administrates. The argument central to the use of force is therefore proportionality, which highlights the argued necessity of using brutal force to achieve something else—the protection of its citizens (Interview with anonymous, 20 May 2022).

The killing and harming of certain people to protect other people is directly related to who is regarded as a "citizen" in Kenya. Samar Al-Bulushi (2021) terms this phenomenon the "citizen-subject", delineating citizens and suspects by highlighting them as "marked by a continent ability to become suspects without awareness or intent" and as "targets of surveillance and policing contend with the fear and paranoia that come with subjection to surveillance and suspicion" (2004: 820, 822). Furthermore, the use of police brutality in the name of protecting society highlights who does not count as human and is thus denied such protection—lives Butler would call "ungrievable" (2010).

The high incidence of police brutality in Kenya creates an environment where actors and organisations speaking out against the brutality are at risk of being targeted by government forces. One particular human rights organisation talked about a "balancing act" of calling out the government if they do something wrong while at the same time also, for instance, reaching out to the police and talk about positive things they do (Interview with anonymous, 10 May 2022). Their mission of holding the government accountable must be put in relation to their staff's safety. As a response to this repression, human rights organisations and other NGOs working on the subject of police brutality have created a Police Reforms Working Group with around 20 civil society organisations present. The main purpose of this network is to provide a certain security to individuals and CSOs involved in the subject. One interviewee who works within this working group phrased it as such:

> There is strength in numbers and there is security in numbers. So even if they want to target one institution, the other institutions will be watching over them—it is watching over the human rights crusaders, that's how we call them. So as I go in, somebody from another

> institution is watching over my security. As they get involved, somebody from another institution is watching over them. (…) Others are watching over your security (Interview with anonymous, 31 May 2022).

In the interview, the activist emphasised how risky their work is, illustrating well how the right to speak about police brutality is reserved only to politicians who would use the subject as a rhetorical platform of campaigning; and as such do not threaten the institutionalised practice of violence. In contrast, human rights organisations and CSOs who intend to bring about change endanger themselves to be targeted and subjected to police brutality.

The police brutality and the brutal intimidation tactics by security forces have led to a vast mistrust between community and police, with community members of a given ethnicity and/or class treated as criminals. The extensive abuse by police officers when it comes to issues around terrorism and violent extremism—and the "trust deficit" resulting out of it—caused people to withhold information about potential risks or threats due to a fear of repercussions for themselves and their close ones. A lot of interviewees have confirmed this by stating that they would not share information with the police because they fear being associated with the offered intelligence and as a consequence, being treated like a criminal which could ultimately lead to their own death or even risk their families to be subjected to violence. A governmental official from a rural part of the country expressed this resentment in the following words: "You fear the terrorists, but you equally fear the government, so people just keep quiet" (Interview with anonymous, 1 February 2022). Even as security forces leverage the fear of terrorist attacks as a means to obtain intelligence and coerce communities to self-police, they fail this exact purpose by losing the population's trust and thus being unable to acquire information. Both, the discourses shaping the police as well as the repeated actions witnessed on the ground, disclose an identity of the police which features fear as an instrument of control, the use of force, and a sheer brutality towards the population.

### Narratives of prevention: The utilisation of capacity and trust-building measures by Kenya's police service

The introduction of preventative, non-physically violent approaches in the counterterrorism regime through the agenda of P/CVE is a strategic corrective for the above-described trust deficit. P/CVE as an iteration of the current counterterrorism regime focuses on softer measures and approaches—in contrast to hard security approaches which require physical force—to address drivers and root causes which could lead to so-called radicalisation. As

defined in the UN Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE), the idea is to apply a whole-of-society approach where communities, civil society organisations, and the development sector are drawn into the policy and practice of fighting violent extremism. While this is often described as a securitisation of the development sector, the security sector itself is heavily engaging with such forms of security practice. P/CVE thus also targets national security institutions, such as the police, to review their role in generating grievances in the local population through specific security (UNDP, 2023). The deliberate denial of protection and the direct infliction of violence to certain groups or people cause a profound animosity towards security institutions, which in the body of literature of radicalisation is defined as a contributing factor for people to be radicalised or to express sympathy towards violent groups and their objectives (Watanabe, 2018; European Commission, 2018). P/CVE as an agenda thus intends to break with hard security approaches and renders the impact of practices such as police brutality on communities as a contributing factor to being "radicalised".

In Kenya, P/CVE approaches within the security sector have targeted the police as an institution and—with funding from international and multilateral organisations—set up activities such as capacity building workshops for police officers and trust building initiatives between the police and the population. The European Commission's Regional Training Curriculum on P/CVE for instance lists revenge as a driver of violent extremism: "Studies in Kenya repeatedly suggest that personal experiences of injustice with Kenyan law enforcement have led to a desire for revenge. […] [R]ecruits have often witnessed the death of family members" (European Commission, 2020: 44). In addition, law enforcement abuses exacerbate the feeling of marginalisation: "In Kenya, law enforcement abuses are often the first thing study respondents discuss when asked about the motivations of young people joining into Al-Shabaab" (European Commission, 2020: 48). The training curriculum proceeds by deliberately listing community engagement as a type of P/CVE intervention. They encourage:

> police officers to be attentive to their citizens' problems, be reliable and responsive, be honest when a job can or cannot be done, address the community with respect and treat all community members fairly. These practices also help to ensure that the behaviours of law enforcement do not inadvertently contribute to grievances that can fuel radicalisation (European Commission, 2020: 91).

The evolution of P/CVE as an international as well as national framework directly connects to the increased attention and calls for police reform. Such efforts clearly had an effect on police security practice: most of the interviewees—across the spectrum of those who apply force,

government representatives, or people discriminated against and deliberately targeted—noticed a change in approach by the police in the use of force since the introduction of P/CVE programmes. Mostly, the interviewees referred to more "cordial" relationships, more trust between the parties and less-aggressive behaviour from security sector actors. One interviewee, a government official from a rural area in Kenya, framed the improved relationship between the police and the communities positively:

> So there were a lot of challenges, but now the government also looks how we can improve the relationship between the government and the community, the security agencies and the community. Also, for the volunteering of information about terrorism, about recruitment. It's for the exchange of information between the government, the agencies, and the people. It's now very cordial, you know, people feel free to share with the government (Interview with anonymous, 1 February 2022).

This quote highlights a very crucial aspect of how P/CVE is understood by government officials and security sector actors: the goal to reduce violence by the security sector is directly linked to the aim of receiving useful intelligence. As illustrated previously, police brutality has proven insufficient in gaining access to the population and possible information about threats. By adopting discourses of trust building and by participating in acts of police reform and community engagement, the police create an identity which is meant to override the prominent subject of the police as violent and brutal. Supporting this argument, a high-ranking police officer based in Nairobi rationalised the implementation of preventative approaches through the acquisition of intelligence:

> The main goal is to make sure that the ideology doesn't infiltrate the population. […] The number one goal is that they don't let the ideology and the terrorist in. And number two is, if they're drawn into it, to de-radicalise them and bring them out. We do capacity building for our police officers: If the people feel that they are treated with injustice, they will never give information to the police. So we have to have a discussion together which creates *room for engagement* (Interview with anonymous, 1 December 2021; emphasis added).

While preventative approaches are meant to override the stigma of police brutality, the key of such security practices lies in their complementarity to brutality and violence, aiming to access spaces which historically have been closed off to security institutions. The reliance on information and intelligence, and the acquisition of this intelligence by "accessing the population", by security institutions is strongly connected to the logic of civil counterinsurgency[26], where the success of a mission relies on the acquisition of intelligence to

[26] Counterinsurgency as a term came into existence and practice in the mid-twentieth century and has been widely used particularly by the U.S. and the U.K. for the wars in Vietnam, Malaysia, and Afghanistan. It is however important to note

identify and understand a perceived enemy and the population close to this "enemy". The U.S. Army Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE) writes that "[o]nly by living among the people and protecting them from insurgent intimidation can a military force gain the *people's trust* and thus *acquire the understanding* necessary to target insurgent cadres" (MCoE, n.d.; emphasis added). This quote is almost a one-to-one replication of the tonality of the statement by the Kenyan police officer cited above, focusing on the key aspects of prevention of infiltration, trust, and information. Identifying or naming the population as a space that needs to be accessed, a "room for engagement", speaks to modes of civil counterinsurgency as a less-lethal, preemptive approach which is "directed at a wide target—the "people"—and aimed to prevent civil violence" (Schrader, 2019: 14).

The idea of P/CVE is, in part, to "win the hearts and minds" of the population, to inoculate the communities against the "enemy" and to gain trust in order to access intelligence. Mesok and Schildknecht (forthcoming) term the conceptual proximity of P/CVE and civil counterinsurgency as "P/CVE-as-counterinsurgency" and emphasise community engagement as a mode of pacification. Communities are turned into a battle ground—winning communities means winning the war. Markus Kienscherf writes that "counterinsurgency doctrine ought to be understood as a programme of *both* rule *and* warfare that seeks to assemble humans, technologies, tactics, and modes of knowledge (production) into an ambiguous machine geared towards pacifying ungoverned spaces and populations that more often than not tend to be located in the post-colonial south" (2011: 520; emphasis in original). Community engagement initiatives and calls for police reforms within the broader agenda of P/CVE are thus tapping in these exact spaces of "pacifying ungoverned spaces".

The NCTC's collaboration with the National Association of Retired Police Officers Kenya (NARPOK) is one of many initiatives which illustrate the significance and the tactics used to obtain information. Borrowed from the Israelis, the idea of NARPOK is that of "once a police officer, always a police officer". The rationale builds on a strong sense of loyalty and responsibility, calling for the police officers to continue their work after retirement by working as a source of intelligence within the community the retired officers live in—and then reporting information to active members of the police. To acknowledge their work, the NCTC pays a small allowance to members of NARPOK, which is an additional income to the police pension.

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that population-centred security practices, such as counterinsurgency and, as I will argue later, "P/CVE-as-counterinsurgency", are rooted in methods of imperial policing and colonial small wars (see for example Kienscherf, 2011, 2016 or Neocleous, 2011).

The expectation for police officers to never be fully retired—and the voluntary engagement of police officers to take part in such initiatives—speaks to the performativity of policing work: the repeated acts of policing through actions of surveillance and reporting as well as the engrained feeling of being responsible for a "safe and security society" become sedimented in their selves. The acts of policing thus translate into a life call, a duty that reaches far beyond a simple profession; rather, it creates an identity. As such, we gain insight into how performativity, identity, and ideas of security are connected and engrained in the everyday. This systematic network of intelligence planted within the communities all over Kenya, instrumentalised and paid by the NCTC in the name of preventing and countering violent extremism, is the largest source of information for the security institutions (Interview with anonymous, 1 December 2021). The initiative links the core activities of policing, namely the acquisition of information, to P/CVE and its aims for community engagement—by accessing the population and creating "room for engagement".

The discrepancy between the discourses of security by the police—on the one hand the systemic police brutality and trust building initiatives on the other—appears to be paradoxical and conflictive, yet must be read as a more insidious relationship within policing where both police brutality and police reform function as two sides of a coercive coin (see Mesok and Schildknecht, forthcoming). Both approaches are security practices which utilise coercion—through physically violent tactics and by steering people into complying with policing; both security practices apply the same narrative of protecting national security and aim to gather information and intelligence for this purpose. The deconstruction of the police as one single unit plays a vital role in the manifestation of police reform and police brutality as two sides of the same coin, as it exposes the fact that different institutions perform different ways of security. The ATPU, for instance, a specialised unit of the Directorate of Criminal Investigation (DCI), is infamous for their brutality and has been described as a "dreaded entity" and as "a gang of criminals that work for the government", responsible for extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances (Interview with anonymous, 7 March 2022). Within the above-described references of police brutality, the ATPU has come up as a major perpetrator of police violence. This has been the case since the establishment of the unit in 2003 up to today, with P/CVE and security sector reform policies not manifesting in any change. A county official from a marginalised area elaborated on this incongruity:

> We are not seeing any shift. What we are only seeing is a shift in paper. The national government is still in charge of security. The special forces are still at the borders. The military are using all the vehicles to run and scare people, but when they require information, they tend to come down to the people and get information (Interview with anonymous, 7 March 2022).

In this described scenario, it is not the ATPU that "comes down to the people and gets information". Likewise, the ATPU rarely appears in the County Engagement Forums (CEF) which were established as part of the P/CVE agenda and serve as a space where all the different actors of the so-called whole-of-society approach come together to discuss matters of violent extremism and terrorism.

In contrast to the ATPU, local police units mainly from the Kenyan Police Service (KPS) and sometimes from the Administrative Police Service (APS) are the ones described as "coming down to the people" and are equally included in the CEF. P/CVE initiatives target almost exclusively members of the KPS and APS which are tasked to build trust within communities and to change "hearts and minds". The programmed trust building initiatives, pushed by western development agencies, often include a type of sporting event such as soccer games or volleyball tournaments to make the local police more accessible, with the intention to "socialise" the local police and their stations and to take away the fear of the population from security institutions (focus group discussion with anonymous, 12 May 2022). One of the interviewed and observed local CSO which is directly involved in the relationship building between the police and the communities stressed the importance of the youth reporting directly to the police. As a CSO, they offered themselves as an intermediary vessel for information to be reported to, if people do not feel at liberty to share information with the local police (Interview with anonymous, 11 May 2022). This example demonstrates strikingly how the significance of programmes lies not the reduction of violence perpetrated by the police, but again, in the acquisition of intelligence. The randomness of police rotations within the local police system is yet another indicator for the shallow promise of police reforms in the use of force. Police officers sometimes get transferred only months after a new deployment, without reasoning or a sensible schedule. The local police who are responsible for trust and community building have therefore often a low incentive for a systemic change, while the system itself is built for a quick extraction of knowledge rather than the advancement of community well-being. Correspondingly, the NCTC, who manages the P/CVE initiatives, has the reputation of a "PR institution that the government set up to cover the face of the public" (Interview with anonymous, 3 June 2022).

The absence of policing reforms within the unit most infamous for their police brutality—the ATPU—speaks yet again to the manifestation of police brutality next to policing reforms as deliberate and intentional—rather than a paradox and coincidental. Applying both physically violent coercion and coercive compliance to communities are two modes of policing which allow the goal of acquiring intelligence as a means to not only retain their power but expand both access and power within the given security dispositif. The idea of P/CVE programmes reducing police brutality to prevent radicalisation can therefore be seen as misleading and obscuring the inherent characteristics of how security is enacted within P/CVE, as it serves as a rationale and modality to wage counterinsurgency within the population and to deepen the security capabilities of the police.

Driven by the UN and predominantly western donors, P/CVE is furthermore a convenient tool for security agencies such as the police to access more resources through more development-oriented actors, while maintaining the purpose of securing intelligence, producing a comprehensive security sector. The nature of P/CVE as an "industry", with large funding streams and numerous international donors who shift money around, is acknowledged by an expert working at the Switzerland-based Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF):

> I think PVE interventions are incredibly low cost by comparison with a military intervention. If it's 1.3 million for every hell fire missile to take out a $3,000 28-er Subaru that has an ID in it or something. The comparison between PVE programming going in and doing some liking it, support, and some mentoring, and setting up peace clubs, and digital clubs in schools in this particular radius, it's absolutely peanuts (Interview with anonymous, 17 March 2021).

P/CVE therefore not only serves as a public face and PR framing for Kenya's national security institutions, but also presents itself as a highly profitable industry for the police to access fundings which are regarding as "peanuts" in comparison to conventional security practices. In line with this, P/CVE also serves as a tool for the Kenyan police to respond to the "international community" and their demands for accountable security institutions. Feminist theorist Sara Ahmed argues that "[t]o be brought into the international civil society—that is, to be not named as a 'rogue state' or as part of 'the axis of evil'—others must 'mimic' these rules of conduct and forms of governance" (2003: 394). Kenya's adoption of its National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism (NSCVE) in 2016, just shortly after the adoption of the global P/CVE agenda by the UN, is a response to international modes of governance which facilitates first, to be not

named as a "rogue state", and second, to access funding by the "international community"—while concurrently continuing its brutal police tactics.

As a security practice, P/CVE contains many logics: it presents itself as a tool for community engagement, bridging the "trust deficit" to the community, while simultaneously being able to gather intelligence, serving the same rationale as conventional security practices. P/CVE is an industry where security institutions are able to access funds from donors who aim for development-oriented and preventative programming within the security sector, and P/CVE offers an opportunity to call for police reform measures with a minimal visible impact on actual police practice. The seemingly paradoxical security practices by the Kenyan police, acts of police brutality and community engagement endeavours, reveal a performativity which rests on a self-imposed identity as a member of the "international community" by playing along the rules, a "good" actor which engages with its citizens. Yet, the enactment of both police reform and police brutality exposes the materialisation of security as coercive, with what is deemed more acceptable forms of security at the very core.

## A corporate rewriting of security: The conflation of security and development and its gendered significance

The brutality used by the police and the reputational damage associated with it often devalues the police as a valuable partner, particularly for donors and western aid agencies. Rather, as I have illustrated elsewhere, the appropriate ways of performing security are closely tied to British militarism plus which centres less-aggressive and preventative approaches. While the recent and grave misconducts by the British Army in Kenya as well as the postcolonial relationship between the U.K. and Kenya (see Chapter 2) disfavours actors which are officially tied to the U.K. government, I noticed an emerging space for non-traditional actors who are neither in the development sector nor in the public security sector. Rather, an in-between area evolved where prevention-related tasks find a home with actors which I call "intermediaries"—in the form of advisory or consultancy companies as well as security risk management companies—stepping in to provide the requested services and reframing these with fewer security connotations. This section therefore examines the establishment of such intermediaries, their associated security practices defined through discourse, as well as the observed expansion of the sector. Furthermore, I explore the deeply gendered nature of the reimagination of security towards

development by looking at discourses around the portrayal of women and feminine-connoted roles such as the figure of the analyst.

### The perks of neoliberal outsourcing: Capitalising on a development framing for better business

Donors and governments operating within P/CVE often hire external companies to conduct the actual programming of P/CVE on the ground. In Kenya, and Somalia, Chemonics, Tetra Tech, and Adam Smith International (ASI) were frequently mentioned during field research as such intermediaries. Chemonics, a U.S.-based consultancy company, has been active in Kenya since the 1970s and is regarded as a big implementer of conflict programmes, particularly for USAID. A lot of their programmes have been reframed under the banner of P/CVE or are regarded as contributing towards the U.S. objectives of counterterrorism policy or the national CVE action plans (Darden, 2019). Most of the times, projects get funded by USAID, contracted by Chemonics, and then implemented again by a local NGO partner. The USAID KENYA Strengthening Community Resilience against Extremism (SCORE) activity is such an example, where the Kenyan NGO Act Change Transform (Act!) appeared as the main implementer, with both Chemonics and USAID mentioning the programme within their own reporting (USAID, 2019; Lopez et al, 2018). Just recently, the USAID contracting of Chemonics for a $9.5 billion programme to improve global health, reinvigorated an investigation due to evidence of fraud, waste, and abuse, including the manipulation of performance indicators (Gawel, 2024). The consultancy company Adam Smith International is a U.K.-based parallel to the Chemonics story: contracted by the U.K. government, ASI engages in capacity building of governments to more effectively prevent and counter violent extremism (Devex, 2020). Asking one particular interview participant about ASI, he offered the following input on ASI's work in Somalia:

> I mean, yeah, what I know about ASI is, you know, they were […] a bunch of Brits, who are all former DFID [Department for International Development[27]], right? And so they had this sort of leg up on the system. And then there was this thing called SSF, the Somalia Stability Fund, which is supposed to be like a multi donor fund helping implement all various types of projects in Somalia. And Adam Smith sort of owned SSF, right? They were selected by all the donors to manage that fund. And so they had incredible power over a huge budget. And what they ended up doing was, you know, wisely or unwisely, they took sort of junior Somalis who were working at Adam Smith as, you know, effectively sort of enumerators or coffee getters or whatever, and created a company with these guys

[27] The DFID was operating from 1997 to 2020 and was replaced by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

> called KasmoDev. And so KasmoDev then became the lead subcontractor of Adam Smith, but all the money went back to Adam Smith. And so they created this like monopoly on programming. And because, you know, all these guys, Adam Smith in London were like friends with people at, FCO [Foreign and Commonwealth Office]and DFID no one really rang the bell (Interview with anonymous, 1 January 2023).

What my interviewee revealed was again the same method as mentioned above, contracting a company and then subcontracting again, which can—and in the case of ASI did—lead to heavy misconduct. In 2017, the U.K. government froze all contracts with ASI due to "unethical behaviour on the part of ASI" which was mainly due to fake testimonials and pressuring beneficiaries to submit "evidence", respectively testimonials (Anti-Corruption and Governance Centre, 2017; House of Commons, 2017).

The contracting and subcontracting of companies within the development sector has been a result of neoliberal economic policy and has since been established as a long-standing practice. As such, the neoliberal marketisation of non-profit organisations involves the transference and externalisation of risks to the sectors outside of the public realm, such as the non-profit sector (Sandberg, Elliot, and Petchel, 2020). The emergence of such neoliberal governance structures further provides the opportunity for the private sector to step in with companies offering services in the development sector while using a "development" branding. ASI for instance uses the following description about who they are: "ASI is a global advisory company that works locally to transform lives by making economies stronger, societies more stable, and government more effective" (Adam Smith International, n.d.). Chemonics slogan is "Development works here" and their short introduction on their website reads as follows: "Around the globe, we work to find life-changing solutions that transform how development can, and should, work" (Chemonics, n.d.). The fact that these two large companies both utilise development as a branding and marketisation strategy illustrates how the for-profit sector has emerged as actor, and viable contractor for governments, within the development space—a space traditionally oriented towards non-profit values.

This model of utilising development as a marketisation strategy is even more remarkable when looking at the private *security* industry. Outsourcing defence services to private security entities has received a lot of attention and is in stark comparison to the same phenomenon in the development sector, which receives marginal consideration (Sandberg, Elliot, and Petchel, 2020). What remains underexplored, however, is how private security contractors make use of the same mechanisms as companies involved in the development sector. Significantly, the emergence of the P/CVE agenda and the enmeshment of development and security allow

private security companies to reorient their activities and their branding towards a less security-driven branding, while effectively still conducting security-related activities. The global change in how security and development is perceived, through the lens of counterterrorism, opened up room for an intentional move away from the *Blackwater-curse*, a term that I use to describe the reputational damage after the grave misconducts of Blackwater in the 2000s, towards an image of accountability and trustworthiness.

The company Bancroft Global Development is an illustrative case for such a reimagination of security practices. I came across this company's name a few times during my research, always in connection to Somalia and mostly referred to as a private military company (PMC). One of my interviewees said the following about Bancroft: "They were the first PMC into Somalia, I think they'd been in since about 2009, 2010. So they've been here a long time. They've got a long legacy and they really understand the country" (Interview with anonymous, 19 July 2022). Bancroft is a contractor of the U.S. government and is involved in various activities in the Somali security sector, such as training the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), today the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), as well as support, vetting, and training of the Danab Brigade, an elite unit within the Somali National Army (SNA) (Felbab-Brown, 2023; Bancroft Global, n.d.; interview with anonymous, 19 July 2022 and 6 January 2023). Another interviewee even went as far as saying that "Danab has traditionally always been sort of run by a company". He continued explaining that "Bancroft, you know, has been around for ages. Bancroft has operated across the [U.S.] state department in three different bureaus: Counterterrorism Bureau, Africa Bureau, which is now called Regional Peace and Security Bureau, and INL [Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs]" (Interview with anonymous, 6 January 2023). Similar to practices of other private security companies (see Chapter 5), Bancroft employs people as experts who are former military, and sometimes, special forces members. Richard Rouget, for instance, who is listed on the company's website as responsible for African Affairs and Governance, is a former French Army officer and has a dubious background in mercenary activities all over the African continent, including a conviction by a South African court of recruiting mercenaries to fight in the Ivory Coast (Bancroft Global, n.d.; Gettleman, Mazzetti, and Schmitt, 2011).

While such employment patterns are not unusual at all for the private security industry, they are crucial in relation to how Bancroft frames itself. On their website, they state that

> Bancroft Global Development is a multinational, *not-for-profit nongovernment organisation* that implements stabilization initiatives in conflict zones. Through ground-up, citizen-focused education and mentoring, Bancroft Global Development creates conditions that allow individuals to transcend basic survival needs and participate in establishment of culturally appropriate civil order and rule of law (Bancroft Global, n.d., emphasis added).

The labelling as a "not-for-profit NGO" is what immediately catches attention, next to the language used around "ground-up", "citizen-focused", and "mentoring". This paragraph strongly insinuates a development or humanitarian orientation of the company and stands in stark contrast to the activities as well as the people involved in the company. They also call their former military experts "mentors", an expression I have not encountered for any other private security contractor, which implies a friendly form of giving advice and a certain level of trust between the mentor and the mentee. Interestingly, the company consists of two separate entities, Bancroft Global Development and Bancroft Global Investments. The latter is profit-oriented and serves as the guarantee for a flow of capital and resources to the former. They justify their unique model as follows:

> The Bancroft model contrasts with current conventional development or humanitarian efforts, which are often perversely incentivized: continued funding typically depends on prolonged conflict and worsening human misery (Bancroft Global, n.d., emphasis added).

Again, the reference to "conventional development or humanitarian efforts" is striking: as this sequence discloses, their point of reference, their identity is located in the development and humanitarian space rather than within the security space, at least in terms of public framing. This stands in opposition to experts referencing them as a PMC, but also to their activities on the ground which are located within what is conventionally understood as the security sector. The labelling as humanitarian/development thus becomes key to access reputation, funding, and contracts, as there is less scrutiny of contracting organisations for development purposes. The rebranding as a humanitarian or development organisation in contrast to a PMC thus can be read as a market strategy.

The presentation of companies in the private security industry as "New Humanitarian Agents" has been explored by Jutta Joachim and Andrea Schneiker (2012) who argue that the humanitarian face of PMSCs help to advance how they are perceived by donors and policymakers. Additionally, the enhanced acceptability contributes to the normalisation of privatised security (Joachim and Schneiker, 2012). Softer, less hard-security oriented approaches to security are therefore deemed more acceptable and valuable forms of security practice, by utilising a development and humanitarian framing, these private security

companies gain both greater legitimacy and marketability. The strategic use of a development discourse by companies such as Bancroft reveals the construction of a specific identity as a "good" and "ethical" company; not only in contrast and reaction to the *Blackwater-curse*, but going much further to be read as an NGO, an actor within the non-profit sector. The "script" through which Bancroft tries to define itself is however not always congruent with other discourses and the set of actions the company enacts. Mostly, Bancroft gets characterised as a PMC which corresponds to their activities on the ground—even if they use development-oriented language such as calling their ex-military trainers "mentors".

I observed this trend of utilising a development-oriented framing within the overall private security industry in Kenya, mostly by capitalising on services required in connection to prevention—adhering to a logic deeply engrained in the policy and practice of P/CVE. Next to a "softer" branding of companies in the private security industry, this space of reimagination is marked by a shift towards the activities of intelligence gathering and training. While the services of intelligence gathering and training are not new for the private security industry, they have regained strength through the logic of P/CVE and allowed the private security industry to expand massively within the recent years—together with the preventative character of violence as part of British militarism plus, these two particular activities are regarded as legitimate forms of security.

The orientation towards development and humanitarian initiatives by the private security industry is also a result of necessity: the *Blackwater-curse* prevented companies with a clear security aligning to get contracts, as they are usually connected with previous misconducts within the industry and an association with "profit-driven, lawless, unscrupulous, trigger-happy individuals" (Joachim and Schneiker, 2012). An interviewee termed the current situation poignantly as a "question of how to make money in an environment that has changed" (Interview with anonymous, 18 March 2022). He continued by saying that "the classical days of mercenaries where you have guys armed to the teeth are over. Today it's about offering different types of services" (Interview with anonymous, 18 March 2022). The "different types of services" are specifically adapted to the logic of prevention, expanding the industry's activities to intelligence and information gathering as well as training. Offering more acceptable forms of security provide an opportunity to distance themselves from an image which is negatively connotated while simultaneously creating a new business model. On the one hand, the "information game", as some interviewees have called it, became crucial in detecting and defining threats. Particularly risk management companies such as GardaWorld, Saladin, and

Constellis have made a deliberate effort in expanding their services to include intelligence gathering and information-based amenities, offering daily, weekly, or monthly security briefings tailored to the clients' needs. This expansion of services made it possible for companies to grow in size and personnel, mainly by hiring analysts to attend to the workload generated by this upcoming security logic of prevention. A manager of an international security company described this transformation as follows:

> These jobs weren't there earlier; it was just us doing the data analysis and there were no such positions as data analysts. Through the request by clients for more information, particularly in hostile environments, we were able to expand (Interview with anonymous, 19 May 2022).

To sustain within an ever-changing security sector, responding to the "how-to-make-money", the private security industry adapted new activities such as gaining and providing information, which allow them to not only persist but expand.

Similarly, more and more companies have turned towards training as an income-based activity, positioning themselves uniquely as security experts who can offer niche knowledge on security systems and operations. Within the particular logic of prevention, risk management companies but also privately armed individuals, who have a western security background, offer classical security trainings to clients, such as Hostile Environment Awareness Training (HEAT), or active shooter awareness and response training. They also deliver training to national security agencies, in particular special forces units, which involve less standardised content but rather specialised knowledge on security. This category of training is the most protected and for obvious reasons remains covert to a great extent. Nevertheless, my interviewees gave me insight to a few companies and individuals who trained the ATPU and other specialised units of the Kenyan government. One particular interviewee, a key person within the private security industry in Kenya, explained:

> Private security always plays a role when it comes to counterterrorism, particularly in the case of third world countries where the army is not professional. They have to rely on the important commercial components particularly in terms of liabilities. Private security companies are the ones coming in for upholding certain standards, training on human rights and international law—it's all about putting the right people in place as a buffer (Interview with anonymous, 14 July 2022).

The perception of companies as buffer who are needed in "third world countries" to bring the accepted knowledge on human rights and international law is telling: the most acceptable, and lucrative, approach to perform security is no longer by delivering front-line services and taking

part in direct combat, but rather in conveying knowledge on acceptable forms of violence and security to states "who need it". The value system of British militarism plus which is associated with prevention gets transferred to performing security through training as well as through gathering information, informed by a deeply racialised logic of what is considered "professional". The quote highlights how neoliberal values ("the important commercial components") converge with the logics of humanitarianism ("training on human rights and international law"), which admits institutions and individuals who are at the top of the Kenyan house of security further access and power within the overall security dispositif. The more traditional security services of the private security industry are still prevalent; they are however kept secret and take up a smaller percentage of what the industry is doing—in comparison to the use of contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq, where traditional security services were the norm. I encountered that many of the former military who are in top managing positions of security companies, all former military, still engage in activities such as hostage recovery or directly engage in responding to a terrorist attack (see Chapter 2). The contrast between these activities and the rebranding of security practices towards development and humanitarianism speaks further to a specific discourse solidified by the industry which aims at—and to a certain degree creates—an identity around accountability. At the centre of this discourse lies a marketisation strategy and the reinvention of an industry which adapts to ensure employability.

Advertising a "female" security: Gendered expressions of appropriate security practices

The inclination of intermediaries and private security contractors to utilise a development-oriented framing is characterised by distinctively gendered features. As discussed, the softer framing of security towards prevention by practices of training and information gathering led not only to a reimagination of the private security industry, but also to an expansion. The "information game" in particular enabled companies to create new products and services which required the hiring of additional human resources. Importantly, these new roles within the private security industry are often taken up by female-bodied, highly educated people without a military or police background. A Regional Director for Africa of a big international security company explained that "the fact that we have more roles now and also more management positions are reasons for more women applying to these jobs. We have an all-female analyst team now" (Interview with anonymous, 19 May 2022). According to him, the expansion and uptake of new roles also led to more management responsibilities which are gender-neutral

(Interview with anonymous, 19 May 2022). Another interviewee, one of the few women in a managing position in the field, suggested that:

> Not many are aware of risk management services and the roles that women can play within it. They again have this perception of security as guards, fighters, masculine. They don't get that there are various other roles in security such as collecting information, do management et cetera. It's really the brain that is needed not the physical (Interview with anonymous, 31 March 2022).

Both of these interviewees mentioned management positions as a gateway for women to take part in the industry. While it is true that there has been a slight change within the managerial level in the Kenyan private security industry, this transformation remains marginal with almost no women at the top of the industry.

However, my interviews also confirmed the expansion through new roles as analysts which are often taken up by women, as "the brain is needed not the physical" as the interviewee above stated. The analyst therefore emerges as a gendered stereotype, which favours the intellectual over physical strength and as such presents what is perceived as a "softer" version of a private security contractor. This stereotype is juxtaposed with the hyper-aggressive masculine contractor who is aggressive, greedy, and trigger-happy (Stachowitsch, 2015) and heavily relies on its physical capabilities. The analyst as a figure, in contrast, correlates to the "humanitarian soldier-scholar" in state-militaries, a terminology coined by Keally McBride and Annick Wibben (2012). As part of the U.S. counterinsurgency strategy (COIN), the humanitarian soldier-scholar inscribes a sensitive masculinity and stands for a well-articulated and educated soldier who recognises the importance of smart and selective military engagement. As McBride and Wibben argue, the figure epitomises the feminising of military engagement, overshadowing the hyper-masculinity of warrior kings. The analyst as a gendered stereotype emerging out of prevention-oriented security practices relies on a similar logic: the analyst is associated with non-militarised activities such as collecting information, gathering evidence, and providing situational assessments which do not necessarily require former military experience—it is clearly branded as a civilian position. As Laleh Khalili's work on civil counterinsurgency as gendered points out, "the binary categorisation which forms the basis of mainstream discourses about war, civilian (feminine) is the opposite of combatant (masculine)" (2011: 1473).

The introduction of what is discursively read as softer, even feminine framing of companies thus led to an expansion of the industry which is connotated by a gendered binary

between designated roles such as the analysts or the typical private security contractor. The division of labour and the associated masculinities and femininities remain deeply entrenched in traditional military values, regardless of the shift to prevention which allowed for more women to enter the private security industry. For instance, activities such as dog handling, technological set-ups, or in-field mission tasks remain typically male-dominated. A woman CEO of a company stated the following about this gap:

> So for a long time, I think, there have been very few MDs [Managing Directors] and CEOs of private security companies and even coming into this sector, I came in quite young and quite small. And, you know, I came in without that background in either police or the military and there was this, there was that you enter a room and you literally see it, not only in the men, but even more with the women, like, how did you get there? They just didn't have women there. And we had to go back and ask ourselves, why is it that particular positions never have women? And we realised that they're not trained in those positions. So again, we had to go back and have very deliberate trainings and make sure that 40% of women are represented in the supervisory courses, in the CCTV operations course, etc. And even this month, we are doing dog handlers courses because we realised that women are not, it's not like they are not interested. They are not aware that they can actually be dog handlers. […] We're struggling with getting women in to do installation of security equipment, like CCTC electric fences walk through metal detectors (Interview with anonymous, 3 December 2021).

As this statement exemplifies, the masculine-written positions within the industry are often inaccessible accessible to women—in contrast to the position of an analyst. Consequently, men remain in the traditional male roles of the protector where physical force is required, while women take up jobs that are perceived as softer, more "mature", intellectual, and less centred on physicality. Out of the 23 interviews conducted with private security contractors, a large majority of them—white, male, and ex-military as described in Chapter 2—adhered to conventional security activities, delegating softer tasks to other, often female, team members. I asked one of my interlocutors about the development of gender within the private security industry and he replied by saying that:

> There are quite a handful of *females* coming to Africa, for NGOs, private businesses. But it's a tough place for *ladies*, it's very difficult for *females* to have a life. (…) Women are better analytically than men, so they come often for jobs in the border force, the FBI, or the police, but often the *ladies* are not treated like white women but actually like Kenyan *ladies* in terms of salary and respect, so they don't get enough money to get by and be happy with the job. I knew a *lady* who was brilliant but unfortunately didn't make it in this environment. She gave up and went back after a while. (…) Blokes find it easier to survive in Kenya, they just party and drink and get by like this. It's much harder for women. Kenya is like the 1970s in the U.K., you leave the wife at home; Kenyans even have two wives in many instances (Interview with anonymous, 15 June 2022; emphasis added).

His word choice around women, often referencing "females" or "ladies", highlights a strong connotation of traditional femininity (see for example Lesley J. Pruitt's work on all-female police contingents, 2013). In his view, "women are better analytically than men" which is why they take up certain roles within the industry, hitting the same notes as the aforementioned quote "lacking the physical but having a brain". The interview excerpt also reveals a strongly racialised component with his point of reference to "ladies" as clearly connotated with whiteness. His words—"the ladies are not treated like white women but actually like Kenyan ladies in terms of salary and respect"—discloses how white womanhood as a racialised and gendered concept is usually accompanied by privileges of protection and benefits, in contrast with a construct of subordinated Black womanhood (see for example Frankenberg, 1993; or Handau, and Simien, 2019). He emphasises the alienation of white women in a male-dominated environment, not only within the professional realm but stressing the difficulties for white women within the private as they might be treated like Black women. Ultimately, his statement discloses how the sector operates as a race-gendered institution, which struggles to adapt to women in the workforce and to successfully diversify to attract the desired labour.

The gendered expansion is key in understanding the practice of security within the private security industry: while the change towards development and humanitarianism facilitated an expansion with more feminine-connotated roles, this expansion also manifested in the cementing of the traditional masculine associated values within the industry. Softer, feminine skills are needed to respond to the client's needs, as one interviewee confirmed: "I think it's really about understanding the client and this topic of diversity, not only women but people of colour, have become more and more important for our clients" (Interview with anonymous, 16 May 2022). The emphasis on the market value of diversification through women and people of colour speaks to neoliberal multiculturalism, where "difference" is recognised as a value-added within neoliberal governance. Yet, as described above, I only observed a marginal diversification within the private security sector. Rather, I noticed that people delivering training as security practice—usually men with a military background—are required to demonstrate softer versions of masculinities, which are associated with the compliance with the rule of law and human rights.

The company Lady Askari mentioned at the beginning of this chapter with their slogan "Redefining security one lady at a time" is an instructive example of how a more feminine and softer discourses of security is aspired and envisaged within company policy. Founded by a

(male) former U.S. marine,[28] the company aims for redefining the role of women in the security industry:

> Lady Askari is an innovative, female-oriented security company dedicated to the advancement and capacity building of women in the security industry. In addition to meeting the demands of a competitive traditional security landscape, Lady Askari addresses a specific niche in the market, where *the inherent capabilities of a woman* are more relevant (Lady Askari, n.d., emphasis added).

While this mission statement sounds admirable, the prominence of the mentioned "inherent capabilities of women" already divulges essentialist notions of "natural" capabilities that women seem to possess. On the company's website a subpage titled "Why ladies?" lists three reasons. First, women have protective instincts: "We emulate the spirit of the ultimate protector and preserver of life—the mother"; second, women can easily blend in, "because they are assumed to be personal assistants or secretaries"; and third, women have a unique perspective: "We capitalise on women's strengths—such as customer service, intuition, emotional intelligence, empathy, innate leadership skills, caregiving" (Lady Askari, n.d.). As this narrative demonstrates, the stereotypical, socially learned attributes of femininity are utilised to redefine security for their own sake. While such a discourse can have an empowering effect by lifting women in all possible security roles, it reinforces existing stereotypes about femininity, and masculinity, and reduces women to biological markers, such as being a mother—a fundamental exclusionary practice of defining femininity. The reduction of women defined by what is seen as biologically pre-determined markers ties back to the construction of women as inherently peaceful due to their ability to create life which has served "as the collective projection of a pure and peaceful Other against which a violent male is constructed" (Elshtain, 1995: 265). While the association of women with motherhood allows an opening to enter the discourse on security, this access remains restricted as it limits the role of women as side-players, as always opposed to violence, and as such, never as a "serious" political actor within the security discourse. Lady Askari's vision, security is a "service", a "hospitality" (Interview with anonymous, 31 March 2022). The framing of security as a hospitality again relates to the development-oriented approach of defining security; a softer, more feminine version of how security is performed. This

[28] I met the founder and CEO of Lady Askari, James Dutkowski, at a security conference in Nairobi, where he and his wife held a public talk on the company's approach. In their talk, they shared the founding story of Lady Askari, which is based on Dutkowski's experience as close protection officer in Iraq. In particular, his experiencing of being a security detail to a female Ambassador and the practice of storming a bathroom, making sure that no one is left within the washroom, and then waiting outside for the Ambassador to finish, made him realise the impracticability of deploying only male protection officers. As a result, he decided to found a company who takes an all-female approach.

rewriting of security practice facilitated the gendered expansion of the private security industry, which reinforced traditional gendered stereotypes.

## Reinforming and reinforcing masculine notions of security through the enactment of feminine coded security practices

The Kenyan police and the private security industry are both distinctive actors who apply different security practices. Yet, there is a striking resemblance in the performativity surfacing in both cases. I illustrated the two seemingly contradictory identities emerging for the Kenyan national police service, one associated with police brutality and one with police reform and community engagement. The continuation of repeated acts of police brutality and the public fear of the police however point towards a different rationality underlining preventative security practices than the one of police reform: the use of more effective, yet equally coercive methods to remain in power and to be able to "access" the population. The construction of a self-image as a "good" actor who is willing to change is thus a continuation of counterterrorism logic, with its racialised and gendered foundations—yet, by adapting to more acceptable forms of security practice, this logic is far less recognisable. The complex performativity of the police is linked to an expansion of policing work and their practices. The role of intermediaries and in particular private security contractors prove a similar narrative of shifting towards prevention-related identities. While their security activities are much more hidden, the active application of a development and humanitarian framing to their work validates security practices which are deemed more acceptable—and marketable. The private security industry therefore massively profits from the shift away from conventional counterterrorism practices towards prevention-related activities such as training and information gathering—and has expanded accordingly. This expansion of the industry is highly gendered, as the more feminine-regarded services are prone to be taken up by a female-bodied civilians, relying heavily on binary and essentialist stereotypes. Building on the theory of West-of-Doom, the gendered expansion sanctions the industry's legitimacy as well their activities which remain in the conventional security realm. The security practices of the private security industry adopting the logic of prevention thus nebulises the still prevailing logic of counterterrorism. The gendered expansion of the industry however gives away how the same logics are applied, using prevention-related narratives as a chance for reimagining themselves.

In both cases, the continuation of conventional security practices through the enactment of more acceptable forms of security is correlated to a successful survival strategy by the actors; to keep access and power, and possibly even expand it. It is the achievement of an ontological security, which describes a state of mind achieved through having a consistent sense of the "self" and having this constitution of the "self" reaffirmed by others (Mitzen, 2006; Kinnwall and Mitzen, 2020). Importantly, this strategy is inherently gendered. In both explored spaces of public and private security, the utilisation of a development framing reflects the mainstream discourse about war, where civilians and the development industry are read as feminine and security work is associated with the masculine (Enloe, 2000; Tickner, 1992; Cohn 2013; Khalili, 2011). The expansion of security practices into spaces coded as feminine—the development-oriented, preventative activities—is thus a gendered process which, rather than rewriting security as feminine, in fact reinforces the masculine coded understandings of security. Similar to Saskia Stachowitsch (2013, 2015) who argues that the commodification of security by privatisation leads to a remasculinisation of security where state security is written as female, I suggest that instead of a clear public-private binary, the gendered process of expanding security is cross-sectoral. As the prevention turn in global politics solicits less-aggressive and brutal implementations of security, both public and private security actors adopt such security practices to persist as viable actors for funding and resources. Yet, the enactment of feminine coded security practices does not replace masculine connotations but rather reinform and reinforce those, leading to a revised masculinity. The masculinities formed within these particular spaces of security will be subject of the next chapter, tracing the materialisation of subjectivities of a particular and exclusive group of white men who hold power in Kenya's house of security.

# CHAPTER 5

## EMBODIED PRACTICES OF EXCEPTIONALISM AND DEMARCATION: CONTRACTORS' IMAGERIES OF THE SELF AND THE OTHER

> You will never be able to get out of the system, you will always be part of it and responsible for it, because loyalty is a huge factor in these circles. You are personally invested in the case. (…) It's our responsibility to give back to society (Interview with anonymous, 7 June 2022).

> The response was unbelievably pathetic, there is really no other word for it. It was just so sad, they couldn't keep it together—and I mean both, the police and the KDF. It was far more dangerous to go inside because the risk existed to be shot by the Kenyan security forces rather than by Al-Shabaab (Interview with anonymous, 15 June 2022).

In the course of talking to numerous private security contractors, I interviewed three particular individuals who stood out to me: One interviewee was above the age of 70, a former member of the U.S. Marine Corps, and two were above 60, who previously served in the British Armed Forces. They attracted my attention not in terms of their insight to the sector, but in how their narratives were shaped by a strong identification to a bigger group that they no longer seemed to have access to. I noticed a strong sense of identity connected to militarism as a belief system; yet, these interviewees seemed lost in insignificance. They were eager to tell me everything they knew in exchange for information or job opportunities—a deal I was neither able nor willing to make—and later still agreed to talking to me, no matter what. Their tone attested to a desperate need to be seen again, to be listened to, to matter. Moreover, they did not have any current contacts in the private security industry, which kept them in isolation. One of these older white men was keen to let me in on his overall life story, including how he is isolated not only professionally, but also personally due to financial difficulties and struggles with his wife. I conducted these interviews before I got deeper into the private security industry in Kenya, which only happened after two thirds of my field stay had already passed. However, having conversations with these men, I started to wonder about the strong sense of belonging which

seemed unequivocally important to them. What defines the identities of private security contractors? What values and norms are inferred and how do these relate to military masculinities obtained by members of state militaries?

As I have argued previously, the ability to speak security knowledge in the Kenyan security dispositif is reserved to a small elite. Moreover, the private security industry as the fastest growing industry in Kenya (Usalama Reforms Forum, 2019) takes up considerable space and meaning within Kenya's security dispositif, with institutionalised patriarchal and colonial security knowledge at its core. As such, I observed a small and exclusive group of ex-military, white men—largely holding British citizenship—privileged to "speak" security. As part of my field research in Kenya, I collected data with a considerable proportion of this group of men, in form of interviews, informal talks, and ethnographic observation, revealing highly distinct identities tied to the neoliberal project and the military as an institution. While the previous chapter explored the performativity of institutions such as the police and the private security industry, this chapter moves in on the individuals working within these institutions. The development-humanitarian paradigm facilitated by a prevention framing informs the industry's establishment of an identity as "good" and "accountable". Moreover, the gendered expansion of security speaks to the adoption of as feminine coded security practices, which in turn reinforced the masculine connoted inscription of security. Understanding how individuals within this institution make sense of themselves within this larger framing and how their subjectivities relate to power relations adds yet another perspective to the puzzle piece on the gendered and racialised formations of prevention. Subsequently, the goal of this chapter is the investigation of the racialised and geopolitical constructions of masculinities evidenced in the private security industry in Kenya.

Judith Butler's theory on performativity, as explored in the previous chapter, and their definition of gender as performative, as a doing, offers a critical foundation for understanding how masculinities work: regulatory practices of gender formation govern culturally intelligible notions of identities (Butler, 1990). This revolutionary concept of identities as fluid, contingent, fragmented, and in constant adaptation produced a shift to more complex visions of masculinities and femininities, which are related to multiple structures of power and inequality (Cohn, 2013). The meaning and values encoded in masculinities are specific to industries and institutions which legitimise and underwrite power differentials. War, conflict, and (state and non-state) militaries have therefore been subject to close analysis of feminist scholars, exploring the gendered presumptions inherent in militarised spaces and developing the notion of military

masculinities (Cohn, 2013). The military, and the security industry correlatedly, is inscribed with masculine-read values:

> One thing you can say about militaries is: they are not feminine cultures. This leads to a further perception: even in social worlds where one sex prevails, as in most military systems, a gender power system is not lacking. For male-dominant systems involve a hierarchy between men, producing different and unequal masculinities, always defined in relation not only to each other but to women (Cockburn, 2004: 29).

The gendered hierarchy and the correlated the system of power engraved into the military as an institution—and the security sector in general—are central in understanding military masculinities. Importantly, gender and military socialisation are processes which are mutually constitutive rather than just additive in nature (Higate, 2003). Military masculinities are hereby neither singular nor a homogenous outcome of military socialisation, but rather display a dynamic nature of a social construct which varies depending on times and places (Eichler, 2014; Henry, 2017).

Importantly, identities—and subjectivities for that matter—are always in conversation with the materialisation of power through the body. As Butler writes: "What constitutes the fixity of the body, its contours, its movements, will be fully material, but materiality will be rethought as the effect of power, as power's most productive effect" (2010: 2). How bodies are trained, marked, used, and made sense of must be read as effects of power, and are as such unthinkable apart from power. Michel Foucault's theorisation of the "docile body" in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) serves as a crucial piece to make sense of the military-body nexus which signifies the evolution of power as the soldier is carrying a "bodily rhetoric of honour" (1975: 135). Foucault argues that the body of the soldier serves the purpose of power; docile bodies are made capable with the necessary virtues and skills and provide a tool for military power and effectiveness against external enemies—a "body-weapon" (1975: 137) as he terms it. A nation's beliefs about whether war presents an opportunity to demonstrate toughness is thus in direct connection to the soldier's body (Belkin, 2012). The racialised and gendered hierarchies are produced, naturalised, and reinforced through the embodiment of identities; questioning the production of identities through colonialism and patriarchy helps to grasp how the preference of a particular form of masculinity and masculinised forms of security work to sustain structures of power (McDowell, 2009; Enloe, 2015; Joachim and Schneiker, 2015).

The recent liberal and neoliberal transformation of military labour, particularly the change from male conscription forces to an all-voluntary force in various contexts, left the

professional military as an institution competing with other employers and thus redefined militarised citizenship, the male citizen soldier, as military labour which is more loosely tied to citizenship through the logic of the market (Eichler, 2014; Riemann and Rossi, 2022). In the case of the U.S. transformation to an all-voluntary force in the 1970s, the economist Milton Friedman argued that conscription is a form of slavery, a coercion into unfree labour. This argumentation provided the foundation for the neoliberal remaking of militarised citizenship, which is bound to the market, positioning the market as the ultimate source of freedom and obscuring its force of coercion. Staying with the U.S. example to illustrate the coercive factor of the market, the neoliberal transformation of the military produced a redistribution of wealth and military labour, which led socially marginalised and disadvantaged groups such as the working poor and a rural lower-middle class to carry the burden of military service (Eichler, 2014). While military labour remains bound to citizenship to a certain degree, the market developed to be an undeniable factor within the identity formation of the institution as well as the individuals tied to such institutions.

The neoliberal restructuring of the security sector and the growing importance of private military labour has a similarly undeniable impact on the production of identities. As Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval (2013) stated: "Neoliberalism is not merely destructive of rules, institutions, and rights. It is also productive of certain kinds of social relations, certain ways of living, certain subjectivities" (x). The backdrop of neoliberal economics and governmentality can therefore not be ignored in the analysis of masculinities. The neoliberal self is an entrepreneurial self, emphasising self-making and self-management (Cornwall, Karioris, Lindisfarne, 2008), and thus creating entrepreneurial masculinities. Neoliberal modes of subjectification also impact the military as an institution. Malte Riemann and Norma Rossi (2022) for instance argue that armed forces increasingly focus on self-optimisation and self-improvement as part of a neoliberal driven "achievement society". Based on Byung-Chul Han's book *Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power* (2017) which brought forward the idea of psychopolitics as a form of (self)governance introduced through neoliberal "achievement societies", their work suggests that the neoliberal remaking of the military subject is marked by an extension from Foucault's conceptual framing of disciplinary and biopolitical power to a psychopolitical dimension of subject formation. The self in neoliberalism is redefined through the affirmation of freedoms and unlimited possibilities articulated through market logics (Riemann and Rossi, 2022). This argument is crucial for my exploration of masculinities, as it

ties together military masculinities and the commercialisation of security services, a distinctively neoliberal endeavour.

The phenomenon of contracting out security services to the private industry is directly connected to the neoliberal transformation of military labour. There is a small but growing scholarship on the identities and subjectivities of private military contractors, highlighting how neoliberal security markets "categorises the men (and sometimes women) who work as racialised, gendered, and classed contractors" (Chisholm, 2017: 123). The work of Chisholm (2014, 2017), Higate (2011, 2012), and Joachim and Schneiker (2012, 2014, 2019, 2022) pave the way in how to theorise, think, and write about the various masculinities brought into the industry. The proximity to the military as an institution is crucial: Paul Higate (2011) designates the contractor's subjectivities as caught between binary constructions of the civil-military and soldier-civilian, not fitting properly in either category (Higate, 2011). The interplay of subjectivities beyond dualism and binary categorisation is therefore key to this chapter, exploring the in-between of pre-constituted binaries such as masculine-feminine, public-private, strong-weak, civilised-barbaric, and dominant-subordinate. The beliefs, practices, and attributes enabling individuals to legitimise *claims to authority* by associating with the military or military ideas (Belkin, 2012) are therefore to be put in relations to the encountered and lived contradictions and ambiguities.

By exploring the subjectivities and identities of private security contractors, we are able to make sense of a military-private-security-nexus which is fundamental in understanding embodied practices within the private security industry. This chapter therefore investigates the different spheres of racialised and gendered identity production, analysing the interplay between public security and private security against the backdrop of neoliberal "achievement societies". As theorised by many scholars, the private contractors' motivation is fuelled by profit rather than patriotism which is distinguished by a "disconnect between military service and duty to the state" (Krahmann, 2008: 256). In contrast to this, the interviews I have conducted illustrate private security actors can have a strong connection to military virtues such as loyalty and a deep sense of responsibility, with profit only playing a secondary role in the contractors' narratives. There is a transference of military values and beliefs to the private security industry, which is bound to the notion of military exceptionalism and the exceptional subject within such an institution. Megan MacKenzie defines military exceptionalism as "unique nature of military service, and the esteemed place that the military holds within society and the public imagination" (2023: 20). I therefore refer to exceptionalism not only as an understanding of

being "special" or "outstanding", but also as a feeling of distinctiveness and uniqueness, being "better" than others. The question I ask is thus not if the military subject is indeed exceptional, but how identities are shaped through the production of narratives of exceptionalism.

In this chapter, I trace the transference of military identities to the private security industry and suggest that there is a distinct space where identities of contractors are formed and nourished. I untangle the interplay between exceptionalism and demarcation—only ever working through each other—which are necessary processes of the contractor's identities. As such, the in-between space of public and private, as well as the ambiguities and the indispensable complexity instilled in identities serve as a guide through the following sections. The first section of this chapter highlights the military identities within the space of the private security industry, exploring the reciprocity of the public and the private security sector, and analysing how past military experiences relate to the self-image offered by the interviewees at the given time. A second part of the chapter analyses how these military identities are amplified by two specific moments of rupture and exposure which support the argument of distinct subjectivities within the private security industry: First, the narratives around "the other" within the private security industry, particularly mercenaries and the "geopolitical other" as I term it, tell a striking story of how contractors comprehend themselves. Second, the theme of exceptionalism by demarcation which is decidedly racialised, as white, superior masculinities clash with imagined subordinate masculinities of Kenyan security personnel. The racialised Other is significant as a category to hold on to a construction of binaries of the developed-underdeveloped, the skilled-unskilled, as well as the appropriate-subordinate. The aim of this chapter is therefore to trace the contractor's subjectivities formed along the narrative of exceptionalism and demarcation.

## The persistence of morality: The transference of military exceptionalism to the private security industry

The linkages and close ties between the public security sector and the private security industry are central in understanding how identities operate and how they transgress the boundaries of the imaginary binary public-private. As explained in Chapter 2, the intertwining of the two sectors is labelled as revolving door phenomenon, where military and strategic expertise become a major asset. Being trained by a public security institution—the military or the police—and having worked and acquired expertise within such institutions is considered to be

an ideal employability prerequisite for the private security industry. The private security industry, on the other hand, entices with better pay, less rigid structures, and greater flexibility, thus reaching a lot of people within public security institutions who served already for a certain period and who are seeking to reorientate themselves (Krahmann, 2013). This revolving door phenomenon is key in understanding how masculinities of a certain group within private security contractors who are embodying British militarism plus are formed through the idea of exceptionalism. This section analyses this exceptionalism and the ambiguities it contains.

### The creation of a militarised altruistic self: Loyalty, the sense of responsibility, and the absence of an institutional brotherhood

The experiences of having served in a given western state military, the level of military training, and the acquired skill set are deeply connected to institutional masculinities which in turn shape the formation of identities of the individual within the institution. Stronger than in a lot of other institutions, the military relies profoundly on the construction of identities, by arguing for the necessity of unity, loyalty, and obedience for an effective defence which connect to the narrative of exceptionalism (Marchal, 2006). It is however crucial to unpack the institutionally inscribed norms and to go beyond reading militaries as simply "hyper-masculine" as this obscures the complexity of military cultures and neglects the structured contradiction within these institutions (Belkin, 2012). Significantly, values such as obedience and loyalty are instilled through the military as an institution and serve the purpose to reach beyond the "mere profession" of being a soldier but to translate to the private sphere outside the military—often, such values remain key for a common identity which is kept even after leaving the given institution.

In the interviews I conducted with private security personnel, the prominence of the revolving door phenomenon, namely their military past, was conspicuous. I always started my interviews by asking them to tell me more about their journey to their current position; with a few exceptions, all of them served in the British Armed Forces before joining the private security industry. Their experiences within the military, often times being deployed to war zones such as Afghanistan and Iraq, were stressed throughout the interviews and related how they connect their current work to their past practices. Most of the times, the people I interviewed served ten

or more years starting from a very young age such as 16.[29] Being educated and trained within a military setting, a certain path dependency exists due to the lack of alternative opportunities outside of security with the given skillset. Importantly, the previous military experience and the values instilled within a certain military context carry beyond the public security sector and reach far into the contractor's identities within the private security industry. I noticed how the identity of being a former military professional was strongly connected to the theme of exceptionalism. The terminology of exceptionalism is often associated with American exceptionalism in U.S. foreign policy, which grew exceedingly in the post-9/11 period (Allhoff, 2009; Robinson, 2014). Yet, the terminology is also applicable to many militaries who strategically use narratives of exceptionalism to raise themselves from the civilian part of society and other professions; as part of militaries transitioning to all-voluntary forces, they had to make sure that what their existence is not received as an ordinary profession, but rather as an industry where patriotic heroes, willing to sacrifice themselves, are produced (Bryant, Swaney, and Urben, 2021). This upcoming theme of exceptionalism as part of the contractor's identity is thus to be comprehended in direct relation to the military as an institution and military masculinities.

Military exceptionalism is conveyed through a specific set of virtues and values, which are gained in the military service and persisted beyond the institution of the military, into the private security industry. One of the key players within the Kenyan private security industry explained in an interview the following:

> You will never be able to get out of the system, you will always be part of it and responsible for it, because loyalty is a huge factor in these circles. You are personally invested in the case. (…) It's our responsibility to give back to society (Interview with anonymous, 7 June 2022).

His phrasing stresses loyalty as a key virtue which military personnel are expected to keep even after ending their service time; a virtue that is a part of identity conveyed through the statement that "you will always be part of it". Interestingly, the identity formed during past military experiences reaches beyond the institution itself, as they proof to be notwithstanding central in the self-image of a private security contractor. The transferral of military identities to the private security industry is thus key in understanding how contractors make sense of themselves. Yet,

[29] The minimum age for joining the British Armed Forces is 16 years. The U.K. is the only European country who allows the recruitment of minors into an armed forces and 134 countries worldwide prohibit this practice. The U.K. routinely makes use of this recruitment practices by specifically targeting minors, using targeted recruitment material (U.K. Parliament, 2011). At least two of the interviewees were recruited at the age of 16.

the idea of "never being able to get out of the system" in direct relation to loyalty speaks to the ambiguous identities of private security personnel. Several interviewees mentioned that they would like to leave the security sector but are not able to find jobs. One particular interviewee stated that after serving for 23 years in the military, he wanted to leave the security sector altogether. 14 years later, he is still involved in the security sector being employed by one of the leading private security companies worldwide. Throughout this time, he tried to get work outside of the sector and reiterated that he is very unhappy about his situation and about being in the security sector. Yet, at the same time he was telling me about a feeling of unmatched aliveness in critical security situations. On top of this, the private industry is explicitly looking for experienced military personnel like him and offers well-paid positions in often times attractive locations such as Dubai (Interview with anonymous, 7 May 2022). The private security industry therefore offers a space which puts a certain distance between the contractors and their militarised selves, yet also presents a trap for contractors where they are not able nor allowed to depart from their identities formed in the military.

This ambiguity is further complicated by the sense of responsibility tied to the virtue of loyalty. While traditional military values such as honour and courage still play a substantial role in regards to military training, the change in warfare during the past decades brought also an adjustment in the duties of a soldier. Today, the expectation of military personnel is to uphold high moral standards and to be "a force for good" (Olsthoorn, 2011). This is deeply connected to the reframing of military interventions as humanitarian interventions, and thus to liberal interventionism. The invasion in Afghanistan, for instance, and the counterinsurgency doctrine (COIN) applied within this context aimed to relabel the U.S. military intervention as a humanitarian, progressive intervention through a people-centred approach. The language used frequently in military interventions include references to the responsibility to protect (R2P), the needs of the population, and international peace and stability displaces geopolitical and power interests from the foreground when it comes to strategic military decisions (McBride and Wibben, 2012). Promoting a narrative of "white knights" in contrast to "dark lands", such interventions aim to uphold liberal peace through a form of riot control (Duncanson, 2013; Razack, 2004)—a theme which will be further elaborated in the last section by analysing the formation of subjectivities vis-à-vis the racialised Other.

These moral standards are directly linked to the soldier's bodies and the subjectivities formed within an organisational culture. I encountered a striking distinct sense of responsibility in a lot of the conversations with private security personnel. For instance, the above-stated

interview sequence talks about "giving back to society", implying a certain *duty* to serve for a greater good, a bigger purpose. One interviewee described this as follows: "I am quite happy to sacrifice myself" (Interview with anonymous, 15 June 2022). After a pause, he corrected himself and said:

> I don't mean it in a life and death situation, but more so to use my skills where they can be helpful for others. (…) When the [one of the attacks] happened, I wasn't actually there but I was at home, sitting on my porch. I got a phone call from a friend but didn't pick up the phone. My friend called again and then just again, so I figured I need to pick up the phone and see what is going on. So when I heard what was happening, I got my gun, jumped on my motorbike, drove to [place where the attack happened] and went inside (Interview with anonymous, 15 June 2022[30]).

The quote highlights the deliberate engagement in an undoubtedly dangerous situation which is not ordered by any superior command, but simply came into existence through a "voluntary bravery" as I would term it: when he heard what was happening, there seemed to be no other option than to get his gun and drive to the scene. The above-described interviewee was not alone in taking such actions, there are a few examples of unaffiliated white men responding to the two major attacks in Nairobi, DusitD2 and Westgate. All of these engagements were uncoordinated, under no obligation by the state (neither U.S., U.K, nor Kenya), and not part of a company contract. This voluntary bravery can only be explained by the deep-seated sense of responsibility instilled through the disciplining by the military as an institution—it is the need of their bodies to be "sacrificed" for society by providing security, which illustrates how far obedience and loyalty reaches, implying a strong connection between the body and the contractor's subjectivity. The typical virtues instilled within military institutions thus reach beyond their mere profession within the public sector, but are part of one's belief system and ultimately, their personal identity. Particularly the sense of responsibility which is a virtue introduced within the past few decades in military doctrine, bears a vast significance in the private security industry. As a private contractor, there is an absence of institutional rigidity, a common reason why people leave the military, which in turn also leaves more room for individualism and freedom. The strong sense of responsibility conveyed in my interviews is thus even more astounding, and exemplifies how people make sense of their self in a different institutional environment and which belief systems materialise in the embodied practices of individuals. The feeling of exceptionalism by "being military", which always and only works

[30] Parts of this transcripts are altered and omitted due to reasons of anonymity.

through demarcation, illustrates the blurring lines and dependency between the public and private security industry. As such, private security contractors find themselves in an in-between space where subjectivities assemble; aiming for self-determination of their own bodies, yet being trapped within a revolving door which puts them into a void where the only operational identities derive from their past.

This sense of responsibility was directly correlated with the failure of the government to provide security for their citizens, creating the urgency and obligation to step in. In Nairobi, the response to two major "terrorist" attacks of Westgate in 2013 and Dusit in 2019 are symbolic for the embodied workings of this value-based idea of responsibility. As armed private individuals, at least four of my interviewees felt the obligation to help at the scene of the attacks, without getting an official request by the national authorities nor communicating with them. The sense of responsibility through the identity of obedience and loyalty is also directly connected to a racialised understanding of how security needs to be performed and who possesses the appropriate knowledge. This ties into the argument on the racialised Other, which I elaborate further below.

Another interviewee expressed this sense of responsibility through the following statement:

> I get super angry when I think about what the terrorists have done. I remember Garissa, I think about the Nairobi bus bombings—it makes me furious. These are the things I think about when I go in. I don't think about my own life. I remember the women and children that have died in the previous attacks (Interview with anonymous, 4 July 2022).

The interviewee reveals the notion of a certain selflessness, an altruistic generosity almost, where his life, his own body is offered to protect society, and women and children in particular. By practicing obedience and loyalty even outside of a military institution, he sacrifices his body for fighting "the terrorists". The blatant statement of "what the terrorists have done" furthermore displays the binary understanding of good and evil, which is a prerequisite for the immediacy of a response to help the side of the "good"—a subjectivity formed around obedience, loyalty, and responsibility. The reliance on this binary category of a racialised Other against the hero-self is crucial in the identity around duty. This sequence is also striking as it reveals the gendered nature of responsibility as part of the contractors' identity; as a masculine fighter, he is there to protect women and children. The notion of "women and children" is put in direct contrast to "the terrorists", utilising paternalistic narratives of the male fighter and the passive female victim. Resembling a problematic but persistent imagery which is sustained

within international policy spaces such as through the UN's agenda of Women, Peace, Security, the conception of "womenandchildren" positions women as caretakers of children, prioritising motherhood as a vulnerable category (Hagen, 2016). The sense of responsibility which ties into the contractor's identity is thus connected to a logic of superiority, namely a fight for the greater good, with the need of bodies to be surrendered.

Next to the sturdy sentiment of responsibility, I noticed an upcoming theme during interviews which was connected to the idea and urge to be independent and work individually from other contractors—beyond the idea of the good and the bad. A private security contractor with his own security company based in Nairobi stated that: "I am a lone wolf; people don't know who I am and I really like that. I don't really talk to other people in the private security sector" (Interview with anonymous, 3 June 2022). Interestingly, the terminology of a "lone wolf"—also sometimes referred to as "lone actors"—is used in multiple spaces such as war journalism, denoting a male, good looking war reporter who is on his own (see Gaus, 2021). Further, the terminology is also often referenced in terrorism studies, describing the threat of "homegrown terrorism" perpetrated by a white, male-bodied person (see for example Lovelace, 2018), hence representing an aggressor who is isolated. This connotation of a lone wolf marks the importance of isolation and individualism, which is distinct to the private security industry. The values of isolation and individualism are crucial for the production of identities tied to the ideal neoliberal subject. Han's concept of "achievement society" explains how disciplining operates through "the negativity of prohibition". He explains that "Achievement society, more and more, is in the process of discarding negativity. […] Unlimited *Can* is the positive modal verb of achievement society. […] Prohibitions, commandments, and the law are replaced by projects, initiatives, and motivation" (2017: 8-9). Narratives of freedom and individualism are therefore key in the formation of the ideal neoliberal subject as an unattached, self-responsible market player who focuses on self-entrepreneurship and the obsessive acquisition of resources (Pendenza and Lamattina, 2019). The individualism, the loneliness even, of contractors is distinct to the private security industry, and marks a significant point of demarcation to the public security sector—noting that the public security sector is also heavily influenced by neoliberal governance, yet offers different formation of identities at the individual level. The military depends on the creation of a common identity through values of unity, collectivism, and obedience, and relies on the identity marked by brotherhood and fraternity it (Marchal, 2006; Wadham, 2013), or "fratriarchy", as Higate (2012) terms it. As in the case of the Kenyan security industry—which stands in contrast to the private security contractors in the context of

Afghanistan and Iraq—these values are rendered obsolete in the transference to the private security industry. This space of transference, the in-between space of public and private is exactly where the identities of contractors are formed. They are no longer part of a military institution, yet they are not fully immersed as entrepreneurial actors within the private sector. The described sense of responsibility is hereby telling: conventionally a norm connected to a humanitarian militarism, the idea of "doing good" converts in the private realm to a personal responsibility which has to be carried as an individual.

This space of transference is also visible in statements which directly refer to the industry as a market. While money and less rigidity in terms of structures have been mentioned as an incentive to join the private security industry, I recognised the subjectivity of "doing good" as a much stronger force than marketability. Only two interviewees mentioned the idea of a client-based environment; a woman with no previous military/security experience and an ex-military who has worked the past ten years for a humanitarian organisation. The latter made the following statement:

> They [ex-military employees] are often not able to respond to client-based requests. You need to be able to reflect which customer you are working for. The military don't do that. They struggle with this a lot; they have one right way. Their right way is however often conflicting with the client's way. You have to adhere a market logic (Interview with anonymous, 16 May 2022).

While this language around market adaptability and versatility has proven important for the industry as a total (see Chapter 4), it does not translate to the identities of the individuals positioned at the very centre of Kenya's house of security—a privileged group of white, ex-military men. As this interlocutor offers in his statement, ex-military contractors—albeit being one himself—are unable and unwilling to respond to a market agility where the client is at the centre. The logic of serving the customer is in the background, if not deficient: the unspoken identity of being military persists through the notion of providing solutions, no matter the market or the client. However, in critical situations, as in the case of a "terrorist" attack, I found that not only a sense of responsibility is drawing contractors to the scene, but also client-based engagement. I know of a minimum of two contractors who went into one of the most infamous attacks in Nairobi, simply for the purpose of retrieving a client who was in the building at the time of the attack. After getting their client out, they disappeared again from the scene of the attack, making sure that the were not seen nor that the word spreads that they were ever present (Interview with anonymous, 24 May 2022; Interview with anonymous, 15 June 2022). Again,

this quote offers us a glimpse into this ambiguous in-between space, where client-based relationship are not part of the contractor's identity, yet they do play a marginal role in how they conduct their profession—which stands in contrast to their previous duty as a soldier where client-informed decision did not trickle down to the individual level. The identity displayed in the narratives of my interlocutors is thus based on ideas borrowed/transferred from the public military institution, with conflicting and ambiguous notions of a voluntary bravery marked by a sense of responsibility and a claim to the self-optimisation on an individual basis, without the overall backing of an industry—it is the creation of a militarised altruistic self. The individualised subjectivities, formed through neoliberal market relations, are thus key in understanding the masculinities of the interviewed contractors.

Once special forces, always special forces: The imaginary of a superior subjectivity

I quickly noticed in the interviews with my interlocutors that exceptionalism was not only conveyed through a past military experiences, but rather through a very specific and narrow identity formation around being a former member of a special forces team. As most of the interviewees had a British military background, the Special Boat Service (SBS) and the Special Air Service (SAS) as the two special forces entities within the British Armed Forces were referenced quite often. As the word exceptionalism already entails, it works through constructing the exception *to*. While the exceptionalism associated with the military as an overall institution operates through being an exception to its civilian counterpart, being special forces forms an exception *within* the military institution. While the concept of special forces exists since at least the Second World War, the deployment of special forces unit as a method of warfare is often associated with a trend towards a concept called "remote warfare" (Rauta, 2021; McKay, Watson, and Karlshoj-Pedersen, 2021; Biegon, Rauta, and Watts, 2021). Remote warfare describes a major trend within western defence policy through "the use of drones, private military security contractors, and Special Forces to minimise—if not avoid—the deployment of 'boots on the ground' in the frontline fighting" (Biegon, Rauta, and Watts, 2021: 432). The SAS, for instance, has its root in WWII, where a regiment of a few selected men were sent behind enemy lines to undertake small-scale raids (Kemp, 1994). In the recent years, special forces units—in Britain and other western countries—have grown considerably in terms of budget, size, pace of operations, as well as geographic reach. The global war on terror and the associated military interventions are infamous for the increase of their use of special forces operations (and the private security industry), as special forces are often used to

efficiently target (*read*: kill) insurgents, terrorists, or violent extremists (Finlan, 2008). An important part of this growth of the special forces—and a key component of remote warfare in general—is the secrecy around it, as the governments' aim is to keep their activities out of the public eye (Watson and McKay, 2021). In the U.K., the Freedom of Information Act 2000 provides people with the legal right to access information held by public authority—with the exemption of the special forces, on the basis of section 23, paragraph 1 and 3 (Legislation Gov U.K.; n.d.). The lack of democratic control and oversight produces a power imbalance in favour of the special forces (Bozkurt et al, 2023).

Interestingly, being special forces played an important role in how people identified themselves and how they talked about others. One interviewee told me that the private security company he works for was founded with the intention of only hiring ex-special forces personnel (Interview with anonymous, 19 May 2022). The practice of exclusively hiring ex-special forces identifies a common belief about these units, the conviction that personnel being trained as special forces are better qualified and more efficient in their performance than other military personnel, often equalising special forces with a certain standard of quality and a reference for excellence—a perception of "utterly efficient units that never make mistakes" (Finlan, 2008: x). The fact that special forces are relatively small units and typically challenging to get in, with people being carefully selected, feed into this imaginary of superiority (Portillo, Doan, and Mog, 2022). In a military publication released by the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) on the subject of special forces (or special operation forces as it is called in this book), the author starts with a quote by George Orwell:[31] "We sleep safe in our beds because rough men stand ready in the night to visit violence on those who would do us harm" (Spulak, 2007: 1). This quote has been utilised in endless ways to argue for the need of "rough men" that are not necessarily part of our society but offer their bodies to protect civilised people. The notion of special forces is thus directly related to the above-described subjectivity of being a "force for good" and incorporating a strong sense of responsibility, which is pressed on them, internalised, and carried to the outside world. Yet, by being special forces this sense of responsibility is even more enhanced by claiming authority through military exceptionalism.

In many of the interviews, the subject of special forces was mentioned also as a narrative to portray or make references to other people. For instance, one interviewee, somebody who

[31] In fact, it unclear if this quote was factually used by Orwell. There are many different variations of this quote including the authors Kipling, Le Carré, Churchill, and Orwell.

used to be part of a special forces unit, named another British ex-military officer who now likewise works in the Kenyan private security industry a "Gin and Tonic officer" (Interview with anonymous, 24 May 2022), implying that the other person spends more time at reception sipping G&T[32] than serving time in the field on missions. There is a clear hierarchy suggested in this statement, belittling and automatically dismissing the other persons' claim to authority and his possible security qualities. This reference exemplifies the embodied exceptionalism of being a former special forces team member and how this superior subjectivity is relevant against other ex-military men. On the other hand, there were a few statements of people who did not belong to this group of ex-special forces who also referenced these units and their reputation in Kenya:

> In fact, you wouldn't leave a special forces unit that you worked so hard to get in, unless you get retired or they let you go; it's shady and makes no sense to have people in their 30s saying they're ex-special forces. People who are special forces would rather say that they are working in logistics and wouldn't right away tell that they're special forces. Really, there are maybe 1/3 of the number you're thinking actual special forces guys in Nairobi (Interview with anonymous, 4 July 2022).

What this statement confers is a suspicion against people who call themselves special forces, yet laying bare a certain preference towards special forces within the private security industry in Kenya, which presents a disadvantage for the interviewed contractor. Another interviewee, also not a former special forces member, offered a similar analysis:

> It's very annoying when I hear people calling themselves special forces, or ex-something. I don't have respect for these people, it doesn't say anything about you. You might have been SAS but only a mechanic within this unit. I only have respect for people at the frontline (Interview with anonymous, 3 June 2022).

The level of annoyance is directly connected with the respect and the employment advantages in the security market given to people who have served in special forces units. It exemplifies that there is exceptionalism inscribed into the identity of being (ex-)special forces, which is challenged by people who are "merely" (ex-)armed forces—what matters to this interviewee is the combat element, the "people at the frontline". Again, the symbolic power of special forces is directly connected to neoliberal market relations of valuing contractors with this particular background. The self-identification with exceptionalism is thus challenged in a way to be broadened if not reformed, to include personnel who have "valid" security experiences within

[32] Interestingly, the drink Gin and Tonic was invented by the Army of the British East India Company for medicinal experimentation; the drink later developed to be the iconic drink of the British Empire (Military History, 2012).

this narrative of excellence. The rivalry amongst contractors within the private security sector speaks to the contested claim to authority and the position of privilege associated with the military in general, but mostly by being special forces.

Again, the enduring nature of the special forces identity beyond the military institution is key. As elaborated in the previous section, values inscribed to a military setting get transferred to the private sector, while adapting certain values and displaying ambiguity more readily. The applicability and significance of the label of being special forces speaks to the nature of the private security industry, which operates on similar patterns and logics as the public security sector, creating militarised masculinities. The parallels between special forces units and the private security industry—two distinct components of remote warfare—such as a light-foot print of military interventions and a lack of democratic control and accountability (Demmers and Gould, 2021) provides an explanation for why this label in particular has resonance. The display of similar features of the two industries creates a certain feeling of continuity, where learned identities, behaviours, and activities find a place without alienation. The imagery of a superior-self as special force plays an important role in creating the space for militarised masculinities, which again rely on the exceptionalism of military values—bound to ambiguity and the in-betweenness of the private security industry.

## Exceptionalism by demarcation: Notions of exclusionary subjectivities

The exploration of exceptionalism within certain subjectivities heavily relies on the exploration of what the exception is *to* (Allhoff, 2009). Subjects are always formed in relation to power (Butler, 1997); the gendered and racialised differences are hereby key in understanding how exceptionalism operates as part of the contractors' subjectivities. Moreover, the process of othering by what Frantz Fanon (1967) called "epidermalization" is writing difference on the basis of racialised beliefs (see also Hall, 2000), which is key in understanding subjectivities. Writing difference is heavily dependent on racial stereotypes with the goal of achieving exclusive subject categories, upholding a binary of the coloniser and the colonised (Bhabha, 1994; Hook, 2005). Building subjectivities around the virtue of exceptionalism can therefore only operate through demarcation. In and of itself, the idea of being exceptional necessarily needs a defined other, an identity of one in differentiation to a presumed other, an imaginary. As the previous section has illustrated, the exceptionalism of being military is sustained by

defining against everyone who has not served in an armed force, against the idea of a non-functioning state, and furthermore against "womenandchildren" who are to be protected. While demarcation is necessary for the demand of exceptionalism, this section focuses on the substance of demarcation as a tool to form distinct subjectivities within the private security industry. There are two specific moments of exposure in the narratives of my interlocutors which reveal the subject formation around exceptionalism in the in-betweenness of public and private—moments of rupture which expose the utility of demarcation for the contractor's subjectivities.

The other, (less) civilised, private security contractor

The identity formation based on "being extraordinary", particularly through the premise of special forces personnel, occurs within a specific time and space. As such, the notion of what it means to be a private security contractor is in constant movement and complex in its nature. Throughout my research it was clear that a certain *temporality* was key to what it means to be a contractor within the private security industry. One interviewee stated the following:

> You really had to be special forces back in the days, the war in Iraq changed the whole scenario, anybody could do it because they needed the people. (…) They get 175$ a day if you work for [company's name] in Iraq, for this you could also work at a McDonalds. But people would still do it, because they thought it's cool to fire a gun, and because they believed they needed the conflict-setting experience for their CV (Interview with anonymous, 21 July 2022).

The phrase "back in the days" refers to the significant impact 9/11 and the resulting global war on terror had on the private security industry. Whereas before 9/11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq the private security sector was led mainly by specialised ex-military or ex-police men who relied on their personal network, the exponential boom for hiring private guns in the contexts of Afghanistan and Iraq meant recruiting people across all sectors and with few to no specific skill requirements (Eichler, 2013; Krahmann, 2013). The statement illustrates that the demarcation to other people within the same industry is coined by a lack of training and experience, a lack of seriousness even, as "it's cool to fire a gun" and "they needed [it] for their CV". In contrast to this, the interviewee—having served "back in the days" as a contractor himself—has a different kind of motivation which is not determined by a needed employment opportunity for the CV, nor because he think it's "cool"; rather, he belongs in this industry because he has the right set of skills, the experience, and the motivation for it. Thus, the interviewed contractor identifies in juxtaposition to a low-skilled contractor, who is deemed

unfit for the mission. The interviewee, an ex-Blackwater employee, continued to elaborate on the change the global war on terror brought to the private security industry:

> It was a race to the bottom. Blackwater, Triple Canopy, and Control Risk were the big companies operating in these contexts. They contracted services where it was guaranteed that people die under the given circumstances. But you still always had people signing up for it. Random ex-military personnel were going to these suicide missions—imagine, most of the people killed in Iraq were actually contractors. […] It was really a race to the bottom (Interview with anonymous, 21 July 2022).

The described race to the bottom and the lack of regulation in this fast-growing industry created an unstable und almost uncontrollable environment, which led to the private security industry's infamous reputation for grave misconduct, human rights abuses, and impunity. The well-known case of the Nisour square massacre, where Blackwater contractors killed 17 innocent civilians in a shootout while conducting a close protection assignment for U.S. officials (Scahill, 2007), was key in perpetuating this reputation which as of today still sticks to the private security industry. As such, the idea of the presumed identity of a contractor is closely connected to hyper-masculine and aggressive behaviour as they need to deliver "the necessary masculine skills of fighting, killing, and dying" (Stachowitsch, 2015: 370). This change in identities tied to the private industry was also expressed by an interviewee: "The whole case of Blackwater really changed the armed private security sector sustainably" (Interview with anonymous, 14 July 2022). Another interviewee termed the change in the private security industry as well as the resulting abuses and misconducts by contractors as "organisational PTSD", and that the whole sector, companies, and contractors had to distance themselves from this image of aggressivity (Interview with anonymous, 24 May 2022.

The huge reputational damage through Blackwater, the *Blackwater-curse*, is thus still defining contractors' identities of the self. As such, the identity construction of the interviewed contractors relies on a strong factor of temporality, demarcating themselves from notions of hyper-masculinity and misconduct; notions which the industry and individuals equally affected and were believed to be operational starting after 9/11 until recently. Within this narrative, my interviewees are different, identifying the whole industry as being on the right track again: "We don't want these kinds of people, I have the feeling that they are just doing it for the CV. But it's back to be[ing] a circuit again, where it's all about personal recommendations" (Interview

with anonymous, 21 July 2022). The circuit[33] hereby describes this idea of a private security industry pre-9/11, where a few specialised men transferred from the public to the private security sector to conduct commercial security, usually risk management or close protection assignments. The return to the circuit implies that the time of the *Blackwater-curse* is over, reassuring that the people currently present within the industry are *different*.

This disruption of who is regarded as a private security contractor and what such a contractor embodies, is thus bound to a historical time period. The demarcation from this *Blackwater-curse* also works through a degradation of these identities. A particular statement by an interviewee, which was already used in Chapter 2 to illustrate who gets access to the Kenyan security dispositif, describes perfectly this kind of demarcation:

> There are many private security guys that come in and think that this context is Afghanistan and Iraq, but it's actually quite different, you can't just turn up and do shady things. (…) There are some that tried to bulldoze their way in as Mzungus [Swahili word for foreigner, usually a white person]. (…) The Kenyan government saw right through this and they failed miserably. (…) It's really good and important for Kenya not to have these warmongers in the country (Interview with anonymous, 15 June 2022).

What this sequence exemplifies is again this temporal, and also spatial, notion of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the people being contracted in this context. Furthermore, the description of "bulldozing" and "warmongers" illustrates how he distances himself from such descriptions, building his identity on the notions of a contractor who is adapted, respectful, and operating with integrity.

Similarly, the idea of what it means to be a mercenary—and the clear demarcation from notions of a mercenary—came up during the fieldwork. The 1989 International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing, and Training of Mercenaries defines a mercenary as follows:

> 1. A mercenary is any person who:
>  a) Is specially recruited locally or abroad in order to fight in an armed conflict;
>  b) Is motivated to take part in the hostilities essentially by the desire for private gain and, in fact, is promised, by or on behalf of a party to the conflict, material compensation substantially in excess of that promised or paid to combatants of similar rank and functions in the armed forces of that party;
>  c) Is neither a national of a party to the conflict nor a resident of territory controlled by a party to the conflict;

[33] See for example the book "The Circuit: An Ex-SAS Soldier's True Account of One of the Most Powerful and Secretive Industries Spawned by the War on Terror" by Bob Shepherd (2008).

d) Is not a member of the armed forces of a party to the conflict; and
e) Has not been sent by a State which is not a party to the conflict on official duty as a member of its armed forces.

2. A mercenary is also any person who, in any other situation:
a) Is specially recruited locally or abroad for the purpose of participating in a concerted act of violence aimed at:
i. Overthrowing a Government or otherwise undermining the constitutional order of a State; or
ii. Undermining the territorial integrity of a State;
b) Is motivated to take part therein essentially by the desire for significant private gain and is prompted by the promise or payment of material compensation;
c) Is neither a national nor a resident of the State against which such an act is directed;
d) Has not been sent by a State on official duty; and
e) Is not a member of the armed forces of the State on whose territory the act is undertaken.
(United Nations, 1989, Art. 1).

While this definition still leaves room for interpretation for what constitutes a mercenary (e.g. what activities are defined to be undermining the constitutional order of a state?), the term has a clear negative tonality. The term is often associated with a lack of legitimacy (see for example Higate, 2011; Abrahamsen and Williams, 2011) and is rarely used proudly, and voluntarily, by contractors.

Throughout all my interviews—with the exception of one—I noticed a rejection of the term, which was put into the temporality associated with the *Blackwater-curse*. One particular interviewee declared that he would never call himself a mercenary. When I replied that I have met a few people who were proud of this label, he replied the following words: "There are also some people calling themselves proudly as prostitutes. That doesn't make it right" (Interview with anonymous, 29 April 2022). Here, the proximity of contemporary private security to mercenarism is vehemently denied, particularly due to the associated selling of (bodily) services for the best-paying customer. This statement exposes the importance of the body: while the sense of responsibility has elucidated the readiness of contractors to *sacrifice* their body for a greater purpose, they do not associate the availability of their bodies as an act of *selling*—the selling, "prostituting" their body for money, is seen as morally wrong, while a sacrifice, paid or unpaid, is deemed appropriate, "ethical", and on the right side of the moral compass. The analogy to sex work is not new as mercenaries have long been referred to as "the whores of war" (see for example Wilfred Burchett and Derek Roebuck's book *The Whores of War: Mercenaries today*, 1977; or Fraser, 2013). The heavy morality and moral condemnation of both mercenarism and sex work speaks to how the contractor is making sense of his own body and

to what degree, what costs, and for what purpose a body is allowed to be instrumentalised. The subtle difference for the contractor's identity lies between *selling* and *sacrificing*—even if he might get paid for such a sacrifice. It is the *selling at what costs* which defines the sacrifice, directly relating to the above-described theme being a "force for good". He infers a clear choice of selling his own body as a free will to do good, in contrast to the argument of selling their body for *anything* that pays, or who pays best. The good versus evil analogy—the will to do good in comparison to care about profit only—is striking in this statement, with the interviewee communicating unmistakably that he himself identifies as doing work which is upright. Mercenaries on the contrary cross the line to the "bad side"—as do the "prostitutes".

Interestingly, the demarcation of contractors within the private security industry, particularly the imagery of mercenaries, is also informed by geopolitics. As such, the Russian private military group called Wagner was often referenced as an example of contemporary mercenaries who are dangerous, aggressive, and using inappropriate violence—similar to the contractors from the *Blackwater-curse*, which were however understood to be almost exclusively western. Wagner as a group constantly portrayed in the media and occupying international policy makers within the security sphere presents therefore a perfect counterpart for the contractors to identify themselves against. One interviewee stated that "Wagner is a completely different beast, they don't give a shit" (Interview with anonymous, 18 March 2022). The somewhat imagined malice serves as a crucial factor for the construction of identity against an assumed other. Russia as a geopolitical adversary to the west has outlived the Cold War and persists up to day—in discourses of politicians, in news articles, and popular culture. Russians recent act of aggression against the Ukraine has only led to the furthering of this process of alienation, with NATO closing their ranks more tightly (Aladekomo, 2022). Wagner as a security institution often gets referenced as "semi-state" and "informal" (Marten, 2019) and is usually discussed outside of the parameters of the category of private military companies; the group thus works as a tool of identification for the west, against which Wagner is defined.

An illustrative example for the demarcation against the Wagner Group is the Mozart Group, founded in March 2022. The Mozart Group was established by a former U.S. Marine as a direct counterpoint to the Wagner Group, hence the name, with the goal of building sustainable capacity in the Ukrainian military.[34] The deliberate positioning of the Mozart

[34] The *Mozart Group* ceased operations in Ukraine in early 2023, mainly because of a tax evasion scandal. The group registered as a limited liability company while donations were encouraged to be sent to an "alter ego" humanitarian organisation called Task Force Sunflower (Isenberg, 2023).

Group as a "reverse, good-guy version" (Isenberg, 2023) to the Wagner Group is telling for how demarcation works along lines of ethical understandings of what is good and what is evil, strongly connected to geopolitical narratives. Contractor's identities are thus subjected to geopolitical power dynamics, which operate along lines of morality, entailing a strong sense of "doing good" and a distinctive appreciation of responsibility. The accumulation of wealth and the argument of the private security industry as purely profit-driven proves to be insignificant in the contractor's identities—getting paid is a vital part of living in a neoliberal world (as is it for military personnel), but the selling of (bodily) services is guided by the logic of the altruistic self, whose moral compass uses the demarcation of the "bad", the "inappropriate". The demarcation at sight here is against sometimes western contractors from a time that has passed or against the geopolitical other, the Russian Wagner group—both are to be found on the spectrum of the civilised other which stands in contrast to the second moment of exposure, namely demarcation against the racialised Other.

### "Africa as a place of freedom": The reliance of subjectivities on narratives of the racialised Other

By investigating how racialised, gendered, and classed power structures operate through space, we gain a deeper understanding how security contractors make sense of themselves through othering. As such, the practice of contrasting one's self against a racialised Other is key in informing subjectivities, while protecting a normative self who is not marked by race (Riggs and Augoustinos, 2005). Writing difference is not only connected to individuals but also involves an aspect of spatiality which is decisive for identity formation. Thus, spatiality as a concept plays a crucial role in understanding how power hierarchies and colonial structures are informing, sustaining, and equally shaped by subjectivities formed at the everyday level. In my interviews, Kenya as an imaginary, as a space of longing, came up as a common theme, informing how the contractors makes sense of themselves in relation to spatiality.

Kenya has been described by the interviewed, white South African, Kenyan, Zimbabwean, and Burundian contractors as a country which offers beneficial livings standards and market-based opportunities tailored to their needs. As described in Chapter 2, these men usually have dual-citizenship, profited from the English school system, and underwent training by the British Armed Forces. Yet, being born and bred on the African continent, they never really felt they belonged in the British society. Returning to the continent, Kenya has often been referenced as "home"—being part of the larger idea of "Africa as home". What I found

is that, in contrast to this, white British ex-soldiers understand "Africa as a place of freedom",[35] where there are less rules that apply to them, more space, breath-taking nature, and the nonconformity of an indulgent lifestyle.

This comes hand in hand with their privileged socioeconomic status within the Kenyan society. The encountered narratives reveal simple dichotomies where Africa is defined as an antonym to the west; more freedom (*read*: you can do whatever you want because of your racialised self), less rigidity (*read*: less rules of how to conduct security), and beautiful nature (*read*: state of less developed infrastructure and cities). Thus, binaries of developed-underdeveloped as well modern-traditional feature prominently in the narratives of my interviewees and their self-image. One interviewee told me that when he first went to Kenya for an assignment, he was really surprised: "I thought there were only houses of mud and other things that you see in movies" (Interview with anonymous, 3 July 2022). The idea of "Africa" as underdeveloped, traditional, and poor connects strongly to the specific role of the contractors' identities located within these narratives, as they are only effective against the racialised Other. This imagery of "Africa" is shaped by colonial imageries and power relations, as critically revealed by scholars such as Homi Bhabha (1994), V. Y. Mudimbe (1988), and Franz Fanon (1967). Fanon's concept of white superiority identifies "the racist" as the one who creates "his inferior". Jasmine Gani describes this superiority in relation to militarism: it is "the psychological need for the colonisers to feel dominant and the need to impose that superiority complex on those they subjugate. […] The civilizational schema […] and the European need to position themselves at the top of it, was and is especially expressed via militarism" (2021: 548, 550). The assumed absence of security knowledge in this imaginary place of "Africa" therefore provides yet another reason for the contractors to settle on the continent. Both groups of contractors have therefore the advantage of *choosing* Kenya and a life in a wealthy neighbourhood in Nairobi, where their power status as a white male-bodied security person is valued and appreciated as the ultimate standard of security knowledge. "Africa" as a construction of western desire plays a crucial part within this; as an objectified and distant place, "Africa" is more easily accessible to a white, male audience by tapping into a post-colonial setting with patriarchal and racialised structures at the very core. This spatial dimension of "Africa" as a unified place is a crucial condition for the embodied identities.

[35] The interviewees themselves used the terminology of "Africa as a home" and "Africa as freedom".

The interviews with particularly British, but also one Eastern European interviewee, revealed how their subjectivities are formed in relation to the racialised imaginary of "Africa". As previously elaborated, their masculinity is strongly connected to the theme of exceptionalism. Yet, this exceptionalism is marked by demarcation through the belief of inferiority of not only the local security knowledge but more so the presumed masculinities of Kenyan security forces. The understanding of their own self is thus directly connected to a racialised idea of the Other. The rating of inferior knowledge was particularly expressed through the description of inadequate skills, training, but also equipment. One interviewee talked about the situation enfolding after the Westgate attack happened:

> The response was unbelievably pathetic, there is really no other word for it. It was just so sad, they couldn't keep it together – and I mean both, the police and the KDF. It was far more dangerous to go inside because the risk existed to be shot by the Kenyan security forces rather than by Al-Shabaab. This in fact actually happened due to the chaos at the scene (Interview with anonymous, 15 June 2022).

His language around "unbelievably pathetic" and "it is just sad" reveals heavily racialised narratives about an inferior Other, who is deemed unfit to react to a security threat. Similarly, another contractor offered the following statement about a contractor friend, a former SAS soldier: "He has stopped his training function with the army, because he really does not want to train people who then shoot him in the next attack. You cannot teach a blind man how to drive a car" (Interview with anonymous, 4 July 2022). By stating that there is a risk of being shot by the Kenyan security forces, the contractor puts the Kenyan security forces and Al-Shabaab in the same category of being an enemy, a threat. The same interviewee continued by saying:

> You had all these really well-equipped soldiers from the KDF with western equipment, but if you looked at their shoes you saw that they had dancing shoes on. You know, fancy shoes that you wear to a suit with no profile. These shoes were not the equipment they needed for the slippery tiles at Westgate, they should have had rubber boots with a good profile (Interview with anonymous, 15 June 2022).

This second quote offers a good glimpse into the belief system of the interviewee. Even though the KDF had western (*read*: the right) equipment, they will never live up to the standard that he himself brings to the scene, which corresponds to the appropriate training, the right equipment, and the necessary skills to react in crisis contexts. Similar statements were offered from a different interviewee: "The police don't have the resources, they have no cars, no guns. There was one guy who shot himself in the leg because he didn't have a holster—and of course,

because he didn't have the proper training" (Interview with anonymous, 3 July 2022). Again, there is an emphasis on the lack of equipment but also on the lack of training. The small add-on of "of course" and "proper" discloses an obviousness in the conversation, as if there is no need for explanation because it is a universal fact which he is stating. It also conveys a certain agreement between the interviewee and me as a researcher, where our shared whiteness offers an opening for him to share his truths about the Other—the other in contrast to him, but also to my own self (see also Chapter 1 for the exploration of whiteness and my positionality as a researcher). The interviewee also stressed the factor of risk associated with the Kenyan security forces. In his recollection of an attack, he told me that:

> […] it's so bad how they were holding their weapons. They were trained to hold them pointing down. Usually, you have it straight or single file on the shoulder of the person in front of you. So when I went in with them, I had a weapon poking my behind, which was obviously very dangerous. So I told this guy that he needs to go in the front and the guy refused and said he was scared (Interview with anonymous, 3 July 2022).

The same story of a lack of proper training materialises in this quote, which results in a risk for the contractors themselves.

The last part of his statement introduces a second theme about the Other who is deemed inferior to the interviewed contractors, namely a lack of the above-described sense of responsibility and voluntary bravery, no intrinsic motivation for "the cause". Particularly two interviewees were utterly vocal in regards to this lack of intrinsic impetus of "Africans". One contractor told me that "nobody in Africa would do anything for free, they don't turn up at [*place of the attack*] even if they have all their fancy equipment from the west, particularly from the U.K. and the U.S." (Interview with anonymous, 15 June 2022). This implicit reference to a responsibility to enter a scene as a security person illustrates how the interviewee makes sense of himself in relation to the Other, the "Africans". This duty is so pronounced that even if nobody asked them to enter a scene, they would nevertheless feel obliged to do so, prompting an imagery of Africa as a place of dark threat which needs the white knights to its rescue (Razack, 2004). He carried on: "They don't have the fight in their belly, that's why it is not working. They have no interest in this war [*against terror*] or showing up for security threats. They are not paid well enough and they have no personal interest in it" (Interview with anonymous, 15 June 2022). Money is noted as an incentive, yet stating clearly that it is not money alone, but rather personal interest and having "the fight in your belly". The personal interest is striking in this statement: the interviewee implies that he himself—in contrast to "the

Africans"—has a personal interest to engage in the war and/or attacks. This is remarkable as it infers the assumption that he cares more about a context which he is non-native to than the local people, assuming a sense of ownership over the land. The superiority and arrogance relate partially to the sense of responsibility and duty. Yet, the interviewee did offer another statement giving a hint about what could possibly shape his personal interest in this context:

> It's all about access and influence, political influence over the regions and being on top security dynamics that could influence your own country. So if you have somebody living in Geneva who goes to Kenya to learn how to build a bomb, but with the intention to come back to Switzerland, you would want to stop this person. Is this motivation and political play wrong? Is it right? I really don't know (Interview with anonymous, 22 June 2022).

With this statement, he centres the U.K.'s geopolitical interest in the region, the safety of his home country, and as such his national duty as a U.K. citizen. He also compared the situation in Kenya and the perceived lack of moral standards and the presumed cowardice to the Falkland War as well as the war in Ukraine:

> You do it from the heart, that's the key to actually win a war even though you have less equipment or less manpower [*in reference to the Falkland War*]. The Russian-Ukrainian war is the best example for this. They have a reason to fight, it's from their heart and they have it in their belly (Interview with anonymous, 22 June 2022).

Similarly, another interviewee offered his perspective of Kenyan security forces, shedding light onto his understanding of his self and the other.

> The most important thing is to teach them discipline—none of them have it. […] You know how it is, you have been to Kenya, they are always late and you have to wait five minutes before your coffee comes which takes two minutes in Europe. […] I'm not saying they're lazy; it's a lifestyle which isn't bad or anything, but they don't have stress. It's also a good thing that they don't have stress. It's just very difficult to work with them, you have to say word by word what you actually want from them (Interview with anonymous, 3 July 2022).

The sequence is spiked with condescending notions of how he understands the racialised Other, exposing perceptions of anti-Blackness: his phrasing of "none of them have discipline" and "they don't have stress" implies a sweeping generalisation of Blackness as not only lacking discipline but also as of intellectual inferiority. The idea of an unburdened Other connects to the notion of Kenya being underdeveloped, in comparison to the west, where people are busy and productive. Productivity is hereby a corner stone of western-type masculinity (Joachim and Schneiker, 2015), and is offered in the contrast to Kenyans, who are "not lazy, but stress-free". The interviewee went on giving an example of a Kenyan collaborator who had to write an

incident report for him with a certain deadline. When the deadline passed and he did not receive the report, he asked the colleague what happened. The colleague replied that he in fact finished the report, but did not get the task to actually send it to my interviewee. The contractor used this example to proof how you need to tell "them" every step: write the report, send the report and text him that he has got the email with the report. The recollection of this anecdote bears blatant anti-Blackness, which are racist to their core. The same interviewee confessed in this interview that he screamed the N-word and "monkey" at Kenyan security forces in a moment of acute stress. Furthermore, during our conversation, he made the analogy of "stealing like baboons" and he also started one sentence with "I don't want to be called a racist, but they need leadership. There is a lot of corruption and they lack leadership" (Interview with anonymous, 3 July 2022).

The statement "I'm not a racist, but" is often used by white people who do not understand themselves as racists, yet who know that what they are about to say will be read as racist (see for example Lawrence Blum's book *"I'm Not a Racist, But…": The Moral Quandary of Race*, 2002). As illustrated by these quotes, this interviewee openly offered racist statements throughout the whole conversation. While I cannot generalise from this interviewee to all of the contractors[36], a distinct sense of the racialised Other came through most of the conversations with white European (mostly British) contractors, where they heavily rely on colonial imaginaries of "Africa" connected to passivity and backwardness (Eriksson-Baaz and Verweijen, 2018). Jemima Pierre's (2018) words that the "Africa" we know today "does not exist outside the legacies of slavery and imperialism, Arab and European white supremacy, racialisation, and most importantly, Blackness" (Pierre, 2018 cited in Al-Bulushi, 2021: 116) is a critical reminder to understand how contractor's identities are formed. The deliberate presence of these contractors in "Africa" as a place of freedom, opportunities, as well as in need of them and their skills is decisive in the subjectivities around exceptionalism, demarcation, and ultimately, superiority.

[36] It is meaningful to note that this is in contrast to the white interviewees growing up on the African continent, who were more nuanced in their articulation towards Kenyan security forces.

## Implicit morality: The exceptional, disciplined, and altruistic subject

The racial and geopolitical constructions of masculinities evidenced in Kenya's private security industry illustrate the complexity and ambiguity of subject formation. The contractor's past military experiences and particularly the identity of having served in a special forces unit is tied to the idea of military exceptionalism. This exceptionalism of being military is crucial in understanding the reciprocity between the public and private security sector: while the sense of responsibility and the belief to have to be part of a force for good are values directly transferred from the military, the personalisation of this responsibility and the loneliness are products that speak to the private security industry. Similarly, the strive towards self-optimisation is shaped by neoliberal market forces, but only as far as it converges with the implicit morality displayed by the contractors. Loyalty to the cause, the idea of a "just" world linked to humanitarian interventionism is reflected in a sense of responsibility which justifies violence. The contractor's subjectivities are thus formed in this very in-between space, where the ideal neoliberal self meets the military, subverting the contractors' obligation to serve for the greater good with an individualised responsibility. Furthermore, the interviewees offered a certain ambiguity towards their militarised self, where the possibility to leave the security sector altogether is denied to them; ultimately being trapped in the private security industry. This in-between space of identity formation, which is marked by exceptionalism, is contextualised against narratives of Otherness. Such demarcation operates by distancing themselves from the mercenary, and the *Blackwater-curse*, but also against the geopolitical Other. Most importantly, however, is the fact that the subjectivities are heavily dependent on the spatial aspect of "Africa" as an imaginary space of freedom and absence of security knowledge. The spatial factor is crucial in their subjectivity, as their exceptionalism is only valid through the demarcation against the racialised Other, the subordinate masculinities of "African" security forces, who supposedly do not know how to *do* security nor possess an inherent drive to fight. Their exceptionalism and the responsibility of doing good, even in a privatised and individualised form, is thus not only valid but rather urgent and required. The binary categories of good and evil, civilised and barbaric, dominant and subordinate, developed and underdeveloped are necessary narratives used in the formation of the contractors' subjectivities, while ambiguity and the in-between of their identity surface in the given conversations.

The formation of contractors' subjectivities is forged in conversation with the observed shift towards the values inherent in British militarism plus, which is based on more acceptable forms of violence, as well as prevention-related and feminine-coded expansion of security practices in Kenya's security dispositif. The witnessed alteration towards development within the security industry and the associated reimagination of the private security industry directly translates to revised masculinities, offering a glimpse into a contradictory trend within this small elitist group in Kenya, where a disciplined, militarised, altruistic, and exceptional self is produced. The displayed subjectivities reveal the reinforcement of masculine-connotated notions of security by an implicit morality of its exceptionalism—an implicit morality which is at the foundation of the counterterrorism regime and its narratives of superiority and neo-colonial violence.

# CONCLUSION

> Every time I meet contacts, people tell me how difficult it is and that it will be hard for me to talk to people. I have established a few contacts and even within those, I feel like they shut down and don't want to refer me to stakeholder or help me. Why is that? One thing is of course the sensitivity of the topic: counterterrorism is not something stakeholder want to discuss with a random researcher. (…) Also, when I mention certain names of security companies such as the [company name], people immediately draw back and stay out of it. They know it's a dead-end (somebody from [a civil society organisation] for example said this), so it's not worth the time and trouble. Exactly the same with [civil society organisation], it's not something they investigate (Field journal entry, 29 January 2022).

I started this project with two clear thoughts: I want to investigate the P/CVE industry from a security perspective and my aim is to discover the private security industry's role within P/CVE. The question this thesis therefore asked from the outset is the following: how does P/CVE materialise in the ontologies, practices, and performances of security along the public-private continuum? The process to answer this was however less linear; as the above-cited quote from my field journal illustrates, it was a difficult journey with an uncertain outcome. While some research on P/CVE and the security sector exists—in contrast to the richer literature on P/CVE and its effects on development—there is nothing academically published on the intersection of P/CVE and private security. I did not know if I would find a link, as there could potentially be none or because I would possibly not get access to the security sector. Yet, after hours of desk research, months of gathering first hand data in the context of Kenya, and pages of writing effort, I look back on a wealth of findings which provide an answer to my research question. By applying a feminist ethnography approach to the case of Kenya, I found four patterns of how P/CVE materialises in security: knowledge networks and values; bodies and the relation to the self; performativity; and spatiality. These patterns build my theory West-of-Doom, which describes the embracing of prevention as a new paradigm of counterterrorism, connected to development-oriented practices. I suggest that P/CVE's logic of prevention operates as an epistemic power project which transgresses from security into development spaces and thus broadens the spectrum of intervention. Moreover, I argue that this

transgression presents a tool for the security dispositif along the public-private continuum to conform to what is deemed more acceptable forms of violence, which in turn renders the racialised and gendered logics of prevention convoluted and concealed. My focus on the private security industry—always in conversation with the public security sector—highlights the interrelatedness, the ambiguity, and the complexity of the public-private continuum; I encountered power structures as deeply connected along this continuum, with West-of-Doom's logic of prevention being reinforced, translated, and building and transforming in the in-between spaces. West-of-Doom and its logic of prevention as an epistemic power project can be deconstructed by recognising the four patterns found in this research.

First, I recognised the significance of knowledge networks and the translation of power structures into allowing certain people to get heard and to speak, while others are silenced. Most importantly, these knowledge networks operate through values and the embodiment of values. I found that British militarism is ubiquitous in the Kenyan security dispositif and strived towards in different security institutions such as private security guarding and the national police. However, through my analysis of the different actors on the ground, such as Israel, South Africa, the U.K. and the U.S., I realised that the appraisal of western knowledge as superior goes beyond British militarism: the less-aggressive, sequenced, and prevention-oriented approach to security taken by western security personnel (public and private) has been considered as the most valuable way of performing security—an observation I coined "British militarism plus". This system of power can also be traced through the privilege of a particular group of white, mostly British, men within the private security industry who are in the position to "speak security" in Kenya—embodying an implicitness of belonging, of a perceived "right" to being heard. This is particularly evident in the comparison to local private security guards who have a high degree of visibility, particularly in the more developed regions of Kenya, yet without holding any power or leverage. Moreover, the Kenyan government's approach to tapping into the western security knowledge by circumventing the U.K. government and collaborating with British private security companies, is yet another sign of how P/CVE's logic of prevention translates to a deeply racialised system, based on and upholding neo-colonial structures.

Moreover, the logic of prevention materialises in the fixity of the body and how people make sense of their self. The materiality of the body must be acknowledged as effects of power that determines how a body is read. Scrutinising my personal bodily experience in the field, the associated positionality, and the assumed identities, I traced the importance of my whiteness in

the intersection to my sexualised self as a crucial factor within Kenya's security dispositif. The recognition of the field as a site of power, where identities are formed, bodies made sense of, allowed me to explore the logics of security beyond my bodily experiences and to investigate the narratives, identities, and subjectivities internalised by the people privileged to speak security. I witnessed that identities and the subjectivities of private security contractors were formed in an in-between space of the public and private, where military exceptionalism was transferred and individualised. Again, whiteness as an identifying marker is crucial for the subjectivities I detected: it defines the subjectivity as "superior" to the people around them, particularly through the embodiment of an exceptional, disciplined, and altruistic self which is in service of an implicit morality of "doing good".

The subjectivities of the privileged group of private security contractors can only be fully grasped by analysing the creation of an institutional and cross-sectoral identity which formed as a result of the tensions between security and development. The narratives and actions of institutions such as the Kenyan police and within certain private (security) companies exposed a complicated performativity of brutality, hard-security approaches, mixed with development and prevention-oriented activities and narratives. P/CVE and its logic of prevention turned out to be a useful tool to capitalise on the values of reform, community engagement, and intelligence gathering—values that tie back to the more acceptable forms of security as they allow a certain identity of "good" and "ethical". Yet, I dismantle how such identities work as a way to uphold, legitimise, and even expand existing racialised and gendered power structures rather than replacing them. The highly gendered narrative of a "female security" is one instance which exemplifies how stereotypical values of femininity get utilised in order to create new roles for women and as such enhance the marketability and reputational value of both public and private security actors.

Lastly, I noticed the pattern of spatiality as yet another dimension of how P/CVE materialised in power structures; this time in marginalised spaces and within marginalised communities who need to provide their own security. Importantly, I expose that the gendered and racialised structures of prevention not only shape the institutions, people, and structures at the centre—and as such often theorised within the public-private binary—but has far-reaching consequences to the periphery. The materiality of security manifested in community policing initiatives which are a product of neoliberal governmentality and its commodification of security, designating security as a collective effort and as such leaving communities to provide for their security through their unpaid labour. The systematic marginalisation of spaces

predominantly inhabited by ethnic Somali communities reveals again the workings of West-of-Doom and its logic of prevention, which is based on the fundamentally racialised system of counterterrorism.

The four patterns of how P/CVE materialises in the ontologies, practices, and performances of security highlight the growing entanglement of security and development through the logic of prevention, which not only provides a justification and foundation for existing security strategies, but also obscures the nature of security strategies and practices operating within this logic as benign. Through my research, I contribute an important part to unravelling this entanglement and highlight how security is adapting, or even shapeshifting, through prevention. Furthermore, my argument provides a significant first step in addressing the glaring lack of the link between P/CVE and the private security industry, underlining that power manifests on a continuum between public and private. While I want to stress that the dichotomy of public-private can indeed be interesting to understand why theory and practice thinks within such binaries, my findings emphasise the need for further explorations that abandons thinking and theorising within such confined dichotomies. This is not new: feminist theorists have long disputed the usefulness and accuracy of the public-private divide. Yet, the critical engagement of security scholars with the imaginary binary of the public and the private has not fully reached its potential and needs further investigation. My theory of West-of-Doom and its logics of prevention provides one crucial puzzle piece to understanding how security materialises on multiple layers—ultimately tracing the hidden transcripts of power.

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# DATA COLLECTION

## Overview data collection

### Legend

I: Interviews
PO: Participant observation, focus group discussion (FGD)
IT: Informal talks
NR: No recording
R: Recorded
*** key interview

| | Private security | Military | Police | Gov / Administration | CSO / Community | Other | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I** | 23 | 4 | 4 | 11 | 12 | 1 | 55 |
| *Of which women participants* | *2* | *0* | *0* | *1* | *3* | *0* | *6* |
| **PO** | 5 | - | 1.5 | - | 4.5 | - | 11 |
| **IT** | 6 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 21 |
| **Total** | 34 | 5 | 6.5 | 12 | 21.5 | 8 | **87** |

*Every I, PO, IT entry has ethnographical notes. There are additional, separate ethnographic entries for the time in the field.
** Data was collected in Nairobi and in the field trips to Isiolo, Wajir, Garissa, Mombasa & Kwale as well as online

## Interviews

The list presented below is an anonymised version of the original list of interviews, which also contains the organisation as well as the name of the interviewee.

| | Sector | Location | Date of interview | Legend |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Police | Nairobi | 1 December 2021 | NR |
| 2 | Private Security | Nairobi | 3 December 2021 | *** R |
| 3 | Gov / Administration | Isiolo | 1 February 2022 | R |
| 4 | Gov / Administration | Isiolo | 1 February 2022 | R |
| 5 | Gov / Administration | Isiolo | 2 February 2022 | R |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | Gov / Administration | Isiolo | 2 February 2022 | R |
| 7 | Gov / Administration | Wajir | 7 March 2022 | ***<br>R |
| 8 | Gov / Administration | Wajir | 7 March 2022 | R |
| 9 | Gov / Administration | Wajir | 8 March 2022 | NR |
| 10 | Private Security | Wajir | 8 March 2022 | NR |
| 11 | Police | Wajir | 8 March 2022 | NR |
| 12 | Police | Wajir | 8 March 2022 | NR |
| 13 | Military | Nairobi | 11 March 2022 | NR |
| 14 | Other | Phone Call<br>UK (previously based in Kenya and Somalia) | 17 March 2022 | NR |
| 15 | Private Security | Phone Call<br>UK (previously based in various countries) | 18 March 2022 | NR |
| 16 | Private Security | Nairobi | 25 March 2022 | R |
| 17 | Military | Garissa | 28 March 2022 | NR |
| 18 | Police | Garissa | 28 March 2022 | NR |
| 19 | Gov / Administration | Garissa | 29 March 2022 | NR |
| 20 | CSO / Community | Garissa | 29 March 2022 | NR |
| 21 | Private Security | Nairobi | 31 March 2022 | ***<br>NR |
| 22 | Private Security | Nairobi | 31 March 2022 | NR |
| 23 | Private Security | Nairobi | 1 April 2022 | NR |
| 24 | Private Security | Nairobi | 29 April 2022 | NR |
| 25 | CSO / Community | Nairobi, Eastleigh | 4 May 2022 | R |
| 26 | Private Security | Nairobi | 7 May 2022 | NR |
| 27 | CSO / Community | Mombasa | 9 May 2022 | R |
| 28 | CSO / Community | Mombasa | 10 May 2022 | R |
| 29 | CSO / Community | Mombasa | 10 May 2022 | R |
| 30 | Gov / Administration | Kwale | 11 May 2022 | NR |
| 31 | Gov / Administration | Kwale | 11 May 2022 | NR |
| 32 | CSO / Community | Kombani | 12 May 2022 | NR |
| 33 | Private Security | London (virtual) | 16 May 2022 | NR |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 34 | CSO / Community | Kwale (virtual) | 18 May 2022 | NR |
| 35 | Private Security | Nairobi | 18 May 2022 | NR |
| 36 | Private Security | Nairobi (Karen) | 19 May 2022 | NR |
| 37 | CSO / Community | Nairobi (Donholm) | 20 May 2022 | NR |
| 38 | CSO / Community | Nairobi | 23 May 2022 | NR |
| 39 | Private Security | Nairobi (Karen) | 24 May 2022 | NR |
| 40 | CSO / Community | Lamu Town | 27 May 2022 | R |
| 41 | Gov / Administration | Nairobi (close to the airport) | 29 May 2022 | NR |
| 42 | CSO / Community | Nairobi | 31 May 2022 | R |
| 43 | Private Security | Nairobi (Capital Center Mombasa Rd) | 2 June 2022 | NR |
| 44 | Private Security | Nairobi (Westlands) | 3 & 6 June 2022 | NR |
| 45 | CSO / Community | Nairobi | 3 June 2022 | *** R |
| 46 | Military | Nairobi (Karen) | 6 June 2022 | NR |
| 47 | Private Security | Online | 10 June 2022 | NR |
| 48 | Private Security | Online (Kenya) | 15 June 2022 | NR |
| 49 | Military | Online (UK-based) | 29 June 2022 | *** NR |
| 50 | Private Security | Online (Slovenia) | 3 & 4 July 2022 | *** NR |
| 51 | Private Security | Online (based in Kenya) | 4 July 2022 / 13 July 2022 | NR |
| 52 | Private Security | Online (based in Kenya) | 14 July 2022 | NR |
| 53 | Private Security | Online | 18 July 2022 | *** R |
| 54 | Private Security | Phone Call | 22 July 2022 | NR |
| 55 | Private Security | Online | 6 January 2023 | *** R |

## FGDs, participant observation, and visits to training sites

| | Sector | Composition | Location | Date of interview | Legend |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Private Security | CHRIPS Conference CVE & PMSCs | Nairobi | 23 September 2021 | NR |
| 2 | CSO / Community | 6 Representatives of local communities<br>- 3 men, 3 women<br>- Elder, youth champion, retired community worker, 2 unclear | Isiolo | 1 February 2022 | R |
| 3 | CSO / Community | 4 representatives of local communities<br>- 3 men, 2 women<br>- 2 youth, 1 religious leader, 1 opinion leader, 1 writer | Isiolo | 2 February 2022 | R |
| 4 | Police | 5 representatives of police officers<br>- 4 men, 1 woman<br>- Inspector, Gender & Child Protection Officer, Accountant, other unknown | Isiolo | 2 February 2022 | R |
| 5 | CSO / Community | 4 representatives of local communities<br>- 3 women, 1 man<br>- Subcounty peacemaker, 2 youth leaders, 1 shop owner | Isiolo | 3 February 2022 | R |
| 6 | CSO / Community | 5 representatives of local NGOs<br>- 5 men | Wajir | 7 March 2022 | R |
| 7 | Private security | Security Expo | Nairobi (Sarit Centre) | 23 March 2022 | NR |
| 8 | Private security | Training facilities KK security, 4<br>- Willie, Trainer<br>- Jeremy, National Control Centre<br>- Mercy and Daktari, K-9 | Nairobi | 5 May 2022 | NR |
| 9 | Private security | Training facilities BM security, 3<br>- Alphonce, head of training | Nairobi | 6 May 2022 | NR |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | - Mary, training officer<br>- Abdi, lecture on incident reportin | | | |
| 10 | Community / Police | 12 people at FGD<br>- 3 police (2 in uniform, 1 civilian clothes)<br>- 1 assistant county commissioner (woman)<br>- 2 elders<br>- 1 religious leader<br>- 5 CSO (2 women)<br>- 3 women, 9 men | Kombani, Kwale | 12 May 2022 | R |
| 11 | Private security | ICOCA conference | Geneva | 6 December 2022 | NR |

## Informal talks*

| | **Sector** | **Location** | **Date** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Other | Nairobi | 9 September 2021 |
| 2 | CSO / Community | Nairobi | Several times<br>13 September 2021; 24 September 2021; 28 January 2022 |
| 3 | CSO / Community | Nairobi | 20 September 2021 |
| 4 | Other | Nairobi | 22 September 2021 |
| 5 | CSO / Community | Nairobi | 24 September 2021 |
| 6 | Police | Nairobi | 13 October 2021 |
| 7 | CSO / Community | Online | 22 November 2021 |
| 8 | Other | Online | 20 December 2021 |
| 9 | CSO / Community | Online & Nairobi | 24 December 2021 & 29 January 2022 |
| 10 | Other | Nairobi | 26 January 2022 |
| 11 | Private Security | Nairobi | Friend, over time |
| 12 | Other | Nairobi | Friend, over time |
| 13 | Other | Online & Mombasa | 25 March 2022 & 10 May 2022 |
| 14 | Other | Nairobi | 29 April 2022 |
| 15 | Private Security | Nairobi | 15 May 2022 |
| 16 | Private Security | Nairobi | 17 May 2022 & 6 June 2022 |
| 17 | Public / Gov | Nairobi | 18 May 2022 |

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| 18 | Private Security | Nairobi | 24 May 2022 |
| 19 | Private Security | Nairobi | 31 May 2022 |
| 20 | Military | Nairobi | 6 June 2022 |
| 21 | Private Security | Zürich | 5 July 2022 |

*This is a non-exhaustive list of informal talks.