



Conflict analysis of North Eastern Kenya

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About this report

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1. Overview

Conflict profile

Threats to peace and security in North Eastern Kenya are closely linked to legacies of state violence and marginalisation (Lind et al., 2017; NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). This report focuses on three counties in the North East: Garissa, Mandera and Wajir. Historical injustices, neglect and repressive state policies have led to the political and economic marginalisation of the North East region and its underdevelopment. State security forces used indiscriminate violence against the local Somali population during 1964-1967 in the name of 'collective responsibility' for the *shifita* insurgency. Although the conflict officially came to an end in 1967, state-sponsored violence and intimidation continued against Somali residents. Political liberalisation in the 1990s contributed to a new context for violent conflict in North Eastern Kenya, in the form of clan conflict and competition over scarce resources (Chome, 2019). At the same time, initiatives in Wajir, Garissa and Mandera aimed at clan accommodation and conflict resolution proved successful in stemming violence. Widespread violence following Kenya's 2007 general election results highlighted the country's troubled internal divisions. It also revealed the continued success of peace infrastructures in the North East, which remained largely free of post-election violence (Nolasco, 2017; Lind et al., 2015; Menkhaus, 2015).

While devolution, introduced in the 2010 Constitution, has begun to pivotally redress the state's neglect and historic marginalisation of pastoral areas in the North, the influence of al-Shabaab, the Somalia-based militant organisation, is a key driver in the rise in violence. Much of the increase in conflict is seen in Kenya's North Eastern counties (Lind, 2018). Devolution appears over time to have helped to undercut support for al-Shabaab in the North East, while at the same time producing greater competition among clans and elites for local government posts and economic resources (ICG, 2018). Al-Shabaab has, in turn, sought to exploit clan disputes and clan dynamics to foster insecurity and advance their operations and activities in Kenya (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019; Sahgal et al., 2019; ICG, 2018). There has been a spike in militant activity in recent months, which could be further exacerbated by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The socio-economic hardships caused by efforts to contain COVID-19 and the allocation of resources away from countering extremism to containing the pandemic can contribute to an enabling environment for militant activity (Mohamed, et al., 2020).

Root causes of conflict

Elite power struggles, identity politics and political exclusion: One of the most potent drivers of conflict in Kenya is the persistence of a system of political patronage, often along ethnic lines (Nolasco, 2017; Cox et al., 2014). In the North East of Kenya, identity politics are central to Kenya-Somalia border conflicts. Influential Somali clan members, such as political leaders, often manipulate Somali clan identities and existing cleavages in their pursuit of power and control of resources (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; Nolasco, 2017). Devolution has resulted in the entrenchment of 'winner-takes-all' ethnic politics at the county level. Vulnerabilities of populations in the North East of Kenya under the prior centralised system now centres upon minority clans within counties (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017).

Weak social contract: Threats to peace and security in the North East arise in part from a long trajectory of problematic state-society (or state-citizen) relations between the Kenyan state and ethnic Somalis (Lind et al., 2017). The state has not only neglected the region, it has also

committed atrocities in the North East, which has made relationships between the communities and state deeply problematic (Lind, 2018; Lind et al., 2017; Kochore, 2016; Carrier & Kochore, 2014). How the Kenyan state has historically viewed and treated the ethnic Somali population has contributed to the 'othering' of Kenyan Somali citizens, putting their lived experience of citizenship and equality of rights at risk (Lind et al., 2015). Even as Kenyan Somalis have become a stronger part of political and economic spheres, they remain marginalised in terms of citizenship recognition and ability to gain access to national identity documents (Scharrer, 2018).

Regional inequality, exclusion and marginalisation: The threat to peace and security in the North East is strongly tied to entrenched forms of political and economic marginalisation, exclusion and inequality (Lind et al., 2017). The region has long experienced the highest levels of poverty and underdevelopment in the country, contributing to crime and insecurity (Nolasco, 2017). Garissa, Wajir and Mandera are among the seven poorest of Kenya's 47 counties, with poverty levels of 66%, 63% and 78%, respectively, compared to 36% across the country (Abdille, 2019). The North East has the greatest concentration of pastoral communities in the country and there is a strong perception among these communities that the government has treated them unfairly, signifying a high level of local alienation from the government (Menkhaus, 2015). The region lags behind the rest of the country in infrastructure, education and health services, with Northern Kenyan counties ranking at the bottom of almost every human development ranking in the country (Abdille, 2019; Menkhaus, 2015).

Resource and environmental factors: Competition for the control of political and economic resources in Northern Kenya – and unequal access to land and natural resources – are considered to be drivers of recurrent violence and key threats to security (Botha & Abdile, 2020; Whittaker, 2017). The weaker socio-economic situation in these arid and semi-arid Northern regions means that climate shocks and stresses, especially drought, normally have greater consequences, such as acute food shortages (Njoka et al., 2016). Pastoral conflicts have become more frequent and unpredictable, exacerbated by scarce resources, and have increasingly involved the use of arms (Njoka et al., 2016; Witsenburg & Adano, 2009). In addition, deep-rooted inequalities persist in areas where oil and hydrocarbon reserves are located, which makes the way in which anticipated revenues are shared of particular importance as a potential source of conflict or resilience (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; Vasquez, 2013).

Conflict dynamics

Cross-border conflict dynamics: Poor security and porous borders in the North and North East of Kenya have produced a complex set of conflict dynamics. It is considered to have contributed to the proliferation of small arms in the region and illicit trade in cattle; and enabled the expansion of al-Shabaab activities (Nolasco, 2017). Growing scarcity of water and grazing land has also contributed to conflicts across county boundaries (Wakube et al., 2017). Cross-border clan identities play a significant role in conflict dynamics and conflict spillover between countries and counties (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Loyalty to one's clan is used at times by powerful individuals and groups to mobilise individual clans against other clans, and in some cases even among sub-clans of the same clan (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017).

Devolution dynamics: The outcomes of devolution have thus far been mixed. Benefits include a strong counterbalance to the centre, greater political power to Kenyan Somalis, and much larger resource allocation to marginalised areas (Cannon & Ali, 2018). Devolution has brought national resources closer to the people, while also intensifying local rivalries and inter-clan competition for political seats - perceived as guaranteed access to economic resources by 'winning' clans to the

disadvantage of 'losing' clans (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; Carrier & Kochore, 2014). The persistent ethnicisation of politics, now also at the county level, has undermined the intent of devolution to accommodate different interest groupings and address marginalisation as important drivers of political violence (Lind, 2018; Carrier & Kochore, 2014). Previously marginalised groups at the national level have come to dominate at the county level, which has led in some cases to the marginalisation of minority clans within the county – and the potential for new conflict (Lind, 2018; NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; Mkutu et al., 2014). Greater levels of corruption at the local level is another unintended consequence of devolution (Cannon & Ali, 2018; Lind, 2018).

Hate speech: Incitement by politicians, local elites and mainstream and community media is a key feature in the majority of prior conflicts in Kenya, contributing to the escalation of tensions (Nolasco, 2017). Despite progress in countering hate speech, spear-headed in large part by the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), politics in Kenya remains divided along ethnic lines (Nolasco, 2017). Hate speech has been less prevalent in the North than in the rest of the country, but there are still reports of politicians inciting clans with abusive and derogatory statements about rival clans, for example in Mandera County (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019).

Security issues: Communities in the North East of Kenya have low levels of trust in security institutions due to inadequate provision of security services; alleged police corruption; and a history of heavy-handed security operations and atrocities committed against residents of the region (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; International Alert, 2016). Alongside, the blanket suspicion of local communities inhibits the ability of security officials to effectively secure the community and the willingness of residents to provide information (Botha & Abdile, 2020; NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Alleged corruption in the National Police Force and the Kenyan Defence Forces (KDF) are considered an 'enabler' for extremism (Mongare, 2019). It is reported, for example, that police corruption at the border has allowed for al-Shabaab to gain entry into Kenya and to smuggle in illegal goods, such as sugar; and that the KDF have acted as brokers in the illegal trade of charcoal (Mongare, 2019). Such corruption, inadequate policies and capacities of security agencies, and poor coordination among them, have heightened insecurity. Small arms availability and misuse further exacerbate security problems, increasing the potential for violence.

Radicalisation and violent extremism: While al-Shabaab remains focused on enforcing its variant of Islamic law in Somalia, it has drawn upon Kenya's internal tensions and divisions to garner support (Lind et al., 2017). Long-standing injustices and poor relations with the police, racial profiling and lack of belonging, can fuel radicalisation and violent extremism (Kirui, 2019; Mkutu et al., 2014; Botha, 2013). A key threat to stability in Kenya is if extremists succeed in dividing Muslims and non-Muslims, which has materialised to some extent following various attacks targeting Christians (Anderson & McKnight, 2015; Botha, 2013). Youth unemployment and lack of sustainable livelihood opportunities are key challenges perceived to contribute to their recruitment into al-Shabaab, which reportedly offers some form of economic or social good as an incentive to join (Anderson & McKnight, 2015; Mkutu et al., 2014). The various attacks committed by al-Shabaab in the North East have also prompted an exodus of civil servants, with a disastrous effect on services (HFTT, 2015; ICG, 2015). In addition, there is some emergent research that finds a complex relationship between al-Shabaab and clan conflicts, in which the extremist group exploits clan competition and the marginalisation of minority clans, to advance their operations in Kenya (Karienyé & Warfa, 2020; Mohamed & Warfa, 2019; Sahgal et al., 2019). The securitisation of the government's response to violent extremism, and indiscriminate

targeting of its own Somali population, has also had the counter-productive outcome of fuelling radicalisation (Botha & Abdile, 2020; Chome, 2019; Lind et al., 2017).

Sources of resilience

Sources of resilience and resilience actors can be double-edged, contributing to peace and to insecurity. Devolution, for example, remains an important source of resilience although it has also exacerbated clan conflicts. Similarly, elders have been effective at peace-making, while at other times they have contributed to violence through their staunch support of particular clans.

Devolution, constitutional reform and local government: The devolution of powers and resources to sub-national county governments remains one of the most promising ways in which to prevent conflict in the North East (Lind et al., 2015). The establishment of county-level administrations responsible for spending a significant proportion of government funds has enabled the expansion of the state-building process into previously marginalised areas of the country (Mosley & Watson, 2016). North Eastern Kenya also moved from the political periphery to being of national importance in the 2013 elections; and the ascent of Kenyan Somalis to top positions in the Kenyan government raises the prospect of shedding their 'outsider' tag (Kirui, 2019; Carrier & Kochore, 2014; Menkhaus, 2015). Locally elected officials in county government, with better local knowledge and greater local legitimacy than politicians from other counties, are also well placed to address conflicts and promote peace (Menkhaus, 2015; Mkutu et al., 2014). County elites need to be more inclusive of minorities, cooperate across local boundaries for inter-county peace and recognise the continued role for neutral national institutions (ICG, 2015).

Citizenship, social cohesion and social contract: The attention of Kenya's governing elite has shifted increasingly to the economic potential of the Northern regions. Infrastructure, such as roads that connect regions to the centre, can alter not only development opportunities for populations in the North, but also their identities and a sense of belonging to the nation (Kochore, 2016). Alongside infrastructure and security, national and county governments need to urgently re-establish social services in the North, especially health and education.

Resilience factors that bring different communities together include the creation of new narratives of collaboration and Kenyan citizenship through joint local initiatives to achieve mutual goals and practical help (International Alert, 2016). Shared public spaces, such as markets, schools, and hospitals, can foster unity. The effective functioning of these facilities is considered to be one of the most important issues that brings different clans together (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Guaranteeing equal citizenship rights for all Kenyans, such as through the fair issuance of identity documents, is a fundamental component of a wider peacebuilding approach that could ameliorate state–society and inter-community tensions (Scharrer, 2018; Lind et al., 2017; International Alert, 2016).

Strengthened security arrangements and police-civilian trust: Building trust, which can enable effective partnerships between the police and the public, is fundamental to conflict prevention and peacebuilding in North East Kenya (Botha & Abdile, 2020; Nolasco, 2017; Mkutu et al., 2014; USAID et al., 2013). It requires security forces to reduce their use of aggressive tactics; and to be better rooted in local communities (Botha & Abdile, 2020; ICG, 2018; International Alert, 2016). The deployment of local, Muslim, ethnic Somali security officials to lead operations in the North East is reported to have built trust in the security services as residents see locally rooted offices as more responsive to their concerns (ICG, 2018). Community policing, neighbourhood watch schemes and other early warning mechanisms can also be effective in

improving levels of trust between communities and the police. Improved relationship and trust-building can, in turn, facilitate information gathering and the early detection of extremist activity and other criminal acts (Botha & Abdile, 2020; ICG, 2018; Nolasco, 2017).

Programmes to counter violent extremism in Kenya have moved away from a securitised response, expanding to include interventions aimed at addressing historical grievances and the environment conducive to extremist ideologies and recruitment (Botha & Abdile, 2020; ICG, 2018; Nolasco, 2017). Efforts also need to be made to challenge particular perceptions of groups and treatment of all Muslims as terrorists or views of Christians as the enemy (Botha, 2013). Creating the space for engagement and dialogue between youth and the police, in contrast to confrontation, is particularly important as youth can be vulnerable to recruitment into extremism (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018). Police forces also need to be representative and reflective of women and their needs, which includes efforts to improve women and girls' awareness of their rights and on reporting violence against women and girls (VAWG) to the police (Beston, 2018).

Transitional justice: Investigation of the Wagalla massacre, and also the wider impact of the *shifita* war, formed a major element of the work of Kenya's Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission of Kenya (TJRC), however, lack of acknowledgement by state actors undermines the important findings of state culpability (Anderson, 2014). Progress toward implementing the TJRC report and acknowledgement by political elites of past atrocities against the Somali population detailed in the report, could play a significant role in addressing historical injustices (Kirui, 2019; Nolasco, 2017). Other actors have made efforts to achieve some form of acknowledgement, such as the public monument to the victims of the Wagalla massacre, supported by the Kenya National Commission for Human Rights (Anderson, 2014).

Peace Committees (PCs): PCs have been prominent in historically marginalised peripheral border areas, playing a pivotal role in coordinating information and interventions to address conflict and serving as a mechanism for cooperation, trust and relationship building (USAID et al., 2013). District PCs have been vastly inclusive and have played a central role in managing ethno-political violence at the local level (Nolasco, 2017; Menkhaus, 2008). They can also spawn strong and beneficial spill-over effects, in which one successful PC is emulated in other districts and regions and across the border; and also at local levels (Nolasco, 2017; USAID et al., 2013). Local PCs have worked successfully with local administration authorities from Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia and Uganda, who routinely meet at the border to discuss conflicts and coordinate with state security forces in the areas (Nolasco, 2017; USAID et al., 2013). While PCs are proven, effective sources of resilience, conflict management and peacebuilding in Kenya, they face various critiques and challenges, including inadequate participation of women and inability to address root causes. PCs have also been undermined by divisive clan interests and by neglect by new county leaders under devolution (USAID et al., 2013).

Traditional elders and Council of Elders (CoEs): Traditional elders and CoEs have played an effective role in enforcing peace initiatives and agreements and managing conflict in Northern Kenya (Nyamweru & Chidongo, 2018; Nolasco, 2017). One of their key benefits may lie in providing an entry point for other actors to engage in dialogue and to anchor infrastructures for peace (NCIC, 2018). Elders and CoEs may represent larger descent groups, sub-clans and clans, with very few of Kenya's CoE claiming an identity that transcends ethnicity, rendering them susceptible to clan politics (Nyamweru & Chidongo, 2018). CoEs played a prominent role in mobilising voters along ethnic and clan lines during the 2013 elections in Northern Kenya (Carrier & Kochore, 2014). In some places, strained relations between youth and community elders, and neglect of women, can undermine peace efforts, requiring more efforts to bridge the groups.

CoEs in Kenya have rarely supported a female candidate for any national position and have even intervened to discourage women from running (Nyabola, 2016). There are indications, however, that some local elder groups show signs of evolving to include younger people and women in their membership (Nyamweru & Chidongo, 2018).

Religious leaders and inter-faith dialogue: Customary and religious leaders continue to play a key role in influencing the attitudes and behaviours of communities, particularly remote, pastoral communities, benefitting from continued legitimacy and authority amongst such communities (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018). Local religious leaders have successfully engaged in conflict mediation, leading to the development of permanent peace dialogue mechanisms, involved in addressing cross-border conflict, violent extremism and VAWG. Strategies to counter violence and extremism include engaging more consistently with both Christian and Muslim religious leaders as a way to counter divisive narratives that fuel inter-communal tensions (International Alert, 2016). Inter-faith dialogue should take place not only among religious leaders and their partners, but also at the community level and in the educational system – which has traditionally offered segmented religious education (Wesonga, 2017).

Media: Kenya's vibrant and dynamic media, with several community and faith-based radio stations with a fairly large following across the country, has the potential to contribute to conflict prevention and peacebuilding (Maweu, 2019). This can be through the portrayal of promising potentials; and the promotion of dialogue and understanding among conflicting communities – through dramas, storytelling, and call-in talk shows (Maweu, 2019). Wajir Community Radio, which provides the community, particularly herders, with climate information, also serves as a platform for local communities to raise grievances and or policy-makers to take part in the dialogue (Mercy Corps, 2019; Sladkova, 2019). Community-based media in Kenya face various challenges, however, in particular lack of funding and reliance on donors (Maweu, 2019).

Business: The dramatic expansion of cross-border commerce from Somalia into Kenya has had a variable effect on cross-border conflict, often serving as a force for cross-clan collaboration and security, but also producing conflict over control of key trade routes (Nolasco, 2017). Cross-border trade has produced a network of regional business elites whose partnerships and business interests cut across clan lines, providing the potential for inclusive collaboration (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; Menkhaus, 2015). At the same time, there are reports that cross-border business monopolies have lured young people to engage in violence to eliminate business rivals from other clans and to continue illicit business operations. They have also relied on al-Shabaab for access to arms and to secure their business interests in exchange for facilitating youth recruitment (Sahgal et al., 2019).

Markets, such as livestock markets, can be important shared spaces that bring different groups and communities within and across borders together, triggering the potential for conflict or resilience and peacebuilding (USAID et al., 2013). Business can also serve to transform the characterisations and perceptions of marginalised populations, in particular, that of Kenyan Somalis (Varming, 2020; Kirui, 2019). Their business success gives them greater influence and clout in calling for improved services and equal treatment before the law; and can make them important, willing collaborators in peacebuilding efforts (Kirui, 2019).

2. Conflict profile

Conflict history and events

Threats to peace and security in North Eastern Kenya are closely linked to legacies of state violence and marginalisation (Lind et al., 2017; NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Historical injustices, neglect and repressive state policies under different governments over the decades have led to the political and economic marginalisation of the North East region and its underdevelopment. The state has also perpetrated indiscriminate violence against regional populations, particularly Kenyan Somalis (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017).

In 1962, a year prior to Kenya's independence, a majority of the people of Northern Kenya (then known as the Northern Frontier District) 'almost unanimously' preferred secession from the Kenyan state to Somalia, in a referendum organised by the British government. The British government ignored this result, however, and instead transformed the administrative arrangements of the Northern Frontier District into the North Eastern Province (NEP), comprising of Garissa, Wajir and Mandera (Lind et al., 2015). The first post-independence government made it clear it would maintain territorial borders, leading to insurgency across Northern Kenya (Kochore, 2016; Lind et al., 2015). The insurgents formed by Somalis and their allies, with support from Mogadishu, called themselves the Northern Frontier District Liberation Front, but were labelled *shifita* ('*bandit*') by the state (Kochore, 2016; Carrier & Kochore, 2014).

State security forces used indiscriminate violence against the local Somali population during 1964-1967 in the name of 'collective responsibility' for the insurgency, killing an estimated 4,000 Somalis and thousands of livestock, the foundation of the Somali pastoral economy (Whittaker, 2015; Lind et al., 2015; Branch, 2014).

Although the conflict officially came to an end in 1967, the NEP remained subject to emergency rule until 1991, with numerous instances of state-sponsored violence and intimidation against Somali residents. This included two massacres in Garissa and Wajir districts, in 1980 and 1984, respectively, and a nationwide 'screening' of all ethnic Somalis residing in Kenya during 1989 and 1990 (Whittaker, 2015).

Political liberalisation in the 1990s, and the advent of multi-party politics, contributed to a new context for violent conflict in North Eastern Kenya, in the form of clan conflict and competition over scarce resources (Chome, 2019). At the same time, initiatives in Wajir, Garissa and Mandera aimed at clan accommodation and conflict resolution proved successful in stemming violence and restoring public security by 2005 – and in the case of Wajir, since the mid-1990s (Chome, 2016; Menkhaus, 2008).

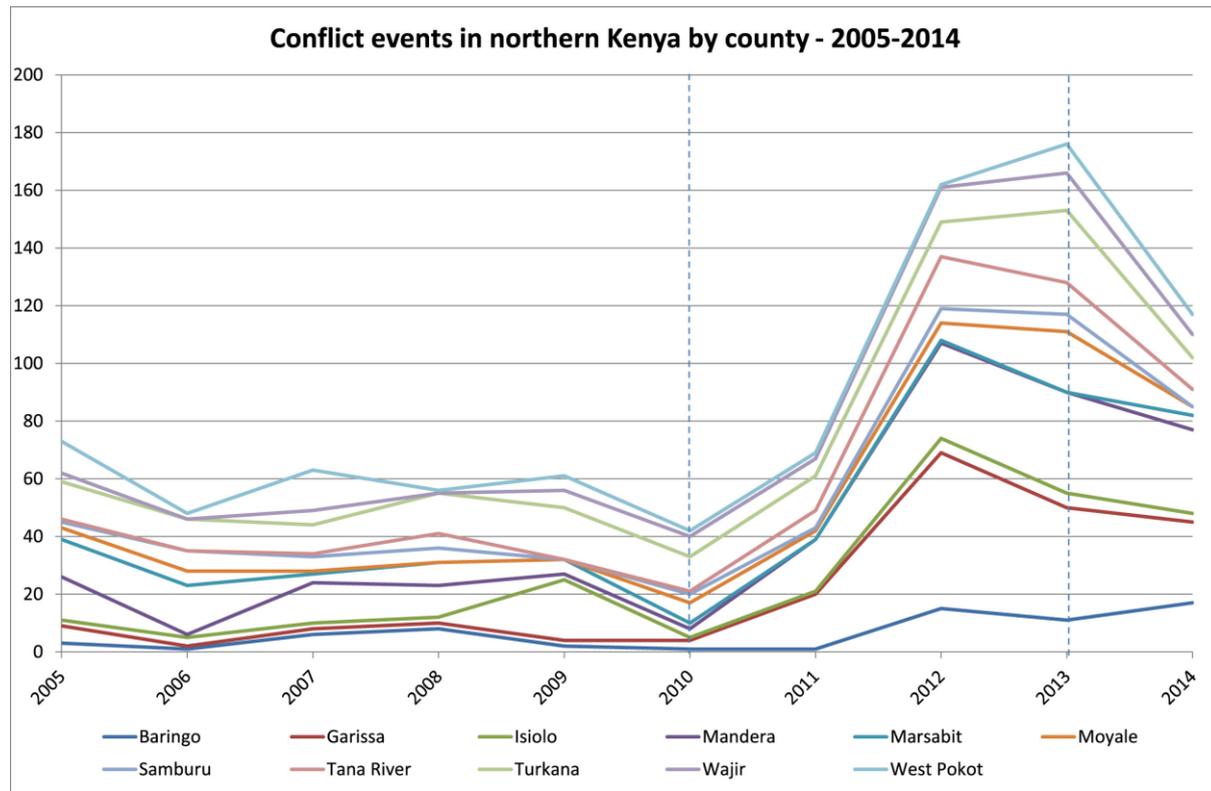
Widespread violence following Kenya's 2007 general election results, which left more than a thousand people dead and over 350,000 displaced, highlighted the country's troubled internal divisions, yet revealed the continued success of peace infrastructures in the North East (Nolasco, 2017; Lind et al., 2015; Menkhaus, 2015). Northern Kenya remained largely free of post-election violence that swept other parts of Kenya in 2007-2008 (Menkhaus, 2015). Since this post-election violence, Kenya has had two hotly contested elections (2013 and 2017), where the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission's voter registration, counting, and tallying processes were also challenged before Kenya's new Supreme Court (Maweu, 2019). The country was spared the violence experienced in the aftermath of the 2007 election. However, the challenges have still contributed to a lack of trust in electoral institutions

and government; and ongoing mistrust between and among different communities (Maweu, 2019). Efforts to address grievances, foster trust and to rebuild Kenya as a nation of diversity included a new Constitution (2010) and the devolution of power and resources to new county-level administrations (Scharrer, 2018; Lind et al., 2015).

Violence in the North East in subsequent elections has exposed a split in strategies with regard to election outcomes, with a negotiated democracy approach adopted in Wajir County and a winner-take-all in other counties. In Wajir County, which has experienced less violence, clan elders and political elites adopted a conflict prevention approach – in the form of ‘negotiated democracy’ - attempting with varying degrees of success, to broker pre-election deals that allocated prized county and national government seats to specific clans or tribes (Menkhaus, 2015). This approach thus sacrificed democratic principles for the purpose of maintaining peace. In some cases, negotiations have also sacrificed the incorporation and representation of women in politics. In some communities, the CoE determine the entire slate of candidates, which rarely include female candidates (Nyabola, 2016). In Mandera County, elections led to winner-take-all calculations on the part of communal groups, including inter-ethnic coalitions at the expense of third parties, contributing to a new cycle of violence (Menkhaus, 2015).

While devolution has begun to pivotally redress the state’s neglect and historic marginalisation of pastoral areas, incidents of violence have risen due in large part to the effect of al-Shabaab (see Figure 1). Much of the increase in conflict is seen in Kenya’s North Eastern counties. The influence of al-Shabaab, the Somalia-based militant organisation, is a key development in the trend of rising conflict in Northern Kenya, particularly in Garissa and Mandera (Lind, 2018). Since 2012, al-Shabaab has targeted Northern Kenya as a site of deadly and destabilising terrorist attacks. It has sought to mobilise support from within Kenya and to advance its regional ambitions by stirring anxiety and fear; and unmasking deep divisions and a social order based on unequal citizenships (Lind et al., 2017).

Figure 1. Number of conflict events by county in northern Kenya, 2005-2014



Source: Lind, 2018, p.41, drawn from ACLED data. © Elsevier.¹

Devolution over time appears to have helped to undercut support for al-Shabaab in the North East, while at the same time fostering greater competition among clans for local government posts (ICG, 2018). While the 2013 elections passed off fairly peacefully, there was subsequent violence in Mandera, connected with ethnic strategising and ethnic exclusion (Carrier & Kochore, 2014). There is some evidence that, as in Somalia, al-Shabaab has sought to exploit resulting clan disputes (Karienyé & Warfa, 2020; Mohamed & Warfa, 2019; Sahgal et al., 2019; ICG, 2018). Ultimately, struggles for county-level political dominance and long-standing exclusions of periphery regions and minority groups, combined with the al-Shabaab threat and counter-productive security responses that disproportionately target Kenyan Somalis, contribute to a complex pattern of conflict (Lind, 2018; Lind et al., 2017). For further discussion, see [Radicalisation and violent extremism](#) under Conflict dynamics.

There has been a spike in recent months in militant activity, which could be exacerbated further by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The rise in militant activity since December 2019 has continued into 2020 (REINVENT, 2020). Hardships caused by efforts to contain COVID-19 and resource allocations away from countering radicalisation and violent extremism to containing the pandemic may create a more enabling environment for militant activity (Mohamed, et al., 2020).

¹ Reprinted from: Political Geography, 63, Lind, J., Devolution, shifting centre-periphery relationships and conflict in northern Kenya, 135–147, Copyright 2018, with permission from Elsevier.

Long-term solutions to violence in the North East requires an examination of recurring historical issues, such as addressing longstanding injustices in regional development, including resource allocation, and widespread ethnic manipulation in identity politics, which tend to undermine national solidarity (Maweu, 2019).

Attention also needs to be paid to the various sources of resilience that have allowed (or have the potential to allow) peace to persist in the North East and nationally during different periods of time (Beston, 2018).

Key areas of conflict

While this section outlines particular types of conflict in the North East of Kenya, there is significant overlap and mutual dependence between the various kinds of conflict (Nolasco, 2017). This is evident, for example, in the case of cross-border conflicts, which can be fuelled in part by ethno-political related violence, violent extremist activities, and pastoralist-related conflict.

Ethno-political related violence: The hardening of pre-existing identities in Northern Kenya under British rule and the “territorialization of ethnicity”, whereby differing groups of pastoralists in the North made stronger claims to certain territory as their own, intensified in the post-1992 era of multi-party elections (Carrier & Kochore, 2014, p. 4). While competition over pastoral resources has historically fuelled communal clashes, competition for political offices over the past two decades has fuelled more violent conflicts in Northern Kenya (Menkhaus, 2015). Elections in Kenya have tended to significantly increase the propensity for ethnic profiling, with politicians and political parties adept at inciting the public and mobilising ethnic alliances. This has in some cases contributed to violence (NCIC, 2018; Nolasco, 2017).

Cross-border conflict: There has been a reported increase in the movement of armed groups across borders from Somalia and Ethiopia during armed conflicts in Northern Kenya since 1991 (Menkhaus, 2015). Cross-border conflict remains a challenge to address due to the porosity of international borders, illicit trade in stolen cattle and arms, and the homogeneity of border communities in Northern and North Eastern regions (Nolasco, 2017). While some of the cross-border violence can be considered to be ‘spillover’ effects from one side of the border to another, in most cases, it involves the rise of more complex cross-border conflict dynamics with clan groupings existing on both sides of various borders (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; Menkhaus, 2015). For further discussion, see [Cross-border clan actors](#) and [Cross-border conflict dynamics](#).

There are also various conflicts across county boundaries. Growing scarcity of water and grazing land has, for example, contributed to pastoralists bringing cattle across the Garissa-Tana River county boundary, with local Somalis fighting against Pokomo farmers to protect their resources (Wakube et al., 2017). Recent clashes in June 2020 between pastoral communities along the Wajir-Marsabit border, linked to recurrent fighting over pasture and other resources, have resulted in multiple deaths (Makong, 2020). See also [pastoralist-related conflict](#). There is also a political dispute linked to clan dynamics that Wajir County is expanding into Garissa (Wakube et al., 2017).

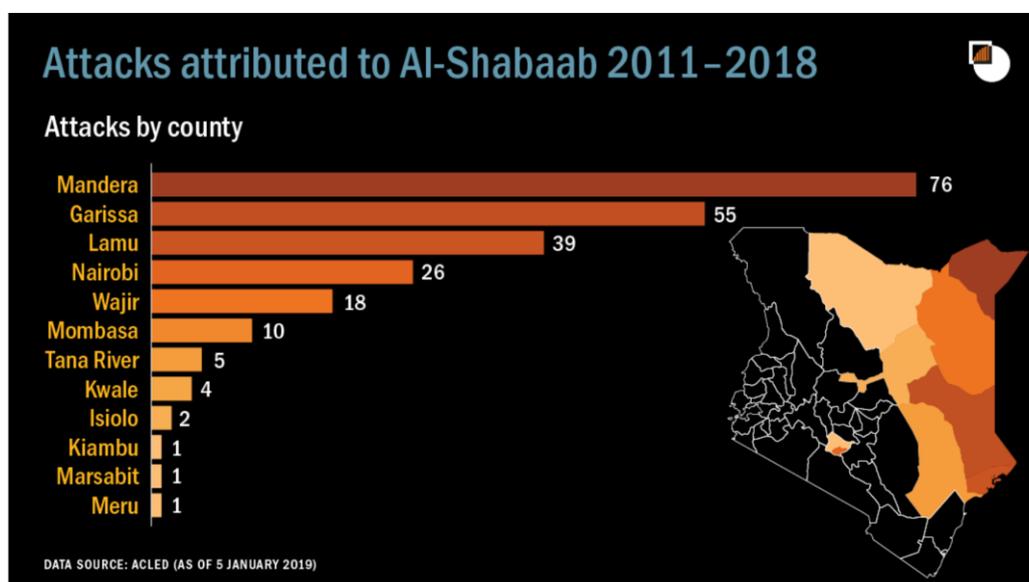
Radicalism and violent extremism:

Radicalisation and violent extremism in Kenya involves a pattern of repeated attacks and is inextricably linked with regional political problems, particularly in connection to Somalia (Nolasco, 2017). The North East of Kenya shares characteristics with other recruitment hotspots, including a history of atrocities perpetrated by unaccountable security forces, along with official neglect

and exclusion (ICG, 2018). Al-Shabaab was not associated with any conflict events inside Kenya prior to 2008, but by 2015, the organisation was implicated in nearly 40% of all conflict events in Northern Kenya, mostly concentrated in Mandera, Wajir and Garissa (Lind, 2018). These include the massacre of 147 people in the 2015 Garissa University attack; and the 2014 Mandera massacres in which 64 non-Muslim Kenyans were executed while travelling by bus to other counties (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). See Figure 2 and Table 1 for incidences of terrorism.

Border communities are simultaneously most vulnerable to attacks by al-Shabaab and to the resulting responses from state security forces (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018). Al-Shabaab has not pulled off a major strike outside Somalia since Garissa University. The threat of attack still lingers, however, and there has been a recent spike in violent incidents beginning at the end of 2019 (REINVENT, 2020; ICG, 2018). For further discussion, see [Al-Shabaab](#) under Actors and [Radicalisation and violent extremism](#) under Conflict dynamics.

Figure 2: Attacks attributed to al-Shabaab 2011-2018 (by county)



Source: Abdille, 2019. © Crisis Group.²

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Table 1: Incidents of terrorism in Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda (1 Jan 2016 - 27 July 2019)

	Kenya	Somalia	Tanzania	Uganda
2016	54	854	13	36
2017	225	1007	25	40
2018	145	1224	9	59
2019	42	1052	10	36
Total	466	4137	57	171

Source: van Zyl & Mahdi, 2019, drawn from ACLED data.

Pastoralist-related, resource and land conflicts: The majority of the population in the North East of Kenya is pastoral. Conflicts among pastoral communities, and unfavourable climate conditions, are key causes of forced displacement and migration (Nolasco, 2017). After a protracted period of cattle raiding and communal violence during the 1990s, community leaders and government representatives from the then Eastern and North Eastern Provinces brokered the Modogashe declaration of 2001 (Guyo, 2011). The declaration put pressure on government officials to prevent and/or arrest criminals in their localities; outlawed gun culture; and specified compensation for lives lost as a result of inter-communal conflict. It has been commended as an exemplary community peace initiative and is credited with the achievement of a long period of relative peace in the North East of Kenya (Guyo, 2011). Depleting resources and decreasing access to land has, however, become a driver of escalating inter-ethnic or inter-clan conflict over land, water and pasture (Nolasco, 2017; Mkutu et al., 2014). The Garre and Degodia clans, for example, frequently fight over control and ownership of water points (Nolasco, 2017). Further, government failures to invest in infrastructure and public services in pastoralist areas has exacerbated conflict in the region (Nolasco, 2017). In recent years, pastoralist communities have provided the largest market for small arms, rendering traditional cattle raiding much more lethal (Nolasco, 2017; Menkhaus, 2015).

Violence against women and girls: Derived from unequal power relationships between men and women, VAWG is a key conflict problem in Kenya. Each year as many as one million women and girls experience some form of violence (Nolasco, 2017). The 2007-2008 post-election violence was characterised by widespread physical and sexual gender-based violence perpetrated by security and state personnel (Nolasco, 2017). The North East of Kenya was spared much of this post-election violence that transpired throughout other parts of the country. Sexual offences in the North East are often addressed through the traditional *Maslaha* system, however, particularly in rural areas, which results in under-reporting of such crimes and lack of clarity about prevalence (USDOS, 2019). For further discussion, see [Traditional elders](#) under Sources of resilience.

The North East is the region in Kenya with the highest prevalence of female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C) in women aged 15-49 at 97.5%, in contrast to 21% throughout Kenya (28 Too Many, 2018; Nolasco, 2017). At the same time, 92.5% of women and 88.8% of men aged 15–49 in Kenya believe that FGM/C should be stopped (see 28 Too Many, 2018, 2). The Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act criminalises all forms of female genital mutilation, regardless of the age or status of a girl or woman (28 Too Many, 2018). Perpetrators of FGM/C have since been arrested and cases successfully prosecuted (28 Too Many, 2018; Beston, 2018). However, implementation of the law and its enforcement remains a challenge due primarily to inadequate resources, difficulties reaching remote rural areas and the limited capacity of law-enforcement agents (28 Too Many, 2018). In addition, the effectiveness of criminalisation is curtailed by custom/tradition and religious influences. Eighty-two percent of respondents in a study on FGM/C practices in Kenya noted that tradition was the main reason why people in their community practised FGM/C, while religious obligations were cited by 1% (Meroka-Mutua et al., 2020, 32). For further discussion, see [Traditional elders and Council of Elders](#) under Sources of Resilience.

Child marriage is also still practised, with most child marriages occurring in the North Eastern and Coast regions (OECD, 2019). It is estimated that almost one-fourth of girls in Kenya are married before the age of 18 (OECD, 2019). Similar to the case of FGM/C, criminalisation under the Marriage Act 2004 is insufficient to counter child marriage as they form part of long-standing customary practices and on socio-economic vulnerabilities. In order to effectively reduce the prevalence of child marriage and FGM/C, it is important to involve both genders in dialogue and action; and to address the root causes, such as poverty, lack of education, harmful social and cultural norms and unequal power dynamics (Warria, 2019).

3. Conflict and resilience actors

Most actors and categories of actors in the North East of Kenya are capable of advancing violence or peace, depending on the circumstances and calculation of their interests (Menkhaus, 2015). Al-Shabaab is the only actor that can be described as a ‘total spoiler’ in the region (Menkhaus, 2015). In addition, actors can comprise various categories, wearing multiple hats – such as serving simultaneously as a political leader, an elder and a business person (Menkhaus, 2015).

Government and security actors

Government officials: County governments have better local knowledge and are likely to enjoy greater local legitimacy. As such, they are well placed to address conflicts and promote peace, in partnership with the national government (Mkutu et al., 2014). In some cases, however, county governors have been accused of skewed appointments to their governments, based on support to ethnic constituencies, and marginalisation of minorities – which undermines their impartiality (Menkhaus, 2015; Mkutu et al., 2014). In other cases, such as in Wajir County, the first governor distributed positions and resources fairly (ICG, 2015). Governors, committed to peacebuilding, need to devote more time to confidence-building measures across communal lines (Menkhaus, 2015). Across Northern Kenya, the county commissioner has also assumed a lead role in peacebuilding efforts, for example coordinating peace committees and convening Councils of Elders (Menkhaus, 2015).

Military officials: The breakdown of trust between the local population and the security agencies began at independence, during the Shifta War, which pitted the Kenyan army against secessionist

insurgents, backed by the Somali government (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). A state of emergency was maintained until 1991, and the military maintained the strategy of 'collective punishment' to control and discipline the population throughout the 1970s and 1980s. They operated with little oversight (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; Lind et al., 2015). Security agencies have committed mass atrocities against Somalis, with massacres in Garissa, Mandera and Wajir during the 1980s that claimed thousands of lives (Scharrer, 2018; NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). This history has led to an ongoing erosion of trust between the local population and the security agencies of the post-colonial Kenyan state (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). People continue to be afraid of sharing information with the security agencies for fear of being targeted in response and held collectively responsible (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). The KDF have also been accused of engaging in corruption and of acting as brokers in the illegal cross-border trade of charcoal (Cannon & Pkalya, 2019; Mongare, 2019). For further discussion, see Weak social contract under Political and institutional factors, and Security issues under Conflict dynamics.

Police officials: Since independence, the police has been linked with the protection of a small political and economic elite at the expense of the protection of all citizens. This has contributed to the public's view of the police as a hostile, brutal, abusive, corrupt and ineffective force (Nolasco, 2017). The police also often lack the necessary equipment and infrastructure to carry out their duties (Nolasco, 2017). A National Task Force for Police Reform, created in 2009, and subsequent laws passed in 2011, have allowed for improvements in police accountability. This includes the establishment of the Police Oversight Board, now the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) overseeing the work of the Internal Affairs Unit and the Kenya Police Service, with powers to investigate and take corrective action on complaints of police misconduct and human rights abuses (Nolasco, 2017). Despite reforms, the endemic culture of corruption remains a deep-seated issue in the service (Nolasco, 2017). In some cases, the police have been accused of receiving large sums of money from terror suspects for the purposes of compromising investigations (Mongare, 2019). For further discussion, see Security issues under Conflict dynamics and Strengthened security arrangements under Sources of Resilience.

Kenyan Somalis, refugees and displaced persons

Kenyan Somalis: People had been leaving Somalia for Kenya since the 1970s as the Barre regime became increasingly restrictive (Lochery, 2012). The biggest group of the Somali population in Kenya live in the North East of Kenya, bordering Somalia and Ethiopia (Scharrer, 2018). Virtually all Somalis in Kenya are Muslim (Menkhaus, 2015). Kenyan Somalis share their socialisation with other fellow Kenyans, but are treated as if not quite belonging to Kenya (Scharrer, 2018). The way in which the Kenyan state has historically viewed and treated the Somali population has contributed to the 'othering' of Kenyan Somali citizens, placing their lived experience of citizenship and the equality of rights at risk (Lind et al., 2015). At the same time, Kenyan Somalis find themselves in various roles: as marginalised citizens, as high-ranking politicians, as businesspeople and as urbanised (lower) middle-class Kenyans (Scharrer, 2018). Somali elites in Kenya have in the past, such as during the 'screening' process, used their position in high offices to eliminate economic and political rivals through detention and deportation – mirroring conflicts expressed along clan lines in Somalia (Scharrer, 2018; Lochery, 2012).

Refugees and displaced persons: The presence of Somali refugees in Kenya has influenced politics in some parts of Kenya, such as in Mandera County (Lind et al., 2015). From the early 1990s onwards, anti-refugee sentiments were aimed at Somalis. They were not only collectively

associated with insecurity and later terrorism, but also to perceptions that they take away commercial opportunities from Kenyans (Scharrer, 2018; Lind et al., 2015). There have also been accusations that they acquired Kenyan passports illegally (Scharrer, 2018). Pressure to close Dadaab and for refugees to leave have grown since the rise of terrorist attacks (ICG, 2015). Armed violence in Northern Kenya has also produced temporary population displacement on a small scale, such as during armed clashes in Mandera and Wajir (Menkhaus, 2015).

External actors and influences

Cross-border clans: While the former Northern frontier district region is home to a number of interrelated ethnic groups, including the Boran, Rendille, Gabra, Sakyue and Burji, it is primarily ethnic Somalis who inhabit the North East (Whittaker, 2015). In Somali society, the clan is the key unit of social structure (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; Menkhaus, 2015). The Somali are divided between six clan families, which can be further sub-divided into clan, sub-clan and lineage groups. In the North East, the major clan groups are the Marehan, Ogaden, Ajuran, Degodia, Garre and Murulle (Whittaker, 2015). Loyalty to one's clan is used at times by powerful individuals and groups to manipulate and mobilise individual clans against the others, and in some cases even among sub-clans of the same clan (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Since clan groupings exist on both sides of various borders,³ clan conflict can be related to wider cross-border factors, interests and spillovers (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; Menkhaus, 2015). The most recent conflict between the Garre and Degodia clans, for example, is believed to have started in Ethiopia before spilling over the border into Kenya's Mandera, and later, Wajir Counties (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). For further discussion, see the three [County profiles](#) and [Cross-border conflict dynamics](#).

Al-Shabaab: Al-Shabaab incursions from Somalia into Kenya is arguably the country's main threat from foreign enemies (Botha & Abdile, 2020; Lind et al., 2017). Al-Shabaab was formed around 2004 by a small circle of militants. Its armed struggle against Ethiopian 'occupiers' between 2006 and 2009 generated considerable support among Somalis (ICG, 2018). The group's recruitment in Kenya can be traced back to its origins in 2006 (Lind et al., 2017). The threat posed by al-Shabaab, and the occurrence of a series of kidnappings along the Kenyan coast in which al-Shabaab was implicated, prompted the Kenyan government to deploy troops to Somalia in 2011 (Botha & Abdile, 2020; Lind et al., 2017). Rather than prevent further attacks in Kenya, the deployment of the Kenyan Defence Force has led to a rise in al-Shabaab attacks, most notably the Garissa University attacks in 2015, killing 148 people, and Nairobi's Westgate shopping centre attack in 2013, killing 67 people. These were planned and executed from Somalia in response to Kenyan presence in that country (Botha & Abdile, 2020; Lind et al., 2017). While it is reported that al-Shabaab's recruitment and popular support in the North East have subsided since 2015, there have still been sporadic assaults on police stations and on 'non-local' (mainly Christian) public servants, including teachers (ICG, 2018).

Al-Hijra: This is a Kenyan fundamentalist group previously known as the Muslim Youth Centre in Mombasa (Nolasco, 2017). It became the means for al-Shabaab to take the war to Kenya. The

³ For a map of Somali clan distribution in the Horn of Africa (Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia) see Kenya Somali Consortium (2017, 21 July). Somali clans distribution in the horn of Africa. <http://kenyasomali.blogspot.com/2017/07/somali-clans-distribution-in-horn-of.html>

foundations, however, on which al-Shabaab relied upon to garner support are the social and economic grievances of the wider Kenyan Muslim community (Anderson & McKnight, 2015).

Civil society actors

Women: Women in the North East of Kenya have successfully mobilised in support of peace. Women peace activists in Wajir County, for example, gathered informally and mobilised women from opposing clans to discuss solutions, during a time when pastoralist violence was at a peak. This encouraged momentum toward a more formalised peacemaking process, leading to the negotiated 1993 Al Fatah Declaration – a declaration for return to peace (Wise et al., 2019). More recently, following the Garre-Marehan conflict in Mandera in March 2012, Belet Hawa women for peace conducted a series of peace dialogues with youth and women to stop revenge attacks. They are credited with securing the implementation of the ceasefire (USAID et al., 2013). Women for peace organisations have also led trauma healing work implemented following outbreaks of violence (USAID et al., 2013). Despite playing such crucial roles, women are often looked down upon in decision-making processes in the highly patriarchal Somali community of North Eastern Kenya (Dahir, 2011). The more women speak out and voice their commitment to peace and non-violence, and the more they form part of networking forums with other stakeholders, the greater the likelihood that attitudes toward women’s role will shift (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018). Other key impediments to women’s active role in peacebuilding include illiteracy and lack of conflict resolution and mediation skills; fear of victimisation; lack of confidence; chronic poverty and family responsibilities; and poor coordination among women (USAID et al., 2013).

Women have at times played a mixed role in conflict. In Mandera County, for example, women have been accused of encouraging conflict using folklore, inciteful songs and poems, despite the fact that their suffering is disproportionate to that of men during violent conflict. Some of these poems, songs and hateful messages have gone viral on social media, intensifying tensions between clans and exacerbating violent conflict in some cases (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017).

Elders: Traditional elders and CoEs retain extensive influence and authority in the Somali context generally (Nyamweru & Chidongo, 2018; USAID et al., 2013). Communal groups in Northern Kenya have traditional elders whose roles include negotiating application of customary law – an important source of conflict management, conflict resolution and enforcement of peace agreements (Nolasco, 2017; Menkhaus, 2015). Elders have also been key actors, however, in mobilising voters along ethnic and clan lines and provoking conflict, as in the 2013 elections in Northern Kenya. Such attempts succeeded strongly in Mandera (Carrier & Kochore, 2014; Menkhaus, 2015). The proliferation of multiple clan elders allied with different politicians has in some cases eroded their influence (USAID et al., 2013). In addition, Councils of Elders in Kenya have rarely supported a female candidate for any national position and have even intervened to discourage women from running (Nyabola, 2016). For further discussion, see [Traditional elders and Council of Elders](#) under Sources of Resilience.

Religious leaders: Customary and religious leaders continue to play a significant role in influencing the attitudes and behaviours of communities in Northern Kenya, particularly in remote, pastoral communities (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018). In Mandera County, for example, religious leaders played important roles in cross border dialogue prior to Kenya’s incursion into Somalia, facilitating many cross border incidents, ranging from the release of captured persons to helping address allegations of police brutality (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). After the incursion, however, the same leaders found themselves on the receiving end, treated with suspicion by the

Kenyan government of supporting al-Shabaab; while at the same time targeted by al-Shabaab as 'enemies of the cause' (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). When a violent conflict erupts and the government fails to contain it, religious leaders are still often called upon even though they do not always receive the requisite facilitation and suitable conditions to mitigate conflicts (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). For further discussion, see [Religious leaders and inter-faith dialogue](#) under Sources of Resilience.

Youth: The appeal of extremism among young people is a significant threat to peace and stability in the North East of Kenya (Lind et al., 2015). Much research finds that the treatment of youth by security personnel is a frequently cited driver of recruitment into violent groups, such as in the case of youth in Mandera (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018). Other pull factors include inadequate educational opportunities and unemployment (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Forums bringing together youth leaders from different clans across Mandera County have given young people the platform to share their learning, experiences, and successes and to continue to build their networks (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018). Youth have organised peace talks; held peace rallies to provide civic education to the community and to pass messages of peaceful, free, and fair elections; and organised meetings with local security agencies to enhance trust-building (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018). For further discussion, see [Radicalisation and violent extremism](#) under Conflict dynamics and [Strengthened security arrangements](#) under Sources of Resilience.

Business people: Most businesses in the Northern and North East Kenya have a strong stake in basic peace and security and have thus been active supporters of local peace committees (Menkhaus, 2015). Clashes, such as recent violence between the Garre and Degodia clans in Mandera and Wajir and violent extremist attacks by al-Shabaab in Garissa town have been problematic for local business (Menkhaus, 2015). Businesses are often reliant on cross-communal trust networks and partnerships, which allow for useful lines of communication to manage conflicts (Menkhaus, 2015). The role of business can be double-edged, however (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019). Business interests can and sometimes do support or even provoke armed conflict, for example by inciting their clans to violence as part of an effort to drive a rival business person out of town or lay claim to an important trade route (Menkhaus, 2015). There are reports that powerful business people have used young people to execute attacks or assassinate business rivals from the other clan in order to ensure the continuity of conflict and illicit business, such as the flow of small arms and smuggling of food items, such as sugar, milk and cooking oil (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019). Al-Shabaab has embedded itself in cross-border trade, taxing traders at roadblocks and providing escort from Kismayo to Mandera Town through trade routes which were weakly manned by the police patrols (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019). In turn, efforts by business people to protect their interests and safeguard smuggling routes at the Kenya-Somalia border have provided an enabling platform for al-Shabaab to extend their operations (Sahgal et al., 2019). The emergence of Somalia-Kenya cross-border business monopolies, alongside the presence of al-Shabaab, have thus perpetuated clan violence and disorder. For further discussion, see [Radicalisation and violent extremism](#) under Conflict dynamics.

For further discussion on positive aspects of business and business actors, see [Business](#) under Sources of Resilience.

4. County profiles: Garissa, Mandera and Wajir

This report focuses on three counties in the North East: Garissa, Mandera and Wajir.

Garissa County: Bordering Somalia, Garissa County possesses unusual demographics due to the presence of the large refugee population it hosts at Dadaab, near the Somali border. The county itself is home to 841,353 residents, according to the 2019 census. The vast majority of Garissa county residents (refugees excluded) are ethnic Somalis from the Ogaden clan with its sub-clans: Aulihan, Abudwak and Abdallah (Chome, 2016; Menkhaus, 2015; Mkutu et al., 2014). The other groups in the county, considered ‘corner tribes,’ include the Mohamed Zubeyr, Makabul, and a few members of the Degodia (Rotich & Warfa, 2019). The three sub-clans of Abudwak, Aulihan and Abdallah in Garissa Township fight for resources, such as plots of land, particularly in Waberi East location (Rotich & Warfa, 2019).

While the County is largely rural, Garissa town, which is the biggest commercial centre in Northern Kenya, and Dadaab town (separate from the refugee camp) have attracted a large number of migrants, including professionals, business owners and casual labourers (Menkhaus, 2015). The County is semi-arid and experiences somewhat higher levels of rainfall than most of the rest of Northern Kenya (Menkhaus, 2015).

Garissa County has not suffered from large scale communal violence in recent years but has seen a noticeable deterioration in public security due to a spike in violent criminality and terrorist attacks by al-Shabaab (Menkhaus, 2015; Mkutu et al., 2014). In addition, devolution and the creation of new political boundaries have given rise to a number of disagreements between sub-clans, which could raise political competition to conflict levels (Chome, 2016). The Abudwak dominates political seats in the county (Rotich & Warfa, 2019). Political competition is a key source of clan animosity and hostilities. Politicians engage clan elders and youth in their fight for seats and elected leaders tend to favour their clans in awarding tenders and employment opportunities (Rotich & Warfa, 2019). Recent research finds that leaders of the Abudwak clan tend to dominate the share of county positions and economic resources, with other groups and Ogaden sub-clans politically marginalised (Rotich & Warfa, 2019). Such inter-clan tension can increase the prospect for the infiltration of al-Shabaab, with respondents also noting that some clans have acquired guns from Somalia, which can escalate clan conflicts (Rotich & Warfa, 2019).

Mandera County: The County’s strategic location at Kenya’s border with both Somalia and Ethiopia means that its conflicts are thoroughly regionalised and cannot be understood without reference to wider cross-border factors and interests (Menkhaus, 2015). The politics of clan identity among Somali clans and hostilities have frequently spilled over into the county, triggering inter-communal conflicts, border conflicts, competition over limited resources, and recurrent terrorism activities (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019).

According to the 2019 census, the county is home to 867,457 residents. The population comprises mainly ethnic Somalis categorised into four clan groupings: the Garre, the Murulle and the Degodia clans, and the ‘Corner Tribes’, a grouping of the smaller clans (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Mandera County is extremely hot and arid and the population is primarily rural and pastoral (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019; Menkhaus, 2015). Mandera ranks near the bottom of all Kenyan counties in terms of poverty levels, with thousands of households in Mandera lacking access to basic infrastructure (Abdille, 2019; Cannon & Ali, 2018; Menkhaus, 2015).

The history of contemporary inter-clan conflict in Mandera is marked by periods of high and low peaks, with the most recent cycle of conflict occurring in 2011-2015. Traditionally fuelled by competition over resources, recent conflicts have been exacerbated by new trigger factors such

as competition between clans for political influence, disputes over land, and attacks by al-Shabaab (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; Chome, 2016; Menkhaus, 2015).

Devolution has widened gaps between communities, with bigger clans and their allies benefiting while minorities and the marginalised lack representation in county affairs. This further aggravates existing inter-clan conflicts in the county (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019). Violence between the Garre and Degodia clans in 2013, 2014 and 2016 were related to political devolution and the rise in clan-based competition for resources in the county (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019). The Garre community has tended to dominate politics in Mandera County, with the Murulle and Garre considering themselves to be residents and Degodia as migrants. The Garre and Murulle clan alliance that formed the 2013–2017 County Government had the effect of isolating the Degodias. While the Degodia lost their Mandera North constituency then, they won the parliamentary seat back in 2017 (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019). Local-level competition is often compounded by the influence of political events in Somalia and Ethiopia (Chome, 2016). Further, politicians have fuelled inter-clan conflicts by orchestrating massive transfers of voters from other counties and neighbouring Ethiopia and Somalia regions to tilt the outcome of election for County gubernatorial and constituency posts (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019).

Wajir County: The County stretches from the border of Ethiopia southward to Garissa County, bordering Somalia and Isiolo and Marsabit counties to the east and Mandera County to the northeast. It is thinly populated and mainly pastoral. Wajir's climate is hot and arid. The most recent 2019 census cited a population of 781,263. The vast majority of the population is ethnically Somali, with three Somali clans predominant: the Ajuran, Degodia and Ogaden (Chome, 2016; Menkhaus, 2015). The Degodia clan form the majority in the County followed by the Ogaden and Ajuran respectively. The main sub-clans of Degodia are Masaare, Fai and Jibrael while the sub-clans for Ajuran are Gelbaris and Waqle (Karienyé & Warfa, 2020).

Clans such as the Degodia and Ogaden have ties with kin in Mandera and Garissa counties as well as in Ethiopia and Somalia. Such cross-border ties have at times been cited as the main cause of communal conflict in the County (Chome, 2016). Wajir County also suffers similarly from land pressures and disputes and political contestation over county government and constituencies, similar to other counties in the region (Menkhaus, 2015). Clan numerical majority within the County has been exploited to gain political and economic power, marginalising the minority clans (Karienyé & Warfa, 2020). Wajir's political and civic leadership have, however, been more committed to and more successful at managing these pressures and in stemming and reducing violence (Menkhaus, 2015). Existing civic-government arrangements, such as the Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC) formed in 1995, have created a local environment well predisposed to conflict mitigation. For further discussion, see [Peace Committees](#) under Sources of Resilience. Incidents of inter-clan conflicts and violence in Wajir were minimal prior to 2014, in comparison to Mandera and Garissa (Karienyé & Warfa, 2020). Conflicts stemming from political devolution are, however, threatening to weaken these local capacities. In addition, Wajir continues to be vulnerable to the spillover of conflict from other counties, in particular from Mandera County as witnessed in mid-2014 (Chome, 2016). The weakening of the WPDC, due to lack of funding, purposeful neglect and transition to County Peace Forums (CPFs), that are considered to be more aligned with the governing team, has also contributed to the rise in clan conflict since 2014 (Karienyé & Warfa, 2020).

5. Root causes of conflict

Political and institutional factors

Elite power struggles, identity politics and political exclusion

One of the most potent drivers of conflict in Kenya is the persistence of a system of political patronage, often along ethnic lines (Nolasco, 2017; Cox et al., 2014). The behaviour of political elites is deeply tied to identity politics and clientelism, whereby state resources, jobs and contracts are allocated on an ethnic basis. This continues to undermine social cohesion - fostering divisive political narratives, inter-ethnic competition, ethnic stereotyping, and the hardening of ethnic identities that were previously more fluid and nuanced (Nolasco, 2017; Cox et al., 2014). Elites have also engaged in the incitement of communities, through hate speech (Cox et al., 2014). These processes have contributed to a deterioration in community relations, communal clashes and violent crime (Nolasco, 2017). In the North East of Kenya, identity politics are central to Kenya-Somalia border conflicts. Influential Somali clan members, such as political leaders, often manipulate Somali clan identities and existing cleavages in their pursuit of power and control of resources (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; Nolasco, 2017). In Mandera County, political tensions between the Degodia and Mandera's majority Garre have escalated to violent clashes between the two communities between 2007-2013, which have spread into neighbouring Wajir County, where the Degodia form the majority (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017).

New electoral rules and provisions for inclusion now exist but are insufficient to counter the entrenched culture of clientelism. Instituted in 2013, devolution in Kenya seeks to bring government closer to the people by devolving political and economic resources to the 47 county governments, such that local needs can be addressed more effectively (Cannon & Ali, 2018). Electoral rules that incentivise crosscutting coalitions and lay out new processes and requirements for inclusivity are now in place. However, informal, divisive political behaviours often continue to dominate government apparatus and are deeply embedded within governance processes (Cox et al., 2014). This makes it very difficult for leaders to truly support the broader social cohesion agenda (Cox et al., 2014). Even though crosscutting social engagement can often be observed in everyday life (religious, economic, business, families, shared traditions), the 'rules of the game' for politics and allocation of state resources remain identity-based and deeply divisive (Cox et al., 2014).

Vulnerabilities of populations in the North East of Kenya under the prior centralised system now centres upon minority clans within counties (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Devolution has resulted in the entrenchment of 'winner-takes-all' ethnic politics at the county level. Communities previously marginalised at the national level are now powerful majorities in their local counties (D'Arcy & Nistotskaya, 2019). In Mandera County, for example, minority clans stand at a political, economic and socio-cultural disadvantage relative to the big clans. Minority respondents cite issues with inequitable resource-sharing, mostly in the form of inequitable representation in the County Assembly and low employment numbers in the Mandera County Public Service Board (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Some minority clans, such as the Watta community that has never been employed by the County government and the Corner Tribes consider their rights as having been better protected under the former centralised system of government. They report the loss of plots, farms and some elective seats (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). The plight of minority clans and other special groups is a potential conflict trigger and impediment to peace (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017).

For further discussion, see [Devolution dynamics](#).

Weak social contract

Current threats to peace and security in the North East arise in part from a long trajectory of problematic state-society (or state-citizen) relations between the Kenyan state and ethnic Somalis (Lind et al., 2017). North Eastern Kenya has historically been relegated to the periphery of the Kenyan Nation during colonial and post-colonial times. The British labelled Somalis the 'Alien Somali' and, after independence, the Kenyan state continued to treat Somalis as not quite belonging to the state (Scharrer, 2018). Treated as a thing apart, people in Northern Kenya experienced social, political and economic marginalisation from the post-colonial Kenyan state, undermining any sense of belonging to the nation (Kochore, 2016). For further discussion, see [Inequality, exclusion and marginalisation](#).

The state has not only neglected the region, it has also committed atrocities in the North East, which has made relationships between the communities and state deeply problematic (Lind, 2018; Lind et al., 2017; Kochore, 2016; Carrier & Kochore, 2014). When the violent *shifita* conflict officially came to an end in 1967, a state of emergency remained in force, and counterinsurgency methods of administration, including the indiscriminate use of collective punishment (a carryover from colonialism), continued in NEP, spanning into the 1990s (Whittaker, 2015). State violence included two massacres in Garissa and Wajir districts, in 1980 and 1984 respectively, and further atrocities committed during a nationwide 'screening' of all ethnic Somalis residing in Kenya during 1989-1990 (Whittaker, 2015). During the 'screening' process, the government scrutinised the identity and origins of Kenyan Somalis in NEP, in order to distinguish 'original' from 'foreign' Somalis and to expel the latter. Those declared citizens were granted pink 'certificates of verification' (Scharrer, 2018; Lochery, 2012). This exercise was framed as a response to insecurity in the North, blamed on the growing presence of ethnic Somalis (Lochery, 2012). Somali elites in Kenya also used the opportunity to eliminate economic and political rivals through detention and deportation (Scharrer, 2018; Lochery, 2012).

How the Kenyan state has historically viewed and treated the ethnic Somali population has contributed to the 'othering' of Kenyan Somali citizens, putting their lived experience of citizenship and equality of rights at risk (Lind et al., 2015). While the rhetoric of 'othering' has shifted from *shifita* and bandits, to poachers, refugees, then pirates and now al-Shabaab, the political strategies adopted by the Kenyan state remain the same. They include screening and registration, checkpoints and repeated raids now in the urban areas (Scharrer, 2018). Even as Kenyan Somalis have become a stronger part of Kenyan political and economic spheres, they remain marginalised in terms of legal recognition of their citizenship (Scharrer, 2018). The experience with 'screening' demonstrated that at any moment one might lose one's status as someone who belongs here (Scott-Villiers, 2017). Even after the identity requirements on Kenyan Somalis were removed in 1997, in practice, they have continued to be subject to routine stop and searches by the police and coerced into paying bribes (Lind et al., 2017; Lochery, 2012). It also remains difficult for Kenyan Somalis to access basic citizenship documentation (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017).

The sense of being part of a targeted, marginalised group is not only about state-society relations but also citizen-society relations (Lind et al., 2015). The dynamics between the Kenyan Somali population and other Kenyan nationals further influence a sense of citizenship among the Kenyan Somalis (Lind et al., 2015). The success stories of Kenyan Somalis

contributing to society in political and economic spheres could change the narrative that sees them as outsiders and a threat to security (see the section on [Business](#) under Sources of Resilience) (Kirui, 2019). This has not necessarily materialised, however, and has instead in some cases fuelled fears that Somalis are taking over the country (Kirui, 2019). Further, Kenya Somalis are often still seen as a security threat, driven in large part by the politicisation of terrorist attacks by various politicians and the securitised responses of the state, in the form of military intervention in Somalia and counter-terrorism raids in Somali areas (International Alert, 2016; Lind et al., 2015). This affects perceptions of and attitudes toward Somalis in everyday life (Lind et al., 2015). For further discussion, see [Radicalisation and violent extremism](#) under Conflict dynamics.

The treatment of particular populations in Kenya as a security threat has extended beyond Kenyan Somalis, who are primarily Muslim, to other Kenyan Muslims (Scharrer, 2018). Concerns over al-Shabaab and fears of large-scale attacks have led to a widening of state surveillance of Muslims generally. As in the case of ethnic Somalis, the vulnerability of many predominantly Muslim groups in Kenya (e.g. coastal Muslims and Kenyans of Arab or Asian descent) has a historical basis (Lochery, 2012). When applying for a passport, for example, Muslims are required to produce additional documentary evidence of citizenship, in contrast to Christian applicants (Botha & Abdile, 2020).

State-society relations in the North East is also undermined by the absence of the state from people's daily lives - a pattern of absent or poor basic public services, including the provision of security services (Lind, 2018; International Alert, 2016). The problem has shifted from state violence to state neglect of insecurity in the region. The state tends to view insecurity in the region through a narrow lens of clan divisions, requiring local mediation and resolution, thus absolving itself of any responsibility to respond (Lind et al., 2015). This perception that insecurity in the North East has become normalised reflects the 'othering' of Somalis in Kenyan society (Lind et al., 2015). For example, experts interviewed compared the slow and inadequate government response to the outbreak of clashes in Mandera and Wajir in June 2014, which left 60 dead and over 75,000 displaced, with the rapid high-level government response to the Mpeketoni attack during the same month, with 67 victims (Lind et al., 2015). Other services are also lacking, such as education. Secondary school facilities in the North East are more dispersed than in other parts of the country, undermining access (Abdille, 2019).

Muslim communities in low-income neighbourhoods in Kenya have also come to see themselves as being at the periphery of the state's interest, due to a lack of government services, including security. The lack of government legitimacy in such marginalised communities and the need to turn to informal networks for services is also a key challenge in countering violent extremism (International Alert, 2016). For further discussion, see [Radicalisation and violent extremism](#) under Dynamics.

A key aspect of the security crisis in the North East – and in Kenya in general – is the loss of faith in the capacity of the state to deliver collective security and find a just solution to local conflicts. This pertains to the state in centralised or devolved form (ICG, 2015). Due to prior state-perpetrated acts of violence and now the sense of neglect, security institutions are often not trusted by local communities in the region (Lind, 2018). For further discussion, see [Security issues](#) under Dynamics.

These problems with state-society relations and citizenship are intertwined with generalised discrimination faced by Somali Kenyans and other groups in the North East of Kenya. See the next section on Regional inequality, exclusion and marginalisation.

Regional inequality, exclusion and marginalisation

The threat to peace and security in the North East is strongly tied to unaddressed historical injustices, including entrenched forms of marginalisation, exclusion and inequality (Lind et al., 2017). The long history of patronage and clientelism has created a system where access to political power ensures access to scarce economic resources, benefitting some groups and largely marginalising others (Cox et al., 2014). This has also fostered inter-group grievances and undermines movement toward inter-group reconciliation necessary for cohesion (Cox et al., 2014). Exclusion and inequality as a cause of conflict may be connected to the weak social contract, discussed under political and institutional factors.

Northern Kenya, and in particular the North East, has long experienced the highest levels of poverty and underdevelopment. The levels of poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment in the Kenya-Somalia border area, in particular, are among the highest in Kenya and are key contributors to crime, insecurity, and alienation (Nolasco, 2017). Garissa, Wajir and Mandera are among the seven poorest of Kenya's 47 counties, with poverty levels of 66%, 63% and 78%, respectively, compared to 36% across the country (Abdille, 2019). The North and North East lag behind the rest of the country in a range of education, health, and infrastructure indicators (see Figure 3). Northern Kenyan counties are at the bottom of almost every human development ranking in Kenya, with Wajir and Mandera cited as falling among the bottom four (Menkhaus, 2015). In Mandera County, high levels of maternal mortality surpass the national average and that of wartime Sierra Leone, according to the United Nations Population Fund (see NCIC & Interpeace, 2017).

Figure 3: Development indicators – North & North Eastern Kenya vs National percentages

NEDI Counties Development Indicators		NEDI	National
	Average Poverty Rate	68%	36%
	Primary School Attendance	55%	82%
	Secondary School Attendance	19%	37%
	Skilled Births	34%	71%
	Literacy Among Women	41%	89%
	Access to Safe Water	57%	72%
	Improved Sanitation	34%	59%

Source: World Bank, 2018. © The World Bank Group.⁴

Note: NEDI = North and Northeastern Development Initiative.⁵

Most people in Northern Kenya are pastoralists dependent on increasingly scarce resources, such as water, arable land and pasture, for their survival (Witsenburg & Adano, 2009). Northern Kenya houses the greatest concentration of pastoral communities in the country and there is a strong perception among these communities that the government has treated them and continues to treat them unfairly, signifying a high level of local alienation from the government (Menkhaus, 2015).

One of the most enduring consequences of the *shifita* counter-insurgency measures has been the sense of victimisation among pastoralists in Northern Kenya (Whittaker, 2012). The various measures taken then by the state, which resulted in livestock losses and impoverishment, continue to reverberate today in terms of the economic and social marginalisation of pastoralist groups (Scharer, 2018; Whittaker, 2012). By regulating and restricting movement to and from pasture areas, as was done during colonial times, livestock keepers were left unable to properly care for their herds. This form of communal punishment of North Eastern Kenyans for *shifita* systematically reduced livestock holdings, leaving many

⁴ The World Bank Group authorises the use of this material subject to the terms and conditions on its website: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/about/legal/terms-and-conditions>

⁵ NEDI counties include Garissa, Isiolo, Lamu, Mandera, Marsabit, Samburu, Tana River, Turkana, Wajir and West Pokot.

households destitute (Branch, 2014; Whittaker, 2012). Further, the state has not invested much in infrastructure and public services in the pastoralist region (Nolasco, 2017).

Muslims concentrated in the North East, coastal area and parts of Nairobi have felt excluded from power in a country dominated by Christians (84% of the population) - where power and economic opportunity is highly correlated with ethnicity (International Alert, 2016). Combined with the historical track record of state security abuses of populations in Northern Kenya, these socio-political and economic grievances held by Muslim communities have produced a narrative of Muslim persecution by the Kenyan state and its Western allies (International Alert, 2016; Menkhaus, 2015). This has provided a platform for mobilisation into violence. For further discussion, see Radicalisation and violent extremism under Conflict dynamics and the Military under Actors.

Resource and environmental factors

Northern Kenya is an economically marginalised region, where water, arable land, and pasture are scarce and shrinking resources (Witsenburg & Adano, 2009). Competition for the control of political and economic resources – and unequal access to land and natural resources - are considered to be drivers of recurrent violence and key threats to security (Botha & Abdile, 2020; Whittaker, 2017).

High poverty levels in the arid and semi-arid North East have been attributed partly to a historical bias in resource allocation, whereby more resources were allocated to high-rainfall areas under the assumption that such areas would give better returns to investments than arid or semi-arid lands (ASALs). Wajir, Mandera and Garissa are 100% ASAL (Njoka et al., 2016) – and ASALs contain 18 of the 20 poorest constituencies in Kenya (Njoka et al., 2016).

The weaker socio-economic situation in Kenya's ASALs means that climate shocks and stresses, especially drought, normally have greater consequences in these areas, such as acute food shortages (Njoka et al., 2016). Climate instability has produced more frequent and intense weather extremes, such as more frequent experience with droughts in the North East and other parts of Kenya (Njoka et al., 2016). Environmental challenges, combined with droughts and a history of ethnic violence, exacerbate the potential for widespread violence in Northern Kenya. Other socio-economic consequences of climate change include changing demographic patterns in ASALs. This stems from the relocation of populations to towns after losses of livestock-based livelihoods and from insecurity and conflicts arising from competition for scarce resources (Njoka et al., 2016). At the same time, a study on how climate change may affect raids-related violence finds that greater rainfall instead has the potential to increase the level of raids in the short-term by increasing the demand for agricultural land that performs well with more rainfall (Witsenburg & Adano, 2009).

Pastoral conflicts have become more frequent and unpredictable, exacerbated by scarce resources, and have increasingly involved the use of arms (Njoka et al., 2016; Witsenburg & Adano, 2009). In Mandera County, for example, a primary cause of inter-clan conflicts among pastoralist communities has been the scarcity of water and pasture and clan struggles to control grazing land and water points (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019). Growing resource scarcity in pastoral areas is attributed to population increase, environmental degradation, restricted access to pasture (due to enclosures, ranches, and development projects), all of which heighten communal tensions (Menkhaus, 2015). The illicit cross-border supply of small arms and demand by

pastoralist communities has made pastoral conflicts more violent and lethal (Nolasco, 2017; Menkhaus, 2015). For further discussion, see [Pastoralist-related violence](#) under Conflict profile.

The spoils of development have complicated and created new patterns of violence (Whittaker, 2017). In colonial times, the available spoils of development were limited to water and pasture. The exclusionary nature of colonial water and grazing schemes created a zero-sum-game in the struggle for access to these resources, manipulated for local elites in search of power and advantages over rivals (Whittaker, 2017). Development projects have continued after independence to form part of governmental efforts to gain political control over peripheral territories that are perceived to have economic potential (Whittaker, 2017). In the context of devolution, investment in development also has the potential to fuel conflict. Substantial investment in agriculture by the Mandera County government, for example, is a factor that could inadvertently trigger further conflicts through increased competition for resources (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017).

Devolution in Kenya has coincided with the discovery of oil in Turkana County with prospecting also taking place in Garissa county (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; Mkutu et al., 2014). This is likely to transform pastoral areas of Kenya and their livelihood systems (Mkutu et al., 2014). Oil exploration changes the land value system to a commercial one, raising the demand for and prices of land (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Kenya has four sedimentary basins (Lamu, Anza, Mandera, and Tertiary Rift Basins) and geological formations that are an extension of, or have similar characteristics to, those of neighbouring countries where large hydrocarbon reserves have already been found (Vasquez, 2013).

Deep-rooted inequalities persist in areas where oil and hydrocarbon reserves are located, which makes the way in which anticipated revenues are shared of particular importance as a potential source of conflict or resilience (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; Vasquez, 2013). If local populations are left out of the discussions and do not benefit from the reserves, this could serve as another source of conflict (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Producing counties need to ensure that participatory resource management mechanisms and mechanism for equitable distribution are in place before revenues from oil and hydrocarbons start to flow (Vasquez, 2013). This should be better enabled through devolution, whose aim is to ensure more equitable development (Vasquez, 2013). Preferably, by the time revenues start to flow, a list of prioritised development projects to be funded with the new revenues will have been identified, with direct input from the community (Vasquez, 2013).

The history of land occupation and displacement, under colonial and post-independence periods, has produced deep communal grievances and divergent communal narratives about historic claims to land (Menkhaus, 2015). Land grievances have been utilised by political actors during electoral periods to mobilise particular communities (D'Arcy & Nistotskaya, 2019; Menkhaus, 2015).

The 2010 Constitution has not fundamentally altered the underlying logic of ethnic patronage politics or addressed land grievances – and has instead contributed to new conflicts over land ownership. Alongside devolution, the Constitution aimed to lay the foundation for change in the politics of land ownership and administration (D'Arcy & Nistotskaya, 2019). Devolution has transformed communities previously marginalised at the national level into powerful majorities in their home counties and this has emboldened their claims over land (D'Arcy & Nistotskaya, 2019). Such tensions have been elevated by the Constitution's recognition of ancestral rights, which has provided county majorities with a legal basis for their

land ownership claims (D'Arcy & Nistotskaya, 2019). This has compounded the tension between land rights over the same piece of land held under title (the legal basis of most county ethnic minority claims) and ancestral/autochthonous rights (the legal basis of most county ethnic majority claims) (D'Arcy & Nistotskaya, 2019).

6. Conflict dynamics

Cross-border conflict dynamics

Poor security and porous borders in the North and North East of Kenya, particularly the 680 km border with Somalia, has produced a complex set of conflict dynamics. It is considered to contribute to the proliferation of small arms in the region and illicit trade in cattle; and to enable the expansion of al-Shabaab activities (Nolasco, 2017). While cross-border conflicts within and between pastoralist communities, such as raiding and cattle-rustling, have a long history along Kenya's borders, these conflicts have become increasingly destructive and less manageable (Nolasco, 2017). Cattle rustling has gone beyond limited rustling among pastoralist communities and has become embedded in wider criminal networks that serve national and regional black markets (Nolasco, 2017). The cross-border exchange of people, particularly since the early 1990s, and the growth of the Somali refugee population in the North East has also been a concern from the perspective of the Kenyan government (Whittaker, 2017). The single largest collection of settled households in the border area is the Dadaab camp, where about 100,000 refugees (mainly from Somalia) have resided for over a decade (Nolasco, 2017). This has added to the sense of the region being 'ungoverned', raising questions about who is and who is not considered to be Kenyan (Whittaker, 2017).

Cross-border clan identities also play a significant role in conflict dynamics and conflict spillover. The Mandera Triangle, for example, is a geographical region in the Horn of Africa where Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia converge. The tri-border area is inhabited almost entirely by Somali communities. The Garre and Degodia clans are known to live side by side in Ethiopia, as well as in Kenya's Mandera and Wajir Counties; while the Marehan and Garre clans live together in Somalia (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Conflicts spillover from one country to another, and from one county to another, such as the conflict in 2016 between Garre and Degodia communities that originated in Ethiopia, then spread to Mandera County and onwards into Wajir County (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). These cross-border conflicts have become particularly challenging with the greater availability of modern weapons, which has also led to the gradual erosion of customary conflict mitigation institutions (Nolasco, 2017). In addition, the legacy of prior conflicts continues to undermine stability. In Rhamu town in Mandera County, for example, the main market has been split into two parts, one for the Degodia and the other for the Garre (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Ongoing political contestation between the Garre and the Degodia in Mandera also contributes to violent clashes. While some respondents find that the numerical dominance of the Garre in Mandera County gives them an advantage in the realms of governance, resource allocation and economic wellbeing, many Garre claim to face deliberate exclusion from jobs in the majority-Degodia County of Wajir. This has produced a cycle of accusations and counter-accusations (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). For further discussion, see the County sub-sections under [Counties in North Eastern Kenya](#).

Conflict between cross-border communities and actions of any of the bordering national governments have social, economic, political and security implications for cross-border clans (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). There seems, however, to be a lack of a coordinated approach

between Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia on issues of peace, security, trade, and the movement of people across the borders (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017).

For further discussion, see [Cross-border clans](#) under Actors and [County profiles](#).

Devolution dynamics

The broad aim of devolution is to bring government closer to the people and to address problems of historical marginalisation and alienation of certain regions and groups by providing them with access to political power and development resources (Cannon & Ali, 2018; NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; Mkutu et al., 2014). This is also considered necessary to promote social cohesion and to reduce the incidence of violence arising from marginalisation and the politicisation of ethnicity (Scott-Villiers, 2017). The 2010 Constitution has been upheld as one of the most progressive pieces of legislation in the world (Nolasco, 2017). It includes provisions to secure the rights of traditionally marginalised groups, including women and youth, and to promote democratic governance through devolution. Devolution can also raise consciousness regarding direct involvement in the management of resources at the local level and the right of communities to manage their own affairs (Scharrer, 2018; Cannon & Ali, 2018). The prior centralised system of governance had largely concentrated development projects in certain regions of the country, with Nairobi and surrounding areas receiving the vast majority of revenue allocation (Cannon & Ali, 2018).

The outcomes of devolution have thus far been mixed, with benefits including a strong counterbalance to the centre, greater political power to Kenyan Somalis, and much larger resource allocation to the marginalised areas (Cannon & Ali, 2018). The formation of county governments and governors willing to assert independence from the centre and to defend county interests has provided a more robust counter to the centre (Lind, 2018). In addition, officials elected in 2013 included a large number of Kenyan Somalis, some assuming important positions in parliament and government (Scharrer, 2018). Devolution has also resulted in the allocation of resources to Kenya's counties in the periphery on a scale and with regularity never experienced before (Cannon & Ali, 2018). The 47 county governments control about 30% of national revenue. Mandera County receives the third largest budget of devolved funds after Nairobi and Turkana Counties due to its underdevelopment, lack of infrastructure and high poverty index (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017).

Devolution has brought national resources closer to the people, while also intensifying local rivalries and inter-clan competition for political seats, perceived as guaranteed access to economic resources by 'winning' clans to the disadvantage of 'losing' clans (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; Carrier & Kochore, 2014). The post of county governor, created under devolution, gives much power to incumbents at a regional level. This increased the stakes for clans to win not just a constituency, but also the county gubernatorial position, for control of territory and economy (Lind et al., 2015; Carrier & Kochore, 2014). Candidates have aimed at maximising the numbers of their own group, either by registering 'their' voters in their area, or by driving others out, a strategy that began during colonial times (Scharrer, 2018). In Mandera County, for example, voter transfer has become a common way of winning, with allegations that both the Garre and Degodia communities were involved in mass voter transfer during the 2013 General Elections (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017).

The persistent ethnicisation of politics, now also at the county level, has undermined the intent of devolution to accommodate different interest groupings and address

marginalisation as important drivers of political violence (Lind, 2018; Carrier & Kochore, 2014). Rather, it has allowed for the replication of familiar patronage politics, governing the distribution of goods, rights and responsibilities, at the sub-national level (D'Arcy & Nistotskaya, 2019; Lind, 2018; Scott-Villiers, 2017; International Alert, 2016; ICG, 2015). Politicians and the elite play a significant role in fanning the conflict (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). CoEs have also been prominent in some cases in attempts to mobilise voters along ethnic and clan lines (Carrier & Kochore, 2014).

Previously marginalised groups at the national level have come to dominate at the county level, which has led in some cases to the marginalisation of minority clans within the county – and the potential for new conflict (Lind, 2018; NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; Mkutu et al., 2014). There is evidence of discrimination and hostility against those perceived to be 'outsiders'. Governors have been accused of skewed appointments that have benefited those who voted for him or her, which has marginalised minorities (Mkutu et al., 2014). In Mandera County, for example, resource sharing tends to favour the big clans, who rely on their numerical advantage to maintain a status of privilege (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). The Garre-led clan coalition that formed the 2013 – 2017 County Government has been accused of enjoying the benefits of devolution to the exclusion of the Degodia and Corner Tribes, in particular isolating the Mandera North constituency that is populated primarily by the Degodia (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). The Controversies over resource sharing in Mandera County is linked to the case in the adjacent Wajir County, which has also been accused of denying services and resources to Garre population, which are the minority in the county (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). In Garissa County too, there are reports that devolution has exacerbated clan divisions, with greater emphasis placed on clannism than on meritocracy for county positions (Mkutu et al., 2014). Such perceptions of skewed resource allocation and new forms of exclusion of minority groups raise the potential for inter-clan conflict (Lind, 2018; NCIC & Interpeace, 2017).

In order for devolution to achieve its original aims, county governments need to work hard in the interests of all their people, not just those of their own ethnic backers (Carrier & Kochore, 2014). In Wajir County, which avoided the communal conflicts that followed the vote in Mandera and Garissa, elected officer positions were carefully apportioned based on a pre-election agreement in order to ensure representation of all clans. The governor was also commended for fairly distributing jobs and resources (Lind, 2018; ICG, 2015). For further discussion, see [Devolution, constitutional reform and local government](#) under Sources of Resilience.

Higher levels of corruption at the local level is another unintended consequence of devolution, alongside the replication of ethnicised patronage politics (Cannon & Ali, 2018; Lind, 2018). Most county governments have been accused of gross irregularities, including fraudulent activities, misappropriation of funds, payroll manipulation, nepotism, and procurement malpractice (Cannon & Ali, 2018). Research and reports issued by the Office of the Controller of Budget reveal that money earmarked for electrification, water supplies, dams, and sewerage or other goods appears to have been misappropriated, misspent, returned to Nairobi, or simply disappeared (Cannon & Ali, 2018). In the North East, many residents point to the corruption and mismanagement of county government, and the Office of the Auditor-General has raised serious issues of misappropriation of devolved funds across the three counties (ICG, 2015). In Mandera County, for example, the accrual of substantial funds and political power since devolution has not led to expected advancements in economic development. Evidence indicates the funds have been misused or returned which has further undermined the already dire health care system

(Cannon & Ali, 2018). Problems with corruption predate devolution and are exacerbated by the lack of effective anti-corruption mechanisms in Kenya (Cannon & Ali, 2018). Further, the police themselves, necessary for prosecutions and investigations of corruption, are in some cases also highly corrupt (Cannon & Ali, 2018). For discussion about corruption in the security sector, see [Security issues](#) below.

Hate speech

Incitement by politicians, local elites and mainstream and community media is a key feature in the majority of prior conflicts in Kenya, contributing to the escalation of tensions (Nolasco, 2017). Hate speech is defined in Kenya as “speech that advocates or encourages violent acts against a specific group, and creates a climate of hate or prejudice, which may in turn foster the commission of hate crimes” (see Scott-Villiers, 2017, p. 257). Methods of incitement range from malicious cell-phone text messages to the denigration of individual political actors (Nolasco, 2017). Ordinary citizens, in turn, have contributed to incitement of ethnic divisions by joining an ethnic voting bloc, often feeling that they are likely to lose less if their ethnic group gains power (Scott-Villiers, 2017). Hate speech has been less of an issue in Northern Kenya, although its effects may be felt nation-wide, particularly during election time. Further, there are specific reports of politicians inciting clans in Mandera County during election time, with abusive and derogatory statements about rival clans (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019).

Despite progress in countering hate speech, politics in Kenya remains divided along ethnic lines (Nolasco, 2017). The NCIC, formed in the aftermath of the 2007-2008 electoral violence with the aim of enhancing social cohesion in Kenya, has played a key role in preventing hate speech. It has achieved this by creating awareness, monitoring social media, and investigating and initiating court cases, however, challenges remain. This is evident in the absence of successful prosecutions, particularly of those who are politically well-connected, which can contribute to social acceptance of expressions of hate (Nolasco, 2017).

While mainstream and community media have often been criticised for their divisive role in incitement, they can and have played constructive roles, particularly in the aftermath of the 2007-2008 election violence (Maweu, 2019). For further discussion, see [Media](#) under Sources of Resilience.

Security issues

While political power and national resources have been subject to devolution, the national government retains responsibility for security, with intensifying militarisation in some cases (Lind, 2018). There are arguments for and against the devolution of security, including in the North Eastern counties. Clan capture of county governments and their potential to contribute to, or cause, conflict supports the continuance of a neutral national administrative and security presence (ICG, 2015). At the same time, however, the national government tends to be inconsistent in its efforts to resolve inter-clan conflict (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Mixed initiatives, involving locally recruited security forces led by nationally trusted and experienced professionals from the same community are producing results (ICG, 2015). In Mandera County, for example, many people support the retention of security as a function of the national government, but they are uncomfortable with the lack of local representation (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Intelligence officers posted to Mandera are mostly drawn from other parts of the country. Due to cultural differences and linguistic limitations, they often find themselves unable to integrate with the local community and gather useful information (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). For

further discussion, see [Strengthened security arrangements and police-civilian trust](#) under Sources of Resilience.

Communities in the North East of Kenya have low levels of trust in security institutions due to inadequate provision of security services, alleged police corruption and a history of heavy-handed security operations and atrocities committed against residents of the region (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; International Alert, 2016). At the same time, trust in law enforcement is essential for the belief in the legitimacy of law enforcement or a sense of obligation to obey the law and adhere to decisions made by legal authorities (Botha & Abdile, 2020). In the absence of trust in the police and cooperation, the police would have to resort to other tactics, such as arresting witnesses or even worse, abuse – to initiate interaction with the public. This, in turn, is likely to further undermine perceptions of the police and solidify an uncooperative, hostile relationship (Botha & Abdile, 2020). Lack of trust in security institutions thus undermines the resilience of the communities against violence and radicalisation (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; International Alert, 2016).

Alongside, the blanket suspicion of local communities inhibits the ability of security officials to effectively secure the community and the willingness of residents to provide information (Botha & Abdile, 2020; NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Communities in Mandera view the heavy presence of government security officers to keep the peace in Mandera as a form of 'collective punishment', reminiscent of prior situations and part of ongoing grievances. Branding the people of Mandera as terrorists undermines the trust between the people and the security agencies under national control and the willingness of residents to provide intelligence to the police about crimes (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Individuals are often reluctant to come forward with information, for fear of being arrested themselves and harassed by security forces (Botha & Abdile, 2020; Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018). Further, the police often do not trust any information that they do receive and/or are easily bribed to release the suspects and reveal the identities of the witnesses. There are reported cases of whistleblowers and witnesses being killed by the suspects as a result (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017).

Alleged corruption in the National Police Force and KDF, particularly cases of bribery, are considered an 'enabler' for extremism (Mongare, 2019). Police forces have been accused of receiving large amounts of money from terror suspects to enable them to easily gain entry into Kenya from Somalia; to gain national identity cards; and to escape prosecution through thwarted investigations (Mongare, 2019; Wakube et al., 2017). Police corruption at the border has also allowed for al-Shabaab to smuggle illegal goods, such as sugar, that are sold in Kenya. The United Nations and other reports reveal that goods pass through Garissa and the Port of Kismayu, passing police checkpoints unnoticed (Mongare, 2019). In the case of Mandera County, al-Shabaab are noted to easily cross over to Kenya by offering bribes to Kenyan and Ethiopian forces manning the border points and tax officials, particularly along trade routes such as El Wak, Rhamu and Bula Hawa (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019). There are also reports that outside of Kenya, the KDF have acted as brokers in the illegal trade of charcoal (Mongare, 2019). Al-Shabaab exploits Kenya's corruption and there are allegations of collusion among the police, military and al-Shabaab (Cannon & Pkalya, 2019). For further discussion, see the following section on [Radicalisation and violent extremism](#).

Corruption, inadequate policies and capacities of security agencies have heightened insecurity in communities in the North East and elsewhere, increasing the tendency towards self-defence, community arming and retaliation (Nolasco, 2017). The rise in attacks by al-Shabaab have exacerbated problems with lack of capacity, which the terrorist organisation

has capitalised upon (Nolasco, 2017; ICG, 2015). In Mandera County, for example, there were already few police posts, and in the wake of increased attacks, the government closed those with less than 40 officers (ICG, 2015).

The national government's failure to provide security is also attributed to corruption among security officials (Whittaker, 2015). This includes the involvement of corrupt security officials in the illicit trade of goods, such as sugar and cooking fat, from Somalia to Nairobi, which is reported to help fund al-Shabaab (Chome, 2016; Whittaker, 2015; Mkutu et al., 2014).

There are also further problems with improper coordination between the various security agencies, in particular, tensions between the Kenya Police Service and the Kenya Police Reserve, on one hand, and between these police formations and the military on the other hand (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Poor coordination and relations between intelligence and policing departments have also been blamed for the failure to prevent terrorist attacks. The National Intelligence Service has been accused of not providing actionable information to the police services; and the police have been accused of not acting on intelligence they receive (Lind et al., 2015).

Small arms availability and misuse exacerbate security problems in Kenya, rendering communal conflict increasingly violent in recent years. The Mandera Triangle is reported to be a significant conduit for weapon shipments from the Middle East into Somalia and onwards to other parts of the African continent (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Widely available small arms, including automatic and semiautomatic weapons, are increasingly used along the borders of Kenya, rendering cattle raiding activities more violent and deadly and inter-clan conflict more aggressive (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; Nolasco, 2017; Mkutu et al., 2014). This, in turn, makes conflict management and resolution more difficult (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). While significant progress has been made in small arms reduction efforts since the 2007-2008 election violence, law enforcement efforts to control the proliferation of small arms continue to face considerable challenges (Nolasco, 2017).

For further discussion, see Police and Military under Actors; Political and institutional factors under Root Causes; Radicalisation and violent extremism under Conflict dynamics; and Strengthened security arrangements and police-civilian trust under Sources of Resilience.

Radicalisation and violent extremism

While al-Shabaab remains focused on enforcing its variant of Islamic law in Somalia, it has long operated elsewhere in East Africa – and has drawn upon Kenya's internal tensions and divisions to gain support (ICG, 2018; Lind et al., 2017). Al-Shabaab has exploited local grievances and regional cleavages, particularly in relation to uneven development patterns in Kenya and the treatment of its Muslim populations (Lind et al., 2017 and 2015; ICG, 2015). A propaganda magazine - Gaidi Mtaani ('Terrorist on the Street'), published in Swahili, for example, demonstrates an effective understanding of Kenya's history and the particular concerns of its Muslim population (Anderson & McKnight, 2015). The terrorist organisation also produced a video that aimed to profile coastal and Somali grievances against the Kenyan state as evidence of a systematic alienation of Muslim interests in Kenya, with particular reference to *shifita* and state massacres in the North East (Chome, 2019). Where conversion through propaganda and drawing on pre-existing grievances has not been possible, it has used intimidation to compel community compliance (ICG, 2015). Expansionist by design, extremists have been successful in intimidating, marginalising and silencing moderate Muslim voices (Botha, 2013).

In rural and urban counties, youth unemployment and lack of sustainable livelihood opportunities are key challenges perceived to contribute to their recruitment into al-Shabaab, which reportedly offers some form of economic or social good as an incentive to join (Anderson & McKnight, 2015; Mkutu et al., 2014). This is considered to be more often the case in towns close to the Somalia border with large refugee communities, which suffer greater challenges with economic deprivation (Anderson & McKnight, 2015). In these border-lands, even non-Muslim youths have been attracted by the financial offer and are converting to join al-Shabaab (Mkutu et al., 2014). In Mandera County, for example, there are reports of some business tycoons hiring young people to protect their cross-border trade and/or luring young people with lucrative jobs in business, subsequently recruiting them to join al-Shabaab's activities (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019). Further, al-Shabaab has supplied businesses with arms and helped them in securing their business interests in exchange for facilitating youth recruitment (Sahgal et al., 2019). For further discussion, see Business people under Conflict and resilience actors.

Long-standing injustices and poor relations with the police, including 'collective punishment' and racial profiling, may also fuel radicalisation and violent extremism (Mkutu et al., 2014; Botha, 2013). Dissatisfaction on the part of Muslim youths in forms of 'collective punishment' by security forces and the labelling of all Muslims as terrorists or potential terrorists have in some cases pushed Muslim youths to join extremist groups (Botha, 2013).

Lack of belonging and being made to feel like an 'outsider' could potentially render ethnic Somalis in Kenya vulnerable to al-Shabaab recruitment or sympathy with them (Kirui, 2019). The feeling by ethnic Somalis in Kenya that their being Kenyan does not guarantee them stable citizenship or equal rights is a longstanding grievance (Kirui, 2019). This extends to non-Somali Muslim groups in the North East (Kirui, 2019). The promotion of equal citizenship of Somalis and Muslims in Kenya is essential in itself, but may also help to ward off susceptibility to violent extremism within Kenya and in Somalia (Kirui, 2019; Anderson & McKnight, 2015).

A key threat to stability in Kenya is if extremists succeed in their efforts to divide Muslims and non-Muslims, which has materialised to some extent following various al-Shabaab attacks targeting Christians (Anderson & McKnight, 2015; Botha, 2013). The attack that brought Kenya's 'home-made' terrorism into the open occurred at Garissa University in 2015, when an al-Shabaab unit moved through the student dormitories killing any non-Muslims they encountered (Anderson & McKnight, 2015). Focus group discussions in Wajir and Garissa find that the rift between Muslims and Christians in the region has widened, with Christians being targeted by the terror groups and Muslims branded as sympathisers alongside a rise in Islamophobia (Botha & Abdile, 2020). Islamophobia has resulted in prejudice and heightened fear of Muslims, with hateful message circulated on social media against Muslims (Wesonga, 2017). Muslims thus often feel persecuted and targeted, once again collectively punished and presumed to be terrorists by security officers and other members of the public. This again undermines their willingness to come to the police with any relevant information (Botha & Abdile, 2020)

The various attacks committed by al-Shabaab in the North East have also prompted an exodus of civil servants, with disastrous effects on services (ICG, 2015). This has included the mass exodus of Christian teachers and health workers not native to the area, drastically undermining the quality of education, health care and nutrition assistance in the region and exacerbating grievances over a lack of services (Abdille, 2019; ICG, 2015; HFTT, 2015). Secondary schools are most affected, but primary schools, especially along the Kenya–Somalia border, have also suffered from an inadequate number of teachers (HFTT, 2015). Locals have argued that their constitutional rights have been violated as they no longer have proper access to

education (REINVENT, 2020). Access to healthcare is limited by the closure of hundreds of health centres, due to a lack of staff (HFTT, 2015). In Mandera, for example, 11 of 26 health facilities closed in 2015 because staff left the County (HFTT, 2015). The government's response to this services crisis has been weak, (ICG, 2015). Attacks against state services may provide support to the al-Shabaab narrative that the Government of Kenya continues to marginalise the North East, despite gains made under devolution (REINVENT, 2020). Such attacks have not been effective, however, in drawing residents toward extremism but in many cases have instead turned those affected against al-Shabaab as the exodus of workers has led to declines in services essential to everyday life (Yusaf, 2020).

Robust evidence of al-Shabaab's exploitation of clan-based conflicts for recruitment is limited, while some emergent research finds there is a complex relationship between the extremist group and clan conflicts (Karienyé & Warfa, 2020; Rotich & Warfa, 2019; Sahgal et al., 2019). The Kenyan security forces remain focused on countering terrorism, often neglecting to address clan conflict. The two can be related, however. Factors that drive clan conflict also enable extremist activities (Karienyé & Warfa, 2020). Recent research indicates that, as in Somalia, al-Shabaab exploits, misuses and controls clan disputes and clan dynamics to foster insecurity and advance their operations and activities in Kenya (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019; Sahgal et al., 2019; ICG, 2018). It is also possible that al-Shabaab's strategy of fomenting division and polarisation could gain ground, with appeals to and recruitment of members of sub-clans and clans that lose out politically (Wakube et al., 2017). In Mandera County, competition over resources, hostilities between elected officials, clan competition, and close cross-border clan ties, have enabled al-Shabaab to lure marginalised minority clans with employment opportunities in Somalia (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019; Sahgal et al., 2019). Attacks by al-Shabaab in specific towns in the County have also fuelled conflict at the clan level as each clan blames the other (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019). It is reported, for example, that al-Shabaab militias ambushed and killed two men and injured others in Dandu in Mandera West. The Garre clan alleged that the Degodia were behind the attack and, without further investigation, engaged in a counter-attack against members of the Degodia clan, ambushing a car and killing six people, and injuring others (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019). This, in turn, led to the eruption of clan violence, despite an existing truce signed by the two communities in Mandera (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019).

The securitisation of the government's response to violent extremism has had the counter-productive outcome of fuelling radicalisation. The Kenyan government stepped up its military involvement in Somalia in 2011, in response to a series of attacks in Kenya by al-Shabaab, its Kenyan affiliate al-Hijra or actors claiming proximity to these groups. The Kenyan security apparatus has also reacted with heavy-handed measures domestically, targeting in particular ethnic Somalis living in Kenya (Lind et al., 2017; Scharrer, 2018). This has included efforts to close refugee camps near the Somali border and crackdowns on Somali refugees living outside the camps, the biggest one taking place in 2014, called *usalama* watch ('security watch'). By indiscriminately targeting its own Somali population through such incursions and with extended curfews, the Kenyan state has exacerbated grievances on the part of Kenyan Somalis and minority Muslims of being treated as 'outsiders' (Botha & Abdile, 2020; Chome, 2019; Lind et al., 2017). This can further reduce citizen's trust in government institutions and weaken communal mechanisms of resilience, rendering individuals and communities more susceptible to radicalisation (International Alert, 2016; Whittaker, 2015). Al-Shabaab has also engaged in a series of retaliatory attacks after the incursion into Somalia, persistently targeting non-Muslims, claiming that they were a response to the non-Muslim occupation of Muslim territory (Scharrer, 2018). At the same time, Kenyan Somalis and Muslims also feel exposed and deeply vulnerable

to terrorist violence (Botha & Abdile, 2020; Cannon & Pkalya, 2019; Chome, 2019; Lind et al., 2017). This all occurs in the backdrop of areas that are underdeveloped, with historical grievances still unaddressed (Botha & Abdile, 2020).

The Kenyan government's 2011 incursion into Somalia also hampered the capacity of cross border mediation structures. Religious leaders, the business community, and local peace activists from Mandera, for example, had strongly lobbied the government against sending troops to Somalia, citing the likelihood of retaliatory attacks by al-Shabaab targeting civilians in Mandera and elsewhere in Kenya (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Some expressed their preference instead for pre-existing cross border peace initiatives (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Religious leaders and local peacebuilders found themselves in the aftermath suspected by both sides: on one hand, al-Shabaab declared them traitors and collaborators of the Kenyan government; on the other hand, some elements within the Kenyan government perceived them of being al-Shabaab sympathisers (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Many religious leaders, despite their longstanding recognition as key agents for peace, have since taken a back seat for fear of being perceived as terror suspects, which has impeded a lot of voluntary engagement in peace work, especially in fighting radicalisation (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Alongside other countries in Africa, the KDF is planning for its exit from Somalia by the end of 2021 (Gisesa, 2020).

Al-Shabaab's recruitment and popular support in the North East are reported to have waned since 2015, although sporadic assaults continue, picking up further since the end of 2019. These include attacks on police stations and on 'non-local' (mainly Christian) public servants, including teachers (ICG, 2018). In addition, militancy in Kenya, which in places predates al-Shabaab's involvement, can be expected to persist so long as grievances remain (ICG, 2018). A significant spike in militant activity in December 2019 has continued into 2020 (REINVENT, 2020). Between December 2019 and April 2020, at least 38 people were killed in 14 clashes and incidents in the border counties of Garissa, Lamu, Mandera, and Wajir (Yusuf, 2020). Those killed have included security forces, government officials, and commuters killed in gun and bomb attacks (Yusuf, 2020).

Hardships and resource re-allocations related to the COVID-19 pandemic may create an enabling environment for militant activity to further take hold. The Kenyan government and civil society organisations have shifted their focus and resources from countering radicalisation and violent extremism to containing the pandemic (Mohamed, et al., 2020). The government, for example, has redirected security forces, media and budgets to COVID-19 awareness, monitoring and prevention. KDF forces have also been downsized or called away from patrolling the borders to enforce social distancing and curfew in Nairobi, increasing the risk of insecurity in border towns (Mohamed, et al., 2020). At the same time, the brutal force that security forces are reported to have exerted in some cases in enforcing COVID-19 security measures, have undermined trust in security forces and perpetuated grievances. Alongside losses in opportunities for youth, who may not be able to access digital learning during the pandemic, this can increase the pool of youth vulnerable to extremist messaging and recruitment (Mohamed, et al., 2020; HRW, 2020).

For discussion on counter violent extremism and radicalisation initiatives, see [Countering violent extremism](#) in [Strengthened security arrangements](#) under Sources of Resilience.

7. Sources of resilience

Devolution, constitutional reform and local government

Despite the various challenges and unintended negative consequences, the devolution of powers and resources to sub-national county governments remains one of the most promising ways in which to prevent conflict in the North East (Lind et al., 2015). It does so by redressing regional inequalities and historic marginalisation; giving greater political prominence to areas previously considered to be the periphery; and providing the possibility of accommodating different interest groups in new governance structures (Lind et al., 2015).

North Eastern Kenya moved from the political periphery to being of national importance in the 2013 elections; and the role of ethnic Somalis in politics gained momentum, raising the prospect of shedding their ‘outsider’ tag (Kirui, 2019; Carrier & Kochore, 2014). This was due in part to the changed mode of the presidential election at the national level, which introduced new competitive elements, whereby the successful candidate must secure 25% of votes in more than half of the counties. This transformed the North East from an area long considered peripheral to Kenyan politics into a ‘swing’ region, with large interest from presidential candidates and their parties (Scharrer, 2018; Lind et al., 2015; Carrier & Kochore, 2014). National figures were seen on the campaign trail in Garissa and Mandera, among other Northern towns (Carrier & Kochore, 2014). Political parties wooed Somali voters with the promise of strategic government jobs once in power (Kirui, 2019). While the increased role of Kenyan Somalis in national politics may be mere political bait to attract votes from the North East, it offers an opportunity for ethnic Somalis to shed their ‘outsider’ tag and to be recognised as equal citizens (Kirui, 2019; Scharrer, 2018). The ascent of Kenyan Somalis to top positions in the Kenyan government, which has increased ruling party reliance on Kenyan Somalis as reliable allies, is one of the most dramatic and positive political developments in the North East in the past couple of decades (Menkhaus, 2015).

The establishment of county-level administrations responsible for spending a significant proportion of government funds have enabled the expansion of the state-building process into previously marginalised areas of the country (Mosley & Watson, 2016). Addressing this history of marginalisation has the potential to improve not only state-society relations, but also inter-community relations in a way that produces greater resilience (International Alert, 2016). The Constitution also specifically provides for a separate ‘Equalisation Fund’, allowing more large and medium scale interventions to improve service delivery in marginalised, pastoral areas – including Mandera, Wajir and Garissa (Nolasco, 2017). The aim is to reduce pastoral conflicts and spark a wave of public investment that will hasten development in the pastoralist counties and ensure equity in national development (Nolasco, 2017). Disbursements under the Equalisation Fund have been minimal, however, delayed by various political and bureaucratic obstacles.⁶

⁶ See: Guleid, M. (2018). How the new equalisation policy will push the poor deeper into poverty. 5 July. *The Standard*. <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001286727/how-the-new-equalisation-policy-will-push-the-poor-deeper-into-poverty>. Mutai, E. (2020). MPs eye bigger role in equalisation cash. 5 June. *Business Daily*. <https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/news/counties/MPs-eye-bigger-role-in-equalisation-cash/4003142-5570860-g5be8gz/index.html>

Devolution has contributed to the redress of local grievances about political, social and economic exclusion (ICG, 2018). Local authorities, controlling millions of dollars in annual budgets, have proven better able to tackle issues such as unemployment and service delivery (ICG, 2015). Devolution of resources can also allow for inclusive local development plans that integrate marginalised regions into the national economy and allow for local-level stakeholder involvement in the processes (International Alert, 2016). Devolved county governments now also have significant resources at the local level to invest in climate adaptation strategies and community mobilisation and participation in development (Njoka et al., 2016). Devolution likewise has reduced Muslim complaints about being governed from a remote, Christian-dominated centre (ICG, 2018). By addressing grievances, devolution has also undercut support for al-Shabaab in the North East and Coastal regions (ICG, 2018).

Locally elected officials in county government, with better local knowledge and greater local legitimacy than politicians from other counties, are well placed to address conflicts and promote peace (Menkhaus, 2015; Mkutu et al., 2014). In Garissa County, for example, the county governor has supported peace initiatives and cooperated with other governors to resolve long-standing conflicts with neighbouring counties of Wajir, Isiolo and Lamu. The county government has also deployed religious leaders, elders, and peace committees to resolve or prevent instability in the county (Mkutu et al., 2014). County governments are also well placed to strengthen and implement existing peace pacts and agreements, in partnership with the national government, such as the Modogashe Declaration of 2001 and the Abdalla-Abudwak peace accord of 2010 between two Somali clans in Garissa County (Mkutu et al., 2014). For discussion on the neglect of peace infrastructures at the local level, however, see the section on [Peace Committees](#) under Sources of Resilience.

Devolved government structures require adequate skills and capacities, effective structures to connect representatives of county governments and national government, and proper oversight, in order to function effectively (Chome, 2016). These linkages will help counties, such as Mandera and Garissa, to strengthen the capacity of local governance structures but also to build their legitimacy with local communities (Chome, 2016). The USAID-funded Agile Harmonized Assistance for Devolved Institutions, for example, which aims to strengthen the benefits of devolution, should seek to encourage the participation of youth and women in local governance and to promote cooperation between county and national governments in addressing the drivers of conflict and violent extremism in the region (Chome, 2016). It could also contribute to support for cooperation between national and county governments necessary for improved county policing and management of local security (Chome, 2016).

The new sub-national wrangling and ethnic and inter-clan competition and tensions that devolution inadvertently produced at county levels needs to be addressed (Lind, 2018; NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). In order to counter this tension and potential for violence, county elites must be more inclusive of minorities, cooperate across local boundaries for inter-county peace and recognise the continued role for neutral national institutions (ICG, 2015). They also need to take advantage of opportunities to engage in a coordinated manner with local political elites, young people and religious leaders, among others, who can help build the relationships required for resilience (International Alert, 2016). County governments need to identify interventions to address inter- and intra-clan conflicts, and to strengthen platforms for clan-level dialogue for conflict resolution, working with various sources of resilience at the community level (Sahgal et al., 2019).

Citizenship, social cohesion and social contract

Infrastructure, services and the social contract

The attention of Kenya's governing elite has recently shifted to the economic potential of the Northern regions, evident in the national development plan, Kenya Vision 2030, which gives a prominent role to infrastructure that connects periphery areas to the centre. For most of the history of Kenya, colonial and post-colonial, Northern Kenya was viewed from Nairobi as a marginally productive zone, serving primarily as a buffer between the rest of Kenya and Somali inhabited regions (Mosley & Watson, 2016). A fundamental part of this marginalisation has been the underdevelopment of infrastructure, particularly roads (Kochore, 2016). Kenya's national development plan, Kenya Vision 2030, gives a prominent role to infrastructure like roads, railways and pipelines, connecting more remote regions to the centre and bringing development and transformation (Kochore, 2016). It involves opening up remote areas and regions previously neglected or closed off from the nation to new economic opportunities (Kochore, 2016).

Infrastructure is a way of fundamentally altering not only development opportunities for populations in the North but also their identities. Due to a history of marginalisation, people in Northern Kenya have not imagined themselves as being part of the nation (Kochore, 2016). The Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) corridor project, for example, which aims to connect regions in the periphery, including Northern Kenya, through road infrastructure, has inherent symbolic and political resonance for the state and its citizens (Kochore, 2016). There have, however, been issues with aspects of large-scale developments in Kenya, in terms of concerns over environmental impact and inadequate community consultation and involvement (Mosley & Watson, 2016). For further discussion, see the section on Traditional elders and Council of Elders.

Alongside infrastructure and security, national and county governments also need to urgently re-establish social services, especially health and education. Low levels of literacy and numeracy have been linked with the propensity for radicalisation in the North East of Kenya (Nolasco, 2017). At the same time, extremist attacks have weakened social services, with exoduses of non-local workers (see Radicalisation and violent extremism under Conflict dynamics). Education can help to reduce poverty and to promote integration among ethnic and religious groups (ICG, 2015). Extending both primary and secondary education, and improving the quality of such education, can help children and youth to develop critical thinking to challenge radical and violent extremist ideology (Nolasco, 2017). Such programmes need to be combined with outreach to ensure that the most vulnerable groups are targeted and encouraged to attend and/or that mechanisms are in place to address the obstacles to their attendance (Nolasco, 2017).

Alongside improvements in infrastructure that connect regions and groups long considered to be in the periphery, improvements in communication technology can improve state-society relations (Kirui, 2019). Through mobile phones, for example, the state can interact with society even in remote villages in the North East of Kenya. In order to be effective, however, the Kenyan state has to change its narratives about Somalis as 'outsiders' in order to gain their trust and support (Kirui, 2019).

Peaceful coexistence, social cohesion and diversity

The NCIC has played a key role in countering hate speech (Nolasco, 2017; NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). While hate speech has been an issue mostly in Southern Kenya, the NCIC's guidance applies nation-wide - to journalists and media outlets, concerning responsible journalism and on conducting awareness training regarding hate speech. It also warns perpetrators that they would be held accountable should they violate the National Cohesion and Integration Commission Act, investigates and hears complaints regarding hate speech, and initiates prosecutions (Nolasco, 2017; NCIC, 2018). There has been an absence of successful prosecutions, however (Nolasco, 2017). The NCIC has also forged partnerships with social media players to minimise online hate (NCIC, 2018). For further discussion, see [Hate speech](#) under Conflict dynamics.

Alongside the monitoring of hate speech, peace messaging peaked in Kenya around the 2013 election and is considered to have contributed to lower levels of electoral violence in Kenya (Lynch et al., 2019). The electoral violence that these initiatives sought to address applied primarily to Southern Kenya, which suffered from the 2007-2008 post-election violence. A vast range of entities called for peace, including media houses and journalists trained in conflict-sensitive reporting; theatre groups and musicians; public advertising; and politicians (Lynch et al., 2019). Peace messages were disseminated using various methods, including SMS (text message) blasts, fliers, radio, TV, billboards, training journalists on peace messaging, comic books, national TV shows and local engagement of community-based groups (Lynch et al., 2019). While the rise of peace messaging has been internally driven, it has often been externally funded through peace programmes supported by a range of international actors (Lynch et al., 2019).

An emphasis on peace campaigning can be problematic, however, as it may strengthen authoritarianism and facilitate the emergence of a 'peaceocracy', in which the fear of conflict is used to elevate stability and order over democracy (Lynch et al., 2019). The peace narrative around Kenya's 2013 and 2017 elections undermined the capacity of the media to speak freely. It was also used to legitimate an unconstitutional ban on political meetings and demonstrations that were considered a threat to peace, and to justify heavy-handed security responses to protests (Lynch et al., 2019).

Citizenship and unity in shared goals

Resilience factors that bring communities together include the creation of new narratives of collaboration and Kenyan citizenship through joint local initiatives to achieve mutual goals and practical help (International Alert, 2016). In Mandera County, for example, while clans have conflicts among themselves, the common problems of underdevelopment, insecurity, political manipulation, environmental challenges and terror attacks often become a unifying factor (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). The scale of the Garre-Degodia conflict of 2010-2014 was lowered due to the various attacks by al-Shabaab on the local population. Common problems like drought have also at times provided opportunities for the community to work together to resolve the challenges, rendering their divisions less salient (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). A number of interventions in the North East, for example, have focused on working to cope jointly with environmental shocks such as drought and flooding, common in pastoral areas. Existing programmes, such as the World Bank-funded Regional Pastoral Livelihoods Resilience Project, have encouraged the establishment of pastoral and agro-pastoral cooperative societies among

the communities they work with, which have the potential to foster inter-clan engagement and social capital (Chome, 2016). Kenya Tuna Uwezo (Kiswahili for “We have the power!”), supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), uses a ‘people to people approach’ to initiate dialogue on shared concerns and to create clear, mutually-beneficial action plans. It involves the engagement of youth, women and community leaders, for example in community-based activities and partnerships to address common challenges, such as violent extremism (Nolasco, 2017).

Shared public spaces can also bring different clan communities together and foster unity.

In villages in Mandera County, for example, members of the local community share common utilities and public spaces like markets, schools, and hospitals despite coming from different clans (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). In the Mandera- Belet Hawa cross border corridor, the Garre, Marehan, Murulle, Degodia and Corner Tribe communities have used the Mandera community centre for cross border dialogue meetings (USAID et al., 2013). The Buruburu primary school in Mandera is also attended by children from all communities from both sides of the border, which improves mutual interaction and cooperation amongst the cross-border communities (USAID et al., 2013). In Belet Hawa, all communities frequent the same market facilities, which has become a central part of the conflict early warning system as information is exchanged there on a regular basis (USAID et al., 2013). The effective functioning of these facilities is considered to be one of the most important issues that brings everyone together (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). These facilities also have local committees, such as the Parent Teacher Association and the Water User Association, which comprise members of the various clans that live in the area, and thus share a common vision of improving the services rendered to the public, even during adverse conflict periods (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). In Wajir, community centres and youth resource centres are often used for cross border peace dialogue meetings and meetings of peace organisations and networks. They also provide a space for youth to engage in drama, sports, library services, and income-generating activities (USAID et al., 2013)

The idea of Kenya as a nation of diversity has been fostered in popular culture and in educational programming. Cultural endeavours include in music (e.g. the song “Narudi yumbani”/“coming home” by Nameless, written in 2010 as a tribute to Kenyan sportspeople who “represent [their] nation”), advertisements (such as “Niko na Safaricom”/“I have Safaricom”, a mobile network operator in Kenya) and TV shows (Scharrer, 2018) (for further discussion, see the section on [Media](#)). Since inception, the NCIC has also implemented educational programmes aimed at the promotion of national values and a Kenyan identity to accelerate the unity of the diverse communities (NCIC, 2018). In partnership with primary and secondary schools, universities and colleges, the Commission has incorporated peace sensitisation and training programmes into the school curriculums that emphasise national values, cohesion and integration (NCIC, 2018).

Shared cultural values can also be unifying, cutting across religion and clan lineages, and may be a contributing factor to the absence of full-blown violence between religious communities in Kenya (Wesonga, 2017). Kenya is unique in that despite terror attacks on Christian establishments, the country has never experienced large-scale violence between Muslims and Christians (Wesonga, 2017). This could be attributed to commonality in some cultural beliefs, such as African Ubuntu philosophy, from which the national motto Harambee, meaning ‘pulling together’ – working toward the same goal, derives. It rallies all Kenyans to join in fighting poverty, disease and illiteracy, and Ubuntu enshrines essential human virtues, compassion and humanity to others, precursors to the respect of human life irrespective of

diverse faith backgrounds (Wesonga, 2017). Harambee is rooted in the tenets of African hospitality, which is crucial in Christian–Muslim relations in Kenya since it reminds the adherents of the faiths that they should love one another because of their shared African identity and philosophy (Wesonga, 2017).

Guaranteeing equal citizenship rights for all Kenyans is a fundamental component of a wider peacebuilding approach that could ameliorate state–society and inter-community tensions (Lind et al., 2017). It could, in turn, reduce the al-Shabaab threat (Lind et al., 2017). The fair issuance of Kenyan identity documents, which are a necessity for participation in the legal aspects of citizenship, to Kenyan Somalis, Muslims and women, who have been subject to precarious citizenship, should be a priority (Scharrer, 2018; International Alert, 2016). This could be done alongside a widespread demonstration of the importance of citizenship and its corresponding rights and obligations (International Alert, 2016).

Strengthened security arrangements and police-civilian trust

Police-civilian trust-building

Building police-civilian trust and positive police-civilian relations, which can enable effective partnerships between the police and the public, is fundamental to conflict prevention and peacebuilding in North East Kenya (Botha & Abdile, 2020; Nolasco, 2017; Mkutu et al., 2014; USAID et al., 2013). Fostering trust between ethnic Somalis and Kenya’s security apparatus is essential in building the sense of belonging and ownership that can help ward off attempts at destabilisation by various factions within Kenya and in Somalia (Kirui, 2019).

Trust-building can also facilitate information gathering and the early detection of extremist activity and other criminal acts (Botha & Abdile, 2020; Nolasco, 2017). Since a common perception is that police officers do not respond to information provided or, even worse, may end up targeting those who provide the information, any indications of failure to give the necessary and appropriate attention to information provided must be addressed (Botha & Abdile, 2020; Nolasco, 2017).

In order to build better relationships with the neighbourhoods they serve, police officers need to reduce their use of aggressive tactics and acknowledge prior atrocities committed by security forces (Botha & Abdile, 2020; International Alert, 2016). These actions, along with efforts to improve accountability, can further contribute to trust-building and to re-establishing the social contract in North East Kenya (International Alert, 2016). This involves various actions, including publicly accepting IPOA investigations that have identified heavy-handed policing and committing to work with communities to avoid such events in the future (International Alert, 2016). At the national level, IPOA has been involved in monthly radio programmes to discuss its own mandate, police accountability, and to increase rights awareness (Beston, 2018). For further discussion on the acknowledgement of atrocities, see the section on [Transitional justice](#).

Trust-building can also be enhanced by security forces that are more rooted in local communities and can better understand and reflect local populations. Security agents have tended to come from outside the local areas, lacking familiarity with the culture and customs of local communities (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018). North Eastern county leaders pressed for greater control over security, and for security forces that would better reflect the local population, after significant acts of violence in Garissa and Mandera in 2013 and 2014 (ICG, 2015). They recommended the appointment of an overarching regional coordinator and deployment of more

security forces drawn from the local population. After initial resistance from the national government, the president appointed Mohamud Saleh in the North East as regional coordinator in 2015 and established a remodelled 'locally sensitive' security apparatus, though still under national command (ICG, 2018 and 2015). An Ogaden Somali who played a role in ending the *shifita* war, Saleh commanded much respect (Wakube et al., 2017).

The deployment of local, Muslim, ethnic Somali security officials to lead operations in the North East is reported to have built trust in the security services as residents see locally rooted offices as more responsive to their concerns (ICG, 2018). This, in turn, has also improved intelligence gathering (ICG, 2018). During Saleh's three-year role as regional commissioner, the number of attacks in the North East, particularly in the regional hub of Garissa and also in Wajir and Mandera town, fell markedly. This is attributed primarily to improved trust in the security leadership and the decline in fear of being accused of collusion with al-Shabaab when sharing information (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019; ICG, 2018). It is also attributed to the greater understanding of Saleh and other top security personnel of Somali origin of local clan dynamics of the Somali communities (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019). Saleh transcended clan divisions and helped to restore relations among national and county security agencies and communities (Wakube et al., 2017). Al-Shabaab's recruitment and popular support in the North East are also reported to have subsided since 2015, due in part to improved security arrangements (ICG, 2018).

While appointing police officers who know and understand the community well is considered to enhance police legitimacy, there is also a concern that this could encourage favouritism and corruption (Botha & Abdile, 2020). A potential solution can be to rotate officers within the station or between stations in the same geographical area on a regular basis. Further, an environment should be fostered whereby commanders and other officers can come forward with information regarding abuse and the misuse of powers of colleagues to a separate command tasked with investigating these allegations (Botha & Abdile, 2020).

Trust-building between youth and security officers is particularly important, as poor treatment of youth by security personnel is a frequently cited driver of recruitment into violent groups, according to various research reports (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018). Creating the space for engagement and dialogue between these two groups, in contrast to confrontation, can build the confidence of young people, foster trust and relationships and possibly change perceptions of the other (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018). Participants at USAID's PEACE III trust-building events find that while youth still face various challenges, such as accessing ID cards, low representation in formal peace structures and low employment in border areas, there has been a marked improvement in youth and security personnel relations since the start of the programme's interventions (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018). Other ways in which to improve relationships include sports competitions, community works, regular feedback forums, and cultural events (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018). In Rhamu town in Mandera County, for example, where communities have long had poor relations with the local police force, friendly soccer matches between the local youth and police have helped to improve relations (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018). The matches have helped to build trust between the youth and police and to change perceptions of the 'other', with youth increasingly viewed as contributors to peacebuilding efforts, rather than trouble makers. Youth have supported police efforts by jointly organising night patrols and promptly reporting any incidents of conflict, such that they can be addressed quickly to avoid escalation (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018).

Police forces also need to be representative and reflective of women and their needs. In Mandera, a group of women formed a sub-county Gender Technical Working Group, with support from a DFID-funded programme aimed at increasing safety and security for communities in Kenya. The group has lobbied the police station about the absence of a female gender desk officer and accompanied survivors of sexual and gender-based violence to court and ensured the justice process was completed (resulting in convictions) (Beston, 2018). Efforts are also needed to strengthen the 'demand' side of services by increasing women and girls' awareness of their rights and on reporting VAWG to the police (Beston, 2018). Different approaches have been piloted in schools and other 'safe spaces' to build trust in the police and awareness around reporting, such as in Girls and Boys clubs in Wajir (Beston, 2018). Work has also been conducted around social norms such as female genital mutilation and on potential problems with traditional structures in the North Eastern counties adjudicating in VAWG cases (Beston, 2018). Support was also given to the sub-county level Gender Technical Working Group, which took action on VAWG cases, including securing the arrest of perpetrators of an FGM/C (Beston, 2018).

Community policing and neighbourhood watch

Community policing, neighbourhood watch schemes and other early warning mechanisms can be effective in improving levels of trust between communities and the police. Communities become a key part of front-line strategies to prevent violence in their own communities (Nolasco, 2017). Such civic-government partnerships can contribute to early warning systems or regular reports from community members about individuals seemingly at risk for extremist recruitment, for example, which can help reduce conflict and violent extremism. This has been particularly effective in Wajir in addressing disruptive communal shocks (Chome, 2016). Further, members of community policing have managed to establish informal communication systems between authorities on either side of the Kenya-Somalia border (even when the Somalia side was under al-Shabaab control). They were able to secure the release of Kenyan teachers and non-governmental organisation (NGO) workers detained by al-Shabaab and accused of spying (USAID et al., 2013). They have also facilitated open discussions of police harassment and corruption during sessions on conflict prevention (USAID et al., 2013). Radio can be used to support community-police collaborative initiatives, helping to raise awareness about community-based programmes and how to become involved (Nolasco, 2017).

Community Police Committees (CPCs), under the National Police Service, face various challenges, however, including issues with representation and risk. CPCs aim to bring together different segments of the community and the police regularly to identify community problems and coordinate responses (Beston, 2018). In areas where the police are not trusted, however, working with them can be a significant risk for community members. Respondents in parts of Wajir and Mandera, for example, say that CPC members fear for their lives because they are targeted as collaborators and spies (Beston, 2018). In addition, community respondents in several locations in the North East claim that CPCs need to be more inclusive and representative of the community and its interests (Beston, 2018).

The Nyumba Kumi (ten houses) initiative, which anchors community policing at various levels – the household level, market, estate, among others, has demonstrated some success. Launched by the Kenyan government, it is a problem and solution-based system intended to create national security awareness amongst citizens and involve citizen participation from the grassroots level (Ndono et al., 2019; Nolasco, 2017). Each grouping is in charge of

addressing challenges specific to them, with the aim of providing more responsive and accountable security governance. The initiative seeks to work with different age and gender groups in order to determine their concerns and elicit their ideas (International Alert, 2016). The programme replaces prior forceful approaches with one that is based on trust, accountability and close relationships with the community to gain intelligence (Wakube et al., 2017). A study on the effectiveness of Nyumba Kumi in Garissa County finds that close collaboration of the community with security agencies has greatly improved and that that extremist attacks in the County have dropped significantly, even though some still occur (Wakube et al., 2017). Another study of Nyumba Kumi in Kayole, Nairobi County, finds that youth involvement helps to reduce crime and improve human security (Ndono et al., 2019). Their involvement can counter friction with elders and the view of youth as criminals. In addition, youth can keep tabs on each other, and ensure that those engaging in criminal activities are well checked (Ndono et al., 2019).

There has been some overlap and confusion about the differences between CPCs and Nyumba Kumi, however, with reports of some individuals serving on both (Beston, 2018). While CPCs work with the police and Nyumba Kumi groups work for the national administration, attempts should be made to clarify their roles and identify opportunities to complement each other's work (Beston, 2018). It is also important to ensure that such initiatives that involve civic-government partnerships are not used for social profiling and community surveillance. Perceptions of such use would adversely affect trust between community and government officials (Chome, 2016).

Countering violent extremism

Kenya has since moved away from its securitised response to violent extremism, adopting a more ambitious counter initiative that extends beyond security, to attention to political and ideological rationales and the sense of nationhood (Nolasco, 2017). While the emphasis continues to focus on individuals, there is recognition of the need for a more holistic and integrated approach. This entails interventions aimed at addressing historical grievances and the environment conducive for violent ideologies and recruitment to extremism (Botha & Abdile, 2020; ICG, 2018). Delivery of quality services, in particular education and health, and jobs within vulnerable communities, should comprise a large component of Countering violent extremism (CVE) efforts, as the lack of these can render youth particularly vulnerable to recruitment (Nolasco, 2017; Mkutu et al., 2014). Targeting, without stigmatising, young people, and providing them with alternative employment can disrupt al-Shabaab's recruitment and diminish their appeal (ICG, 2018).

Devolution has helped to undercut support for al-Shabaab as locally elected leaders are more likely to be trusted by local populations and to enjoy greater credibility with youths in addressing radicalisation and violent extremism than security officers posted from Nairobi (ICG, 2018; Mkutu et al., 2014). Counties also have a better understanding than the national government of the spread and distribution of unemployed youth and their vulnerability to recruitment (Mkutu et al., 2014). Counties thus have the potential to develop effective strategies and programmes which link these youth to training opportunities and potential employers (Mkutu et al., 2014). Garissa County, for example, has created scholarships scheme for technical courses, engineering and medicine. The county government has also popularised a motto of 'Ugatuzi na Kazi' (devolution and work), which it has cascaded to the sub-counties, employing 100 youth in every sub-county (Mkutu et al., 2014).

Efforts also need to be made to challenge particular perceptions of groups and treatment of all Muslims as terrorists or views of Christians as the enemy (Botha, 2013). Along these lines, authorities need to avoid blanket arrests and extrajudicial killings (ICG, 2018). In order to succeed, counter initiatives also need to be designed collectively with affected communities, ensuring that the voices of those who are often marginalised and excluded are heard (Botha & Abdile, 2020; Nolasco, 2017). With the aim of better integrating religious, ethnic and tribal minorities, promoting inter-faith harmony, and facilitating de-radicalisation, the government launched a National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism. The plan was launched in 2016 in coastal counties and in Wajir, Mandera and Garissa (Botha & Abdile, 2020; Chandra, 2019; NCIC, 2018). The plan includes training and capacity building for religious leaders, youth, women and government officials (NCIC, 2018). By increasing the knowledge and awareness of radicalisation processes amongst FBOs, local government and CBOs, a network of groups and individuals can be formed to help identify and quickly respond to such dynamics (Nolasco, 2017).

Transitional justice

Progress toward implementing the TJRC report and acknowledgement by political elites of past atrocities against the Somali population detailed in the report, could play a significant role in addressing historical injustices (Kirui, 2019; Nolasco, 2017). Such an acknowledgement, adopted with a view of taking responsibility, could help to rebuild trust and improve Kenyan Somali-Government of Kenya relations. This, in turn, could improve the prospect of greater national integration (Kirui, 2019).

Investigation of the Wagalla massacre, and also the wider impact of the *shifita* war, formed a major element of the work of Kenya's TJRC, however, lack of acknowledgement by state actors undermines the important findings of state culpability (Anderson, 2014). The TJRC determined findings of responsibility for the massacre of hundreds of civilians and other atrocities on the part of three state actors: the Wajir District Security Committee and the Provincial Security Committee (which authorised the violence); and the Kenya Army (for the actual execution) (see Anderson, 2014). The Commission also emphasised that the Kenyan state had created the political environment in which such an event could happen (Anderson, 2014). Failure of the agents of the state, especially the military, to acknowledge that the Wagalla massacre was a product of a state policy of violence, during TJRC hearings and subsequently, however, amounts to a failure to properly deal with the past (Anderson, 2014).

Other actors have made efforts to achieve some form of acknowledgement, such as the unveiling of a public monument to the victims in 2014 (the 30th anniversary of the massacre), with the names of 482 of the victims engraved. This was supported by the Kenya National Commission for Human Rights, and assisted by the National Museums of Kenya, in conjunction with local and international partners (Anderson, 2014).

The TJRC report, thus while commended for its robustness, has suffered from lack of implementation and lack of agreement on the part of political elites on how to proceed, which could contribute to a cycle of violence (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017; Nolasco, 2017). The non-implementation of the report thus remains a threat to peace in the country (Nolasco, 2017). Unaddressed historical injustices, in particular direct use of state power for violence against ethnic groups, are likely to continue to foster inter-group grievances (Cox et al., 2014). The lack of sustainable social reconciliation processes, and the manipulation of clan identities and stereotypes, has created an entrenched culture of retaliation in Mandera, for example, between the Garre and Degodia clans. Each episode of violent conflict leaves behind numerous

unresolved issues, which resurge and exacerbate the next conflict into a more severe (and often prolonged) contest, undermining the effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017).

Peace committees

Regional marginalisation and lack of trust in state institutions by communities in Northern Kenya mean that power has not necessarily resided in state institutions, but rather in a mix of actors adjacent to state institutions, such as traditional leaders, clan leaders and elders (Lind, 2018). These non-state actors and informal systems have not been in competition with formal structures for authority and power but rather executed the core functions of security and governance in places far from the centre (Lind, 2018). Recognising the importance of these non-state and informal actors to the functioning of political systems and peacebuilding at the margins, the central government has since the 1990s given them space to operate and treated them as partners. This began with a group of influential women peacebuilders in Wajir, who came together and successfully mediated between rival groups. This led to the formalisation of civic-governmental collaboration through the formation of the WPDC in 1995 (Lind, 2018; Menkhaus, 2008). The marked decline in violent crime, including livestock raiding, in the North in the late 1990s – and the prevention or quick resolution of communal and cross-border clashes – is attributed to these coalitions of local non-state actors in partnership with the Kenyan state (Menkhaus, 2008).

PCs have been prominent in historically marginalised peripheral border areas, playing a pivotal role in coordinating information and interventions to address conflict and serving as a mechanism for cooperation, trust and relationship building (USAID et al., 2013). The philosophy behind the establishment of PCs was derived from the need to institutionalise and legitimise traditional conflict resolution mechanisms; and to widen the constituency of traditional institutions to be more inclusive of gender and youth (Nolasco, 2017). Following the 2007-2008 post-election violence, there was a growing recognition of the importance of PCs (Nolasco, 2017).

District PCs are vastly inclusive and have played a central role in managing ethno-political violence at the local level (Nolasco, 2017; Menkhaus, 2008). The WPDC gave social groups not normally given voice in formal government (e.g. elders, women, and youth) a central place in the civic-government collaboration. It also enabled cooperation among actors who may have previously been rival sources of non-state authority (e.g. traditional elders and business people and/or local NGO figures) (Menkhaus, 2008). Chaired by the District Commissioner, the WPDC included representatives from the District Security Committee, heads of government departments, NGOs, elders, women, youth, religious leaders, the business community, and the district's four MPs (Menkhaus, 2008). The key success of the WPDC, and the partnerships it established, was the reduction of incidents of violent crime and banditry, and the facilitation of rapid, effective conflict management responses (Menkhaus, 2008). The WPDC also catalysed traditional clan elders within the Wajir District to form a robust 'Council of Elders', enabling them to engage in regular communication and collaboration (Menkhaus, 2008). The legitimacy and effectiveness of PCs, such as the WPDC, follows in large part from their homegrown, organic emergence; and their ability to be inclusive in a way that cuts across societal divisions (Hedditch, 2016; USAID et al., 2013). In addition, its hybrid state-civic structure allows for local autonomy, along with the benefit of political support and coordination (Hedditch, 2016). Over time, the WPDC also received support from international donors (Menkhaus, 2008).

PCs can also spawn strong and beneficial spill-over effects, in which one successful PC is emulated in other districts and regions and across the border; and lessons are shared from one area to the next (Nolasco, 2017). Once established, the WPDC, for example, facilitated the establishment of other PCs, styled upon its own, along the border zone with their Somali counterparts, which contributed to an actual decline in cross-border conflicts (Hedditch, 2016). Such regional connectivity facilitated by the WPDC was, in turn, instrumental in the emergence of the Modogashe Declaration of 2001, concerned specifically with the peaceful settlement of regional disputes (see Hedditch, 2016). In the aftermath of the 2007-2008 post-election violence in Kenya, there has been growing recognition among government, civil society and development partners of the need to institutionalise traditional and community based peace structures such as District PCs (Nolasco, 2017). The National Policy on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management (2011) gave legal enforcement and official recognition to District PCs, which have become known as 'County Peace Forums' following devolution (Lind, 2018).

There can also be spillover effects from the district to local level – and cooperation of sub-committees to effectively address cross-border conflicts. In Wajir, for example, the WPDC, along with other partners, have strengthened various local peace committees, which have then managed numerous inter-clan disputes over natural resource use (USAID et al., 2013). Sub-county PCs that coordinate peacebuilding and conflict management in pastoral zones, incorporating traditional justice resolution mechanisms into the formal legal-judicial system, are highly regarded by members (Nolasco, 2017). The involvement of pastoralist associations in PCs can also help to address pastoralist conflict and competition for increasingly scarce water and pasture (Nolasco, 2017; USAID et al., 2013). A cross-border PC was established in 2018, for example, under the USAID's PEACE III programme, to share early warning information, in order to help counter pastoral conflicts between Gare and Degodia clans. Strong PC-government relations can also contribute to the effectiveness of conflict reduction, by making pastoral communities well aware of the consequences of engaging in livestock theft and likely interception by authorities (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018).

Local PCs have also worked successfully with local administration authorities from Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia and Uganda, who routinely meet at the border to discuss conflicts and coordinate with state security forces in the areas (Nolasco, 2017; USAID et al., 2013). This collaboration as a whole has been credited with successfully addressing cross-border conflict and reversing insecurity along the borders (Nolasco, 2017). Their success is attributed to: a good, functional relationship with government officials; strong local ownership; knowledge of local conflicts; commitment; flexible membership; and international financial support (Nolasco, 2017). PCs have been involved in coordinating rapid response interventions and have been supported under the USAID's PEACE II programme to build up localised peace committees in strategic hotspot areas along the border (USAID et al., 2013). The programme has invested in strengthening PCs, supporting them to be more inclusive, to better coordinate across sectors and borders, and to link with the regional and national Conflict Early Warning and response mechanisms (USAID et al., 2013).

While PCs have emerged as a proven, effective source of resilience, conflict management and peacebuilding in Kenya and neighbouring countries, they face various critiques and challenges, including the participation of women and inability to address root causes. Women in Northern Kenya have reported mixed experiences of being involved in PCs, with some suggesting that they were intentionally excluded from processes by not being told the correct time of meetings, or only included as a token to satisfy donor requirements (Wise et al., 2019). In

other cases, however, women respondents claim that their male counterparts support them and respect their opinion (Wise et al., 2019). It is important to be aware of these varying experiences to ensure that PCs are genuinely inclusive (Wise et al., 2019). Further, while PCs have been successful in reducing violent crime and in conflict management, they are often not in a position to prevent large-scale communal clashes nor to address the underlying causes of violent conflict (Menkhaus, 2008).

PCs have also been undermined by divisive clan interests and by neglect by new county leaders under devolution. The effectiveness of PCs is based in large part on their independence and accountability (USAID et al., 2013). PCs have lost their effectiveness in situations where they have been utilised by clan leaders as a vehicle for pursuing their clan interests and/or where PC members have taken their own clan's side in a conflict (or are strongly perceived to have done so). This undermines their role as a neutral peacebuilder (USAID et al., 2013). Devolution has also inadvertently led to the side-lining of PCs and traditional peace pacts that have been effective sources of resilience. New county elites underutilise proven PCs and other community-based organisations (ICG, 2015). Intent on keeping the national government and neighbouring county jurisdictions at a distance and sidelining women and youth networks, they have preferred CPFs that are county-controlled mediation facilities (ICG, 2015). The WPDC, for example, has been weakened from lack of funding, purposeful neglect and transition to CPFs (Karienyé & Warfa, 2020).

The waning of DPCs and traditional peace pacts (such as the Modogashe Declaration) takes place in a context where new fields of political competition have emerged at the sub-national level (Lind, 2018). In relatively peaceful Wajir, upheld for its inclusive approach to county government, the experienced and successful 'Al-Fatah Council of Elders' has been superseded by the CPF (ICG, 2015). At the same time, governors, who are responsible for mobilising support for new CPFs, have often focused their energies instead on gaining greater security powers from the centre (Lind, 2018). The strength of CPFs ultimately will vary across the country, with some counties yet to constitute them, including Mandera, which has many other peace actors, committees and structures (Beston, 2018). There are some concerns that these county-controlled entities may adversely affect perceptions of neutrality on the part of parties to the conflict (ICG, 2015).

Traditional elders and Council of Elders

While traditional elders and CoEs have played an effective role in enforcing peace initiatives and agreements and managing conflict in Northern Kenya, there is debate about their continued utility (Nyamweru & Chidongo, 2018; Nolasco, 2017). The terms elders and Councils of Elders does not appear in the 2010 Constitution. Some scholars of African politics have suggested that these institutions are at odds with the ideals of modern democratic governance and will become increasingly less relevant, while others stress their continued relevance at the local level. They see them as continuing to provide affordable and easily accessible forms of alternative dispute resolution (Nyamweru & Chidongo, 2018).

Traditional elders and CoEs have been effective in a number of places, although one of their key benefits may lie in providing an entry point for other actors to anchor infrastructures for peace. Examples of effective CoEs include the joint council established for the Mandera-Gedo region, and the elders of Garissa who led on the Lagdera dispute from the Garissa side while the famous Al Fatah council of elders from Wajir led from the Wajir side (USAID et al., 2013). Elders from conflicting communities have sealed treaties on peacekeeping

through traditional customs. This has not, however, necessarily prevented conflicts from flaring up again (Nolasco, 2017). Nonetheless, community elders can be one of the most important entry points through which other actors can anchor their local infrastructures for peace (NCIC, 2018). The NCIC, for example, has relied on elders as entry points in facilitating dialogue in various counties, including in Garissa County (NCIC, 2018). The Commission uses dialogue extensively as a tool for achieving peace and reconciliation between and amongst communities, with mediation often accompanying dialogue efforts (NCIC, 2018). The Commission has trained over 500 CoE and Sub-County PCs in conflict transformation and facilitation of community dialogue, networking and early warning systems – and created platforms where CoE and government officials meet to discuss the implementation of community peace agreements (NCIC, 2018). In recent years the Kenyan judiciary has also begun to explore ways of encouraging the use of local CoE in alternative dispute resolution, and both national and county governments are recognising the need to provide more financial and logistical support to these bodies (Nyamweru & Chidongo, 2018).

CoEs have also been involved in pushing for greater involvement in the LAPSSET process in order to ensure that local concerns and interests are heard and accommodated (Cormack, 2016). Criticism of LAPSSET has not been about rejecting development, but about negotiating and claiming a stake in the process of development (Cormack, 2016). The revival and reinvention of the CoE, called *dedha*, which is a part of pastoralist heritage, is also a way of reclaiming control of the production of knowledge about the past and pastoralism (Cormack, 2016). This can also serve to reconnect pastoralist and other minority groups of Northern Kenya (Cormack, 2016). For further discussion on LAPSSET, see [Citizenship, social cohesion and diversity](#) under Sources of Resilience.

Elders and CoEs may represent larger descent groups, sub-clans and clans, with very few of Kenya's CoE claiming an identity that transcends ethnicity, rendering them susceptible to clan politics. The National Council of Elders (of Kenya) is one of the few entities that transcends identity, comprising of all registered traditional councils of elders with the objective of peace, cohesion and integration for development (Nyamweru & Chidongo, 2018). While traditional elders retain extensive influence and authority in the Somali context generally, the proliferation of multiple clan elders allied with different politicians has eroded their influence. (USAID et al., 2013). In some parts of Mandera and Wajir, for example, some peace structures involving elders had been co-opted by politicians (Beston, 2018). CoEs were prominent in attempts to mobilise voters along ethnic and clan lines during the 2013 elections in Northern Kenya (Carrier & Kochore, 2014). Councils of each of the ethnic groups met to designate single candidates for the governorship (Scott-Villiers, 2017).

In some places, strained relations between youth and community elders and neglect of women can undermine peace efforts. An accelerating generational gap may lead to the loss of knowledge of traditional peacemaking knowledge unless it is transferred, requiring more efforts to bridge the two generational groups (USAID et al., 2013). In addition, CoEs in Kenya have rarely supported a female candidate for any national position and have even intervened to discourage women from running (Nyabola, 2016). There are indications, however, that some local elder groups show signs of evolving to include younger people and women in their membership (Nyamweru & Chidongo, 2018).

The resolution of disputes through traditional systems can offer quick justice and prevent retaliation, however, they can fail to address gender-based violence adequately. At the local community level, clans have been able to mitigate cases of crime, including cases involving

loss of life, through the *maslaha* reconciliation process (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Faster resolution through such alternative dispute mechanisms can prevent additional violence through retaliation or the escalation of conflict (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). This system is often used in the case of sexual offences in rural areas and occasionally in urban areas, with village elders assessing financial compensation for the victims or their families. This can result in much less official reporting of such crimes and lack of clarity about prevalence, however, alongside the absence of criminal prosecutions (USDOS, 2019).

Elders can play a role in addressing FGM/C. As discussed, a high percentage (82%) of respondents in a study on FGM/C practices in Kenya noted that tradition/custom was the main reason why people in their community practised FGM/C (Meroka-Mutua et al., 2020). A high proportion of respondents (85%) also strongly supported FGM/C abandonment programmes regardless of whether it was spearheaded by traditional community elders, government, or religious leaders (Meroka-Mutua et al., 2020). Elders, religious leaders and other community leaders can thus play important roles alongside government to create a platform to address issues related to FGM/C and to encourage bottom-up processes that encourage buy-in and compliance with formal laws that prohibit FGM/C (Meroka-Mutua et al., 2020).

Religious leaders and inter-faith dialogue

Customary and religious leaders continue to play a key role in influencing the attitudes and behaviours of communities, particularly remote, pastoral communities, benefitting from continued legitimacy and authority amongst such communities (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018). They are also perceived by members of the community as being impartial and above clan politics (USAID et al., 2013). Further, there are ways in which to address situations in which impartiality is in question. The Garissa Mediation Council, comprised of religious leaders and entities, for example, facilitated a dialogue among traditional clan elders to break the deadlock on a boundary dispute. During the process, however, the key religious leaders were not seen as impartial enough and the process was then led by third-party elders (for non-affected clans) (USAID et al., 2013). This flexibility in the leadership of peace processes demonstrates increased resilience and leadership in peacebuilding (USAID et al., 2013).

Local religious leaders have successfully engaged in conflict mediation, leading to the development of permanent peace dialogue mechanisms, involved in addressing cross-border conflict, violent extremism and VAWG. Local religious leaders successfully brokered the peaceful and unconditional release of non-local teachers from Mandera, for example, who had gone to buy merchandise from Belet Hawa, Somalia, in 2008 and were abducted (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). This successful mediation led to the creation of a permanent peace dialogue mechanism between Kenya and Somalia, involving multi-stakeholders: the Mandera Mediation Council (MMC). The sheiks in MMC came from different clans, with existing skills in settling disputes. Since MMC's successful intervention in the Garre-Murulle conflict in 2008 (with the support of PEACE II), the profile of religious actors have grown and they have formed a central part of subsequent conflict mediation efforts (USAID et al., 2013). The MMC has also been prominent in the cross border peace strategy team which enabled dialogue with al-Shabaab, which helped to avert the escalation of a number of disputes (USAID et al., 2013). More recently, the MMC has collaborated with the Violence against Women and Girls partner, Women for Peace and Development to enhance the gender element of their peace work (Beston, 2018). Mediation councils have thus enhanced the unity of religious leaders in undertaking

peacebuilding initiatives and improved their relationships with youth, women and the government (USAID et al., 2013).

Strategies to counter violence and extremism include engaging more consistently with both Christian and Muslim religious leaders as a way to counter divisive narratives that fuel inter-communal tensions and to improve state-society and inter-community relations (International Alert, 2016). Inter-faith and intra-faith dialogues have been initiated, but they need to be increased and given more support (Nolasco, 2017). The government's 2016 National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism includes training and capacity building for religious leaders, youth, women and government officials to increase knowledge and awareness of radicalisation processes and how to respond (NCIC, 2018; Nolasco, 2017).

While the involvement of religious leaders is often considered essential for successful CVE initiatives, they experience challenges for their own safety when engaging in CVE activities (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018). Many religious leaders, despite their longstanding recognition as key agents for peace, have taken a back seat for fear of being perceived as terror suspects on suspicion of supporting al-Shabaab (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). This, in turn, has impeded voluntary engagement in peace work, especially in fighting radicalisation (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). It is important to foster relationships and networks among religious leaders and with other peace actors and security agencies such that religious leaders can safely carry out their roles (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018). Most events that brought these actors together resulted in the development of some form of structure that would enable trusted, known leaders to keep working together. The Mandera action plan developed during an interfaith forum, for example, highlights the importance of developing a cross-border network of religious leaders from Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia who know and trust one another (Pact & Mercy Corps, 2018)

Inter-faith dialogue should take place not only among religious leaders and their partners, but also at the community level and in the educational system. The lack of integration in the Kenyan educational system, whereby religious teaching is divided into Christian and Islamic studies, and students are grouped by religion, hinders inter-faith dialogue (Wesonga, 2017). Instead, children could benefit from inter-faith studies as part of their curriculum (Wesonga, 2017). Initiatives of Change started an interfaith dialogue in 2016 at Garissa University, the site of the horrendous terror attack one year prior. The first dialogue attracted over 80 students, members of civil society, clergy from both Muslim and Christian faiths, as well as other members of the community. Discussion included teachings of harmony and coexistence from both the Bible and the Quran and outlined the roles of Muslims and Christians, among other community stakeholders. Students requested more dialogues to be held at to the university (IofC, 2018). Inter-faith dialogues and calls on the community to promote unity and to reject violence had already been taking place in Garissa County prior to the attack at the University, in response to prior violence in Garissa town in 2012 when the KDF burnt the market (Wakube et al., 2017). After the 2015 University attack, there was an immense wave of shared grief and horror, which had the effect of galvanising the religious groups to work together, contrary to the aim of al-Shabaab (Wakube et al., 2017).

Other inter-faith initiatives include the sharing of Christian and Muslim festivals and joint art projects to show unity (Wesonga, 2017). The Muslim community pushed to have Eid-ul-Adha recognised as a public holiday, alongside Eid-il-Fitr, which was granted by the Kenyan government, helping to alleviate the perceptions of inequality or unfair treatment toward Islam (Wesonga, 2017). The painting of Mosques and Churches in the same colour in some parts of Nairobi, in order to show unity, has also brought different communities together (Wesonga,

2017). In order to gain sufficient traction, however, inter-faith initiatives, including dialogues, require ongoing support and resources (Nolasco, 2017).

Media

Kenya's vibrant and dynamic media, with several community and faith-based radio stations with a fairly large following across the country, has the potential to contribute to conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes (Maweu, 2019). Radio remains the most powerful, accessible and affordable medium for reaching large numbers of people in isolated areas, building on the oral tradition of rural populations (Mercy Corps, 2019). Star FM, based in the North East of Kenya, is the country's oldest Somali-language broadcaster and broadcasts throughout Kenya. USAID's PEACE II programme has funded Star FM to hold live radio panel interviews with key peace actors in the North East, including religious leaders, and to broadcast peace dramas and interviews with the public (USAID et al., 2013). The radio dramas, in Somali, were very popular among the youth (USAID et al., 2013). Star FM also set up a hotline for citizens to share information on incidents of conflict across the region (USAID et al., 2013). The television and radio show, *The Team in Kenya*, developed in response to the 2007-2008 post-election violence and co-produced by Search for Common Ground and Media Focus on Africa, dramatises key issues facing Kenyans. They include the need to move beyond tribalism, leadership, good governance, the roles and responsibilities of citizens, and the challenging relationship between elders and youth (Maweu, 2019). It has successfully reached millions of Kenyans with messages of peace and reconciliation (Maweu, 2019). The success of these various peace messages has been gauged through the lack of large-scale post-election violence in both 2013 and 2017, despite the fact that the root causes of post-election violence in 2007-08 still remain largely unaddressed (Maweu, 2019). For further information on peace messaging, see [Citizenship, social cohesion and diversity](#) under Sources of Resilience.

Community radio, which is considered closer to people at the grassroots level than mainstream broadcasts, can also be used to facilitate peaceful social dialogue and build trust and resilience between and among different communities in Kenya. This is due in part to their portrayal of promising potentials; and the promotion of dialogue and better understanding among conflicting communities (Maweu, 2019). Community radio can be a powerful peacebuilding tool, again through dramas, storytelling, and call-in talk shows (Maweu, 2019). The popular community radio drama, 'Gutuka' (a Kiswahili word meaning awaken), supported by the International Rescue Committee and USAID, disseminated messages of peace. It encouraged women to actively participate in the promotion of a peaceful society (Maweu, 2019). In Wajir County, which has experienced problems with drought and scarcity of water, community radio is relied upon to help better cope with the effects of climate change. Through radio talk shows and various messages broadcasted in local languages, Wajir Community Radio provides the community, particularly herders, with climate information. The radio also airs gender and natural resource management programming (Mercy Corps, 2019). It has become a trusted source of information for pastoralists and is well connected to local communities (Sladkova, 2019). It has also provided a platform for local communities to raise grievances and for policy-makers to take part in the dialogue (Sladkova, 2019). There is some limited evidence that the Radio improved the government's accountability and made its relationships with local communities more collaborative (Sladkova, 2019). With donor support, the Radio was able to expand to other counties outside of Wajir, including Garissa, Isiolo and Mandera, reaching a larger audience that has also been affected by various disasters like droughts and floods (Mercy Corps, 2019).

Community-based media in Kenya face various challenges, however, in particular lack of funding and reliance on donors, inadequate professional training of journalists, and overreliance on volunteers (Maweu, 2019). Media organisations are also susceptible to political control and influence due in part to inadequate governance structures and lack of a defined identity (Maweu, 2019).

Business

The dramatic expansion of cross-border commerce from Somalia into Kenya has had a variable effect on cross-border conflict, often serving as a force for cross-clan collaboration and security, but also producing conflict over control of key trade routes (Nolasco, 2017). Small but fast-growing towns, such as Mandera and Garissa, are centres of local and cross border commerce, linked to markets and production in Somalia and Ethiopia, (Menkhaus, 2015). Cross-border trade has produced a network of regional business elites whose partnerships span ethnic and national boundaries and whose interests in promoting either peace or conflict are essential for tracking conflict trends (Menkhaus, 2015). In Mandera County, many people confirmed that they have common business interests or investments across clan lines (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). Communities on both sides of the Mandera County-Somalia border not only engage in cross-border trade, but also make use of one another's services, including livestock markets, schools, health posts, and airstrips (Mohamed & Warfa, 2019). Such interdependence has at times helped people seek solutions that will halt conflicts that are likely to affect their commercial interests. Some people also jointly own or run properties with members of other clans and do not wish to see them destroyed in clan conflicts (NCIC & Interpeace, 2017). For discussion on how business people can instead fuel conflict, in particular, through the elimination of business rivals from other clans and engagement with al-Shabaab, see [Conflict and resilience actors](#).

Markets, such as livestock markets, are important shared spaces that bring different groups and communities within and across borders together, triggering the potential for conflict or resilience and peacebuilding. The Mandera livestock market, for example, brings together daily livestock traders from Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia. While disputes can arise in the marketplace that trigger wider communal conflicts, relationships can also be built and solidified, allowing for sharing of information, and crime and conflict prevention (USAID et al., 2013). The Mandera District Livestock Marketing Council (DLMC) serves as a peace structure to resolve disputes arising between livestock traders as they conduct their business, collaborating closely with Mandera's peace committees. Disputes in the market can trigger wider inter-communal tensions and violence, thus market-based mediators need to be able to rapidly gather accurate information and resolve disputes before they escalate. A constant dialogue between livestock keepers mitigates such cross-border conflict, which can be triggered through livestock theft (USAID et al., 2013). The Mandera DLMC, in turn, has supported the formation of a Garissa Livestock Market Mediation Council, transferring good practice through training, exchange visits and facilitation (USAID et al., 2013). The DLMC action research team uncovered root causes of conflicts in Garissa Livestock Market, which include the lack of pricing regulations, and sources of potential cross-border conflict, including animal rustling, clan rivalry and drought (USAID et al., 2013). The DLMC institution has moved beyond solely economic functions to act as a peace organisation with a strong early warning network among traders (USAID et al., 2013).

Business can also serve to transform the characterisations and perceptions of marginalised populations, in particular the business success of Kenyan Somalis. The

large Somali community in Eastleigh, Nairobi, many of whom moved there from the North East of Kenya, have also been treated as outsiders, labelled as 'terrorists' and 'illegal refugees' and subjected to heavy-handed security raids (Varming, 2020). Their growing contribution to the business community, to the tax revenue of Nairobi City Council and to the general wealth and development of Kenya, however, has the potential to change discourses about them to new narratives of belonging and contribution (Varming, 2020). The business success of Kenyan Somalis can also evoke envy though from non-Somali Kenyans or fears that the former are taking over (Kirui, 2019). Somali Kenyans wish to contribute, but they also wish to be given the level of service and infrastructure in their communities to reflect their contributions (Varming, 2020). Their business success can give them greater influence and clout in calling for improved services and equal treatment before the law, and can make them important, willing collaborators in peacebuilding efforts (Kirui, 2019).

For further discussion, see Citizenship, social cohesion and diversity under Sources of Resilience.

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