



Security Urbanism and the Counterterror State in Kenya

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Abstract

This article offers a theoretical and ethnographic analysis of what I am calling ‘security urbanism’, examining the spatial practices of the Kenyan security state and the urban impacts of the War on Terror in Nairobi. From counterterror policing to forced disappearances, demolitions, military operations and the proliferation of checkpoints and security searches, the War on Terror has left its indelible material and affective impacts in Kenya. Counterterrorist policing operations such as Operation Usalama Watch have left many marginalized Nairobi residents fearful and traumatized. Meanwhile, in rich suburbs, the twin specters of terrorism and crime fuse in the imaginations and gated compounds of the affluent. This article analyzes the urban, state and spatial transformations produced by the War on Terror across several geographical scales (from the highly local to the neighborhood and the national). In a first section, I focus on the ‘state spatial strategies’ of counterterrorism and analyze the emergence of a ‘counterterror state’ in Kenya. In a second section, I draw on several ethnographic vignettes to demonstrate how urban residents internalize and perform fears, fantasies and politics thoroughly saturated by the imaginaries of the War on Terror. Ultimately, I argue that Nairobi’s security urbanism is the material articulation of War on Terror at the scale of the city, produced through the confluence of state strategies and everyday practices of securitized urban subjects. But how stable is the new hegemony of security in the country?

Keywords

anthropology of security, counterterrorism, Kenya, Nairobi, postcolonial state, production of space, state space, urbanism, war on terror

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Introduction

The city [is] not just the site, but the very medium of warfare – a flexible, almost liquid medium that is forever contingent and in flux. (Eyal Weizman 2006: 53)

Ibrahim tells me: ‘personally, I know about 30 people who lost their homes in the demolitions’. It is early October 2014, and I’ve come to meet Ibrahim, an elder, community leader and imam at a local mosque in Eastleigh where he teaches neighborhood children at his madrasa.¹ Eastleigh is a predominantly Somali and Muslim neighborhood in Nairobi, home to a large refugee population of Somalis and Ethiopians who have fled war and conflict in their home countries. It is also at the epicenter of the Kenyan government’s counter-terrorism policing operations. As Ibrahim describes to me:

The government decided that they wanted to remove all of the structures that were not ‘permanent’ in Eastleigh. [...] my madrasa was one of these semi-permanent structures, so it was demolished. It used to be made of *mabati* [iron sheets].

The official pretext for the neighborhood-wide demolitions was that the structures were built illegally, yet the police who carried them out were operating in the context ‘Operation Usalama Watch’, the infamous counterterrorism policing initiative that swept the neighborhood in the Spring and Summer of 2014. Amongst neighborhood residents, the demolitions were understood to be a kind of retaliation and collective punishment for the terrorist attack carried out against the Westgate shopping mall by the Somali militant group, Al-Shabaab, in September 2013.

There were no advance warnings before the demolition crews arrived in Eastleigh, and many people lost all of their belongings, either because they were unable to get to them in time or not allowed to retrieve them by the police. As Ibrahim recounts,

people were crying about their property, but there were police everywhere and there was nothing you could do. [...] when I saw my madrasa, I sat in the street there for three hours. Three hours. All I could do was cry.

Yet Ibrahim tells me that he was lucky: with much community support and many donations, he was able to open the madrasa at a new location across the street from where his demolished school once stood. His rent is higher now, and he struggles every month to stay open, but compared to what many people in the community have suffered his plight is, as he tells me, minor. In the hours that I spent talking with Ibrahim, he and his friends told me harrowing stories about what they had witnessed during the police raids. Under the auspice of rooting out ‘terrorists’, the Kenyan police engaged in widespread human rights abuses: beatings, robberies, extortion, rape and intimidation of residents while destroying property (often smashing and stealing from people’s homes during the raids) (Balakian, 2016). In the years since the Operation, human rights organizations have documented

wide-spread disappearances of young Muslim men across the country at the hands of anti-terrorism police forces (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

In 2014, Operation Usalama Watch worked like a battering ram on Eastleigh. Semi-permanent *mabati* structures were torn down en masse, putting many people out of their homes and work. Police rounds-ups punctuated the days, placing thousands in jail cells, and draining family and community resources to pay off bail and bribes (Henry, 2014; Human Rights Watch, 2014a, 2014b). To date, these operations have not led to any major convictions of suspects on terrorism related charges, but they have deeply affected the communities and the neighborhoods within which they were carried out. Within the first week of Usalama Watch, 4,000 people were arrested, caught in the seemingly indiscriminate dragnet of policing raids that pulled people out of their homes at night and swept-up whole crowds off of the city streets by day (Henry, 2014). Over the next months, thousands of refugees were forcibly relocated from their homes in Nairobi to overcrowded refugee camps in the Northern desert region of the country. Deportation and forced 'relocation' split up families, while hundreds were also kept for weeks under inhumane conditions at the now infamous Kasarani stadium in Nairobi. While such security operations have left their indelible physical and psychological marks on the neighborhood, they also stand as an index of the increasingly urban tactics and spatial strategies employed by the Kenyan state in its 'war on terror'.

This article looks at the sociospatial impacts of Kenya's War on Terror at multiple scales, through the prism of the urban, neighborhood and subjective transformations it has precipitated and what such processes may tell us about the changing nature of state power in contemporary Kenya. Over the past few years, the War on Terror has transformed and remade spaces across East Africa, pulverizing slums and marginalized urban areas, galvanizing attempts to construct border walls and close refugee camps, and precipitating larger international interventions in the Horn of Africa which are transforming regional governance and regional space (Al Bulushi, 2014; Anderson and McKnight, 2014). Building on Stephen Graham's (2010) theorization of 'military urbanism', I offer an analysis of processes of militarization and securitization of urban space in Nairobi. I begin from the premise that as security increasingly becomes a dominant concept and discourse in political and social life in Kenya, it also becomes an important mechanism through which space is produced. By providing an analysis of the 'production of security space' (Glück, 2015) through the case of security practices and urban imaginaries in Nairobi, this article contributes to a *sociospatial framework* for the anthropology of security (Low and Glück, 2017) by offering a grounded theorization of what I am here calling 'security urbanism'.

In a first section, I analyze the 'state spatial strategies' (Brenner, 2004) of counterterrorism, placing policing operations such as Usalama Watch in a broader context how *state space* is produced. I argue that policing practices and urban interventions are pivotal moments in the formation of the Kenyan 'counterterror state' (Masco, 2014). In a second section, I draw upon several ethnographic vignettes to illustrate how 'security' has become a dominant urban imaginary in

Nairobi, affecting the way securitized urban subjects articulate their fears, imagine threats, perceive politics and experience urban spaces. Taken together, these arguments provide a grounded theorization of how *security urbanism* is co-produced by state strategies and the everyday practices of urban residents.

Spatial strategies of the counterterror state

[E]ach new form of state, each new form of political power, introduces its own particular way of partitioning space, its own particular administrative classification of discourses about space and about things and people in space. Each such form commands space, as it were, to serve its purposes [...] (Henri Lefebvre 1991: 281)

Counterterrorism operations have left many Eastleigh residents traumatized, fearful of the police and even scared of leaving the neighborhood. As one woman who had been detained at Kasarani stadium told me during an interview: 'Even last night someone called me and told me not to leave me house, because there were police men here [in the streets].' Meti is an Oromo Ethiopian refugee who has made her home in Eastleigh for the past ten years; she tells me that everything changed in 2014. Refugees had long faced discrimination and intermittent police harassment in Kenya, but the past year represented a dramatic shift in the scale and brutality of the violence. Meti fled Ethiopia after her father was killed ten years ago and, as she explains: 'I can't go home unless I want to be killed, [...] but here [after this past year] my heart is so broken.' When I ask about how things have changed in her daily life in the city she replies, 'I don't leave Eastleigh if I don't have to, [...] I don't feel safe other places.' This sentiment, which was echoed by other refugees that I met in the neighborhood, also stands as an index of some of the less visible ways that Nairobi is being transformed by the War on Terror. As whole groups of people become fearful of leaving their neighborhood, it is the affective and immaterial boundaries within the city that are hardening. Residents of Eastleigh are not only dispossessed of their homes in large-scale highly visible demolitions. They are also excluded in less visible ways, as everyday harassment, trauma and fears impact the way they move around the city.

Urban counterterrorism interventions in Nairobi neighborhoods such as Operation Usalama Watch have become key spatial strategies of Kenya's 'war on terror.' As an extraordinary means through which the Kenyan state seeks to intervene in the social life of the city, counterterrorism policing both reshapes urban space and produces new relations between the state and its subjects. We may read such interventions as particular 'state spatial strategies' (Brenner, 2004) through which the emergent Kenyan 'counterterror state' (Masco, 2014) is actively constructing itself and through which state power makes itself visible and tangible in the everyday lives of citizens (Mitchell, 2006). Counterterrorism can thus be understood as a set of material practices through which the state is spatialized and new forms of 'state space' are constructed (Brenner and Elden, 2009;

Ferguson and Gupta, 2002). In this respect, urban security operations are key sites in which the Kenyan state's spatiality is re-negotiated, re-scaled, and reconstructed under the auspices of the war on terror.

While it has become an accepted theoretical axiom in the critical social sciences that urban space is 'produced' through social, political and economic forces (Harvey, 2007; Massey, 2005; Smith, 1984), there is decidedly less consensus about how to understand *the state* and its spatiality (Brenner, 2004; Ferguson and Gupta, 2002; Jessop, 2001, 1990). Building on urban-focused theories of spatial production, critical geographers have begun to theorize 'state space' as an outcome of conflicting social forces (Brenner, 2004; Brenner and Elden, 2009; Cowen and Gilbert, 2008; Smith, 1984): 'Much like the geography of the city,' writes Neil Brenner, 'the geography of state spatiality must be viewed as a presupposition, an area, and an outcome of continually evolving political strategies' (2004: 75–76). By viewing the state as a social process, a critical theory of state space focuses on the concrete strategies through which the state is materially articulated in social life. Rather than taking idealized spatial abstractions at face value – such as maps, laws, treaties, or policy documents – this critical state-space approach attends to the practices through which states constantly produce and reproduce their economic and juridico-political claims on space. Anthropological approaches to the study of states have often begun from similar theoretical points of departure: namely, that states can be studied through the practices and interactions in which they are made material in social life (Aretxaga, 2003; Das and Poole, 2004; Sharma and Gupta, 2006). As such, the anthropology of the state has helped to give ethnographic flesh to the fairly abstract statement that the state is a 'social relation' (Jessop, 1990; Poulantzas, 1978: 146–154). Whereas critical geographers have been helpful in theorizing state spatiality, they have been less adept at studying the concrete social practices through which states enact such spatiality in everyday life. Ethnographers, by contrast, have successfully documented the social relationships and interactions through which states enact their power, yet their ambit of theorization has often been too modestly curtailed by the horizons of their ethnographic scope. In what follows, I strive to stitch together the insights of these two fields in order to develop an ethnographically grounded treatment of state spatiality through the case of the Kenya counterterror state and its urban security strategies.

Just as it would be difficult to imagine a city existing apart from its material extension in space, states themselves can be analyzed through their spatial practices, projects and material practices of reproduction. Such an approach understands states as unfinished projects of socio-political domination that are constantly in need of renewal. As Jessop writes:

There is never a point when *the state* is finally built within a given territory and thereafter operates, so to speak, on autopilot according to its own definite, fixed and inevitable laws [...] Whether, how and to what extent one can talk in definite terms about the state actually depends on the contingent and provisional outcome of struggles to realize more or less 'specific' 'state projects'. (Jessop, 1990: 9)

As projects of political domination, states must constantly reproduce themselves through material and symbolic practices (such as bureaucratic repetition, public spectacle, or violent intervention) which are often realized as attempts to organize, regulate, abject or destroy facets of social life at given geographic scales. It is through such practices that relations of power and domination are institutionalized and organized spatially in society: put another way, states achieve and reproduce power through spatial strategies of domination. In its classic formulation, social theory has traditionally treated the 'space' of a state as coextensive with its territorial boundaries (Elden, 2013; Foucault, 2004). Indeed, the production of national territories has historically been an important strategy, defining the geographic scale at which states organize relations of power and accumulation. Yet territory is far from the only scale at which spatial strategies are enacted. Rather than the high-water mark of the state's capacity to control 'sovereign' space, territory can be 'analyzed as a historically specific strategy of spatial enclosure and as an evolving multi-scalar institutional configuration' (Brenner, 2004: 70). From this vantage point, state spatiality is perhaps better thought of through Lefebvre's image of a *mille-feuille*,² that is, as a kind of collection of overlapping layers and scales of social integration, with national territory being but one of the geographic scales at which states seeks to enclose and manipulate space (Lefebvre, 1991: 86). Particularly with the rise of new forms of decentralized governmentality, inter-urban competition, global counterinsurgency and everyday securitization, cities have become pivotal sites through which state spatiality is being renegotiated and re-scaled in the contemporary period (Brenner, 2009; Graham, 2010; Smith, 1992).

It is in this sense that the violent production of urban spaces as unevenly 'securitized' zones of danger variously targeted for intervention or fortification can be read as part of broader array of state spatial strategies employed by the Kenyan government in its on-going War on Terror. Such spatial strategies have included: the partial construction of a border wall along stretches of its north eastern border with Somalia, a new Security Laws bill which sought to remove all refugees from urban areas, attempts to close the Dadaab refugee camp (the largest in the world), counterinsurgency operations in national parks and forest spaces which are seen as potential terrorist havens, and a protracted military campaign in Southern Somalia which has grown into a de facto occupation of the region under the auspices of African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) (Anderson and McKnight, 2015). Taken on their own, such state actions seem to be a piecemeal set of events – or 'worse' (as critics of the Kenyan government often claim), they can be seen as symptoms of the government's allegedly inept, inefficient, and chaotic response terrorism. I would, however, propose a different reading. Namely, that such interventions can be read as part of a broader *securitization of the state* and the formation of a 'counterterror state' which is currently taking place in Kenya under the auspices of its war on terror.³ This contemporary counterterror state formation stands in an important lineage of security formations in Kenya, each of which preserved and protected elite class interests against internal and external 'threats'

in succession since the early colonial period (see, e.g., Berman, 1990; Cheeseman and Branch, 2006; Nyabola, 2016). As present-day Kenyan state organs seek to reconstruct themselves (and their legitimacy) around the imperatives of national security and counterterrorism, its spatial strategies and interventions reflect such changes.

The contours of this broader securitization of the Kenyan state can also be read in the statements and speeches of those at the apex of the state's power, such as President Uhuru Kenyatta, most notably in a 'high level seminar on national security strategy' which he delivered in October 2014 to members of his government outlining a 'national grand strategy' on security. Among the central tenets of Kenyatta's talk was the notion that security must increasingly become a fundamental concern for *all* branches of government. According to Kenyatta;

for some, security is a matter for the security sector alone. [...] Nothing could be more defeating. And this is the reason of [our] attempt [...] to begin to infuse an all government approach to [security] programming. (Kenyatta, 2014).

Contained in this notion of an all-government approach to security is the idea that disparate sectors of government (e.g., immigration, health care, and military) should increasingly work hand-in-hand, and that they should be directed by an undergirding concern for national security. This extension of 'national security' as a dominant logic throughout all branches of government embodies the logic of the securitizing of the state. As Kenyatta alleges, it is the 'weakness in functions and capabilities of the state' that are 'the leading cause of insecurity of all forms' (Kenyatta, 2014). Building a state apparatus which has the capacity to respond, prevent, and pre-empt all manner of security threats is at the heart of Kenyatta's government's agenda. Or, as Kenyatta has succinctly put it: 'Our day job, expressed in the simplest way, is to build a strong state'.

When the government passed its new Security Laws (Amendment) Bill in December 2014, critics quickly pointed out that the bill violated several international human rights treaties of which Kenya is a signatory, and that it set a dangerous precedent of eliding 'counter-terrorism with immigration' policy (Henry, 2014), blurring the separation between the two. What went unnoticed at the time was that such elisions, in fact, perfectly embodied the all-state approach to security and counterterrorism that the government is intentionally building.

The kind of security state that is being produced is best characterized as what Joseph Masco has called a 'counterterror state', that is, a project of consolidating state power around new and imagined security threats at various spatial scales (from global and national threats to county- and neighborhood-level xenophobic fantasies) which of course can never be totally vanquished. To declare a 'war on terror' is to declare a war against an emotion – it is also potentially a war without end as new threats to 'national security' can perennially be found or invented, potentially extending the affective states of fear and terror in perpetuity (Aretxaga, 2001; Masco, 2014; Puar, 2007). The counterterror state can best be

thought of as a new state formation which seeks to transform institutions, territories, cities, state–subject relations and cultural practices under the auspices of security. Moreover, it has become a dominant global logic of state formation and state-building in the 21st century. While in the United States, its inception is often traced to the protracted moment after the end of the Cold War when state power was reorganized around global policing and ultimately around the Global War on Terror, there is another genealogy of the counterterror state which has its roots in colonial violence, genocide and the counter-insurgency campaigns of the late colonial period.

In Kenya, contemporary forced migration and violence against Somali refugees carried out through counterterrorism finds its most important local analogues in the forced ‘villagization’, concentration camps, and military campaigns carried out by the British colonial government against the Land and Freedom Army – called ‘Mau Mau terrorists’ by the colonial regime (Elkins, 2005; see also wa Thiong’o, 2016: 67). These brutal practices were famously continued by the post-independence government of Jomo Kenyatta against Somali residents of the North Eastern Province during the Shifta War (Whitaker, 2015).⁴ When Kenyan police hunt down and kill presumed ‘terrorists’ whose faces occasionally appear on billboards in urban spaces, reading ‘Wanted Dead or Alive’ (see Figure 1), this too shares a direct line with British colonial practices of hunting down the presumed and real leaders of the Land and Freedom Army.⁵ But more importantly, undergirding these homologies of practice is an institutional history of state security organs which have not been significantly reformed since colonialism.⁶ There is thus a direct genealogy in Kenya between the British colonial counter-insurgency state of the mid 1950s and the present-day formation of a counterterror state.⁷

Yet, while earlier moments of security intervention and spatial reorganization of society (through violence, villagization, encampment, enclosure, and eviction) were often undertaken under the guise of ‘emergencies’, contemporary counterterrorism tactics are becoming progressively normalized as expected functions of state power today (Fassin and Pandolfi, 2010). There are, of course, important international dimensions of such processes. Beyond the normalization of the state of exception promulgated around the world through the specter of terrorism, there are also particular linkages connecting Kenya’s state spatial processes to international security and counterterrorism agendas. For instance, while Kenya’s invasion of Southern Somalia in October 2011, *Operation Linda Nchi*, was launched by the Kenyan government under the pretext of routing out Al-Shabaab, by June 2012, the military operations had been subsumed under the broader African Union ‘peacekeeping’ force in Somalia (AMISOM). Because AMISOM is principally funded by a UN trust fund and the European Union, this effectively means that the Kenyan military’s occupation of Southern Somalia is almost entirely subsidized by European and international money.⁸ This is a direct international subsidy for the expansion of the Kenyan counterterror state and its spatial strategies (here, for creating a spatial buffer zone in Southern Somalia against Al-Shabaab). Kenya’s counterterrorist operations are further subsidized in a variety of ways by



Figure 1. 'Wanted Dead or Alive' (Photo Credit: Bandabarn, August 17, 2015, Mombasa).

international funders – for instance, counterterrorism funding for Kenyan police from the United States alone is around US\$8 million annually, while the Kenyan military has received approximately US\$300 million over the past decade for counterterrorism 'train and equip' assistance from the US Department of Defense (Blanchard, 2016). In 2016 alone, further US assistance to the Kenyan military may have been as high as US\$120 million, accounting for up to 10% of the KDF's annual budget (Allison, 2017). Further, in the civil society sphere, it is estimated

that approximately US\$70 million in international funds is currently 'sloshing around' in Kenya for work on 'Countering Violent Extremism' at the community level (Donald, personal interview, 2017). What this indicates is that Kenya, as the largest recipient of US foreign aid in Africa, holds a privileged place in the global 'security empire' (Besteman, 2017) in East Africa.⁹

Such international funding indicates an important imperialist dimension to the War on Terror in East Africa, however, the everyday politics of counterterrorism cannot be so easily reduced to a kind of neo-colonialism. As ethnographic examples in the next section of this article demonstrate, the War on Terror has been thoroughly domesticated within Kenyan politics, saturating everything from immigration policy and political discourse to subjective experiences of urban space and the everyday fears of Nairobi residents. And above all, counterterrorism has become a major modality of expanding state power in Kenya through the idiom of security. As with other forms of state power, the counterterror state produces and reproduces itself through particular spatial strategies and practices. Such practices as military occupation, construction of border walls, closure of refugee camps, and urban interventions index how the Kenyan counterterror state builds power through the production of space, and while these national and urban strategies are embedded within the new 'scalar hierarchies' (Brenner, 2004) of the global security empire (Besteman, 2017), they are in turn transforming political and urban subjectivities in highly local and particular ways. As security practices remake who belongs within Kenyan cities, camps, parks, and national spaces, it is the very spatiality of the Kenyan state that is being renegotiated, re-territorialized and re-scaled.

The kind of cities that are produced through contemporary state spatial strategies of the War on Terror takes the form of what I am calling *security urbanism*. As counterterrorism produces new forms of urban belonging mediated by experiences of security and insecurity, it reshapes not only the material spaces of cities but also the affective relations and experiences of residents. Urban counterterrorism operations are therefore not only interventions into the spatial fabric of the city, but also into the very social fabric that holds together state and society. Cities have long been privileged loci for the renegotiation of the relationship between states and their subjects. In the present moment, as urban imaginaries are progressively shaped by cultures of fear, terrorism and security, the reshaping of urban space itself becomes a vehicle for the consolidation of state power.

Security urbanism and its subjects

Security produces fractured and divided urban space. As the 'logic of security' seeks to spatially separate those deemed 'undesirable' from the rest (Foucault, 2004), it becomes a privileged idiom through which fantasies of safety and fears of terrorism are projected onto the spaces of the city. Over the past few years, these fears and fantasies have transformed Nairobi. As electric- and razor-wire fencing are erected around malls, businesses and homes, increasingly large swathes of the city come to resemble the fortified and militarized enclaves of Johannesburg or

Sao Paulo (Caldeira, 2000; Mbembe and Nutall, 2004). In Nairobi, the physical walls surrounding homes in affluent neighborhoods like Karen or Gigiri are mirrored in the psychic walls of fear hemming-in neighborhoods like Eastleigh, whose racialized and most marginalized residents feel scared to move around the city. The result is both familiar – resembling many global cities in which the elite few fortify themselves against dispossessed masses behind increasingly militarized walls and fencing (Davis, 2006; Graham, 2016) – and yet what is taking place is also particular to the dynamics of counterterrorism in the region.

As Nairobi becomes yet another ‘city of walls’ (Caldeira, 2000), it is also producing a new kind of ‘security affects’ (Masco, 2014) structured by the fears of terrorism and traumas of counterterrorist policing. As terrorist events catalyze public protests and political performances in urban public space, so too are new political imaginaries produced in and through the idiom of security. In what follows, I offer several ethnographic vignettes which, taken together, are suggestive of some of the main ways that the War on Terror is reshaping postcolonial urban space and political imaginaries in Kenya. As security becomes the privileged idiom for the articulation of social fears, existential anxieties, and political demands, so too is urban sociality being transformed in Nairobi. It is my contention that as the counterterror state mobilizes urban strategies to consolidate power, a parallel process is also taking place in which everyday urban residents internalize and perform fears, insecurity and reactions to terrorists threats in their everyday lives. As Nairobi’s urban residents find themselves waiting in lines at checkpoints, donating blood for victims of terrorism, and investing in electric and razor wire fences to protect their homes, they are increasingly conscripted into a kind of *securitized urban subjectivity* produced by the War on Terror. In this respect, Nairobi’s *security urbanism* is produced as much by the everyday practices of securitized urban subjects as by the larger designs and interventions of the Kenyan counterterror state.

Checkpoints and the formation of anxious subjects

In the wake of the attack on the Westgate Shopping Center in 2013, Nairobi has seen a vast proliferation of security checkpoints. Primarily these new checkpoints are located at entrances to elite and middle-class spaces of consumption,¹⁰ leisure and labor: malls, restaurants, office buildings, housing complexes, and hotels. From speaking with a wide range of Nairobi residents, it is evident that very few people actually believe that these checkpoints are effective at preventing or deterring ‘terrorism’. As Karanja, a de-professionalized¹¹ 35-year old Kenyan friend of mine explained to me emphatically, ‘nobody actually believes that unarmed and underpaid security guards can stop a terrorist attack’ similar to the kind that hit the Westgate shopping mall, where militants stormed the doors with automatic weapons and grenades. But there is also a deeper sense of doubt that many urban residents express when talking about the checkpoints that have become part of their daily life. The most common refrain is that security guards ‘don’t seem to know what they were looking for’, when they search your bag, or look under the

hood of your car. At best checkpoints were an annoyance, slowing down your commute or errands, at worst the farcical incompetence of security guards was taken by some as a symbol of Kenya's 'security crisis' and its failure to respond substantively to the real threat of terrorism. In this latter interpretation, the checkpoints 'accomplish nothing'.¹²

On a Wednesday afternoon in September 2014, Karanja and I went to meet up with Johnson in one of Nairobi's plethora of fortified malls, this one in the Westlands neighborhood. Johnson is a white American expat who has worked for an international NGO in Nairobi for ten years, and we are meeting at a restaurant of his choosing. As we drive into the mall's parking lot, Karanja remarks to me that this is the kind of high-end restaurant that he would never usually come to, because *wananchi*¹³ don't come to these kinds of places. After passing through a checkpoint, in which a skinny, security guard in his mid-20s peered into the car, opened the trunk and then waved us on, we all sit down and start making small talk about the security at the mall. When I ask about how Johnson felt about the Westgate attack, he tells us that he isn't so much afraid of being killed in a Westgate style terrorist attack because 'what are the chances of that', but rather, what he fears more is that 'someone will just throw a grenade into a restaurant like this one, which could happen at any time'. Like Karanja, Johnson is skeptical about the efficacy of the new checkpoints. 'I am never stopped when entering my office complex', he explains, and this 'doesn't exactly reassure me about the security in my building'.

Though Johnson's racial and class-privilege allow him to move through checkpoints with ease, and his fears are likely quite different from those of his Kenyan neighbors, I am struck by the similarities in the way that Johnson and Karanja evaluate the checkpoint and analyze its inadequacies. The prevalence of small-talk about the annoyances of checkpoints and banter about the (in)efficacies and idiocies of various security procedures have become something of a common language for many Nairobi residents. In this sense, what the proliferation of checkpoints has accomplished in Nairobi is an expansion and normalization of security culture, as urban residents rehearse daily their evaluations of this or that checkpoint, share their annoyances, encounters, fears and frustrations.

What is produced is a shared social and affective environment in which security is a constant touchstone; and regardless of their technical inadequacies at preventing terrorist attacks, checkpoints do 'accomplish' something important indeed, namely, checkpoints and the conversations and anxieties they provoke are productive of a kind of 'affective infrastructure' (Masco, 2014) in Nairobi, creating a shared urban sociality saturated with security-talk. Checkpoints are also daily reminders of the specter of terrorism and the ever-present possibility of an attack, fostering an everyday affective environment of fear and suspicion to accompany the more quotidian emotions of annoyance and frustration. As we sit at dinner, listening to Johnson's fears, we picture his imagined grenade thrown 'into a restaurant like this one' and what it might look like, where we would dive for cover, and what each of us might do if 'any minute now' one was lobbed through the open window.

Everyday counterterror as the spatial regulation of race and class

Checkpoints also function to regulate mobility and relations of race and class in the city. While Johnson's white-skin privilege allowed for much greater mobility in urban spaces and guaranteed him free passage through many of the city's checkpoints, his anxieties about how well checkpoints worked revealed a stunning lack of understanding that his mobility through checkpoints was not granted to all. Despite their inadequacies in deterring terrorism, checkpoints do perform an important function of regulating racialized and class-based segregation in urban spaces, controlling who can be where.

At Nairobi's shopping malls, security guards regularly turn away anyone who looks like they 'do not belong' or 'do not have enough money' to shop. While white-skinned people and affluent-looking Africans are often ushered into buildings without much questioning, mall checkpoints can be much more contentious spaces for some of Nairobi's less affluent residents. As Karanja explained to me while standing in front of one such high-end mall, 'if they don't like the way you look, or if you look like you can't afford to shop here, they will turn you away', which is one of the reasons that he has decided to wear a pressed shirt and tie today at Village Market, an upscale mall in the equally upscale Gigiri neighborhood of Nairobi. 'Or if they do let you in', he continues, 'sometimes they will ask you what store you are going to, then they accompany you to that store to make sure that is really where you are going'. This hyper-vigilance about people who appear 'poor', and scrutinizing of anyone who looks like 'they don't belong', is one of the chief functions of the city's checkpoints. It is also the reason that some of the Somali residents of Eastleigh I spoke with will flatly tell me: 'I don't go to upmarket malls, they give me too much trouble'.

By contrast, such spaces are experienced very differently by those who look affluent or 'important'. George, a 50-year-old Kenyan security expert, recounts transporting two guns from Nairobi to Mombasa for his firm. As he explains,

I arrived at the airport checkpoint and opened my trunk for the police officer to see. Inside were my two rifle cases for a high-caliber automatic weapon and a shotgun. The officer recognized the gun cases, of course, but he just looked at me and said 'ok, you can continue'.

George says he half expected this, but still asked 'don't you want to see my registration papers?' To which the guard responded: 'No, they'll look at your papers at the check-in'. George is tall, affluent looking, and always immaculately dressed in crisp suits and ties, and as he explains to me: 'The officer probably thought I was some kind of VIP so he didn't want to give me any trouble'. Of course, 'letting me into the airport terminals with a high-caliber automatic weapon is crazy – you can do a lot of damage with that gun', but the imperatives of security were evidently trumped by George's perceived class position and potential power over the officer as a VIP.

In such instances, checkpoints function to regulate urban mobility, sorting people by class markers, ethno-racial markers, and perceived 'belonging'. Rich people carrying high-caliber automatic weapons are allowed to enter highly securitized spaces (like an international airport) without any questioning, yet the poor are harassed, questioned, and followed when simply trying to go to a supermarket. Checkpoints may do very little to actually prevent terrorism, however, as a kind of everyday counterterrorist infrastructure, they actively exacerbate and reproduce ethno-racial and class based divisions, spatializing relations of inequality and entrenching them in the very fabric of the city.¹⁴

Security as an idiom for middle-class fears and their spatialization

In the affluent Nairobi suburb of Karen, a friend is giving me and her sister a tour of the new house that she has built with her husband. The 'American-style' home with its 'open-format' kitchen and dining room, four bedrooms, a game room, and large back yard is surrounded by tall concrete walls topped with electric fencing and razor wire. The tour includes windows and doors reinforced with steel bars, the guard dog's kennels and a security guard booth at the gate (replete with its own bathroom but no bed 'because we don't want them sleeping here'). Noticing a second-floor balcony, her sister asks concerned 'But, Elizabeth, aren't you scared that criminals can climb the walls and get onto that balcony?' After a thorough explanation of all of the security precautions that they have taken, including the width of the steel bars that reinforce all of the second-story windows and doors, Elizabeth says in collected but resigned tone,

but you know, if they really want to get in they will always find a way. If they are really coming for us there is nothing we can do to keep them out.

As upwardly mobile affluent Kenyans, their 'dream home' was an 'American-style' house in a neighborhood that has been steadily evolving (from plantation-style homes of the colonial era) towards an American McMansion aesthetic. While such forms of conspicuous consumption have been Americanized, the fear of crime and 'dangerous others' seems to be global phenomena endemic to gated communities and fortified enclaves (Caldiera, 2000; Low, 2003). Nonetheless, in Nairobi's gated communities, the universal fear of crime is also laced with fears of terrorism and the two discourses (criminality and terror) often blend together in a strikingly seamless discourse about insecurity in the city.

For Elizabeth and her family, their home was also constructed as a 'safer place' for socializing than going to the neighborhood mall. 'After Westgate, I try to spend as little time in malls as possible', Elizabeth tells me: 'We'd rather have people over for lunch here than meet them at *Java* or *Art Caffé*'.¹⁵ As I've been told many times: for Nairobi's of 'a certain class', everyone knows someone who was affected by Westgate. Elizabeth's family was of this class, and they, too, had 'friends of friends' who were there during the attack. The feeling that 'it could

happen to anybody', was thus to a certain extent a highly class-based experience, which contrasted sharply to the sentiment shared by another working-class friend who flatly told me: 'I never went to Westgate, so I don't really feel like it was part of me.' In contrast, for these residents of Karen, the Westgate attack affected a number of intimate aspects of their lives, from their patterns of socializing to the schooling of their children. As Elizabeth explains to me, the international school that their 7-year-old attends is 'very secure,' and new measures have also been put in place in the past few years. For example, only the child's parents or 'one other designated adult' are allowed to pick up the children. And 'now you can only pick up your child between 3:30 and 3:40pm', therefore, 'you have to be there exactly on time', otherwise 'the kids are taken to a classroom to wait, and when you arrive you have to get a signature from the principal to get them'. According to Elizabeth, these new measures were put in place because the international school has 'high value kids', such as the children of diplomats, and 'if they are kidnapped they could be ransomed by thugs or terrorists'.

These upper-class fears have important material effects on the production of space in the city. On the one hand, the dystopian fantasy of criminals scaling the walls of your gated compound or terrorist blowing up your mall café produces a centripetal effect, concentrating psychological energies and fortifications inward towards the protection of the family, the home, and the micro-level production of secure enclaves. On the other hand, middle-class fears are also projected outwards, coding the city as a series of *safe zones* and *zones of danger*. This helps to produce and reproduce forms of 'territorial stigmatization' (Wacquant, 2007) of poorer 'dangerous' neighborhoods within the city. As another middle-class Kenyan friend tells me, he used to go to Eastleigh semi-frequently, but has stopped going since 'terrorism' and bombings started happening in the neighborhood: 'you just don't know who is or isn't [a terrorist]', he says, 'anything could happen to you there'. And then after a long explanation of how easy it is to get guns or 'any other kind of weapon' in the neighborhood, he tells me that when I go to the neighborhood I must be sure to roll up the windows of our vehicle, 'so that someone doesn't throw a grenade into the car'. The mutually reinforcing fears of middle and upper-class Kenyans (who stay away from danger zones) and Eastleigh residents (who no longer feel safe leaving the neighborhood) are material articulations of the hardening boundaries between neighborhoods in Nairobi. It is not only razor-wire fences and cement walls, but also stigma, affect and fear that produce sociospatial segregation in the city.

Security as imagined community

Immediately after the Westgate Shopping Mall attack, calls for 'unity' emerged from all stripes of the political spectrum, blood drives for victims sprang up across the country and, on social media, the hashtag #WeAreOne began trending and was quickly seized upon by the government as symbol of how Kenyans stood together. Politicians lined up with everyday *wananchi* to donate their blood in Nairobi's



Figure 2. #WeAreOne (Post-Westgate Blood Drive, 2013).

Source: <https://twitter.com/MissFitNijn/status/382548438472093696>

public parks, and the tremendous symbolism of ‘Kenyan from all tribes’ giving blood for one another in face of national disaster became a poignant image of national unity. A group of restaurant workers captured the ethos of this moment by posting a picture of their arms on which they had written the words: ‘Now Our Blood Flows Through Each Other!’ (see Figure 2).

However, cracks in the edifice of unity emerged almost as quickly as these patriotic public performances. Politicians jumping the queue at blood drives for photo-ops became symbols of elitism and the self-serving opportunism of the political class (Harrington, 2016). And as the scandal of looting by military and police during the siege of Westgate emerged, the lack of answers about basic details of the attack and shock at the bungled police and military responses became part of a popular discourse of discontent. Within a week of the attack, a new subversive hashtag had emerged on social media: #WeAreOnedering took the place of #WeAreOne.

As John Harrington has argued, the blood drive in the wake of Westgate was a powerful moment of national imagination, fostering a kind of imagined community forged through a pooling of the blood of the nation (Harrington, 2016). However, the durability of such an imagined community built on calamity and charitable

blood donations was always open to question, as a typical twitter post from the weeks after Westgate reads: ‘The only thing that unites Kenyans is disaster #WeAreOne and #WeAreOnedering’.¹⁶ Such expressions of ambivalence indexed something fundamental about this imagined community, namely that unity in disaster can be both fragile and enduring. Those left *wondering* about Westgate are quick to point to the many failures of the government in its handling of the crisis (albeit the demand which most frequently emerged was for *more* security forces as a solution to Kenya’s ‘security crisis’). Meanwhile, within a few months, Operation Usalama Watch was unleashed leaving many in Eastleigh *wondering* about their own inclusion in this project of national unity. Youth in the Mathare slum used the hashtag #WeAreOndering to ask why the government failed to provide schools and basic infrastructure, and why the police continued to kill young men in the neighborhood with total impunity.¹⁷ In brief, the critique of *who* was to be included in imagined community was articulated in subversive hashtags and in everyday conversations that marginalized and excluded Kenyans were also having in the wake of Westgate: conversations about police corruption and ineptitude, about endemic poverty as a source of insecurity, about lack of schools, historical marginalization and the violent abjection that the poor so often experience at the hands of Kenyan security forces.

Security as a political demand

In the wake of the November 2014 terrorist attack in northern border town of Mandera, a series of street protests calling themselves #OccupyHarambeeAve arose in Nairobi, criticizing the government’s response to Kenya’s so-called ‘security crisis’. Hundreds of protestors descended on Harambee Avenue and gathered in front of Parliament to protest the government’s handling of the recent wave of Al-Shabaab attacks. Using the hashtags #OccupyHarambeeAve and #MySecurityMyRight, protestors brought colorful signs, T-shirts, and even wooden crosses to symbolize the lives that had been lost. The signs read: ‘Tumechoka’ (we are tired), and ‘Mr. President we need your action on security’. These signs and messages captured an important element of Nairobi’s security culture which also pervaded these protests. Namely, while protestors could vehemently criticize the mis-management of particular attacks or crises, they nonetheless recognized the state as the legitimate entity with the responsibility to ‘provide security’ and called upon the government to ‘improve security’ in Kenya. In this respect, the particular demands voiced on cardboard signs at the march, were not surprising: ‘Uhuru, police cars have no fuel’ and ‘Uhuru, pay cops well’.¹⁸ This latter sign referred to the common perception that the reason police are corrupt and use extortion is because they are underpaid. In both particular and general demands, the undergirding aims of these protests were better funding for a ‘functional’ security sector. For those using the trending hashtag #Mysecuritymyright, the message was also clear: security is a right which the state must deliver.

Building on this popular outrage at ‘terrorist’ violence, the Kenyan government did not let the ‘crisis’ go to waste. In the weeks following the protests the

government passed its Security Laws (Amendment) Bill – which promised, among other things, to remove all refugees from urban areas and threatened to severely curtail the freedom of the press. The government also placated protestors demands by firing its two top security officials, replacing them with arguably more severe military personnel.¹⁹ Capitalizing on the protests and the perceived security crisis, the government thus deepened and consolidated its project of constructing a robust counterterror state. If protestors were asking for ‘more security,’ then the government delivered – but perhaps not in the way that protestors had imagined.

The unfortunate irony for the activists on Harambee Avenue was that the protest ended with Kenyan security forces dispersing the crowds with tear gas. And indeed, this image perhaps captures the hegemonic place that ‘security’ has attained in Kenya better than any other: that of passionate protestors, assembled before the seat of government, demanding *more security* as state security forces promptly arrive to disperse them with clouds of asphyxiating tear gas. It is an image of how dominant ‘security’ has become transforming the very terrain of political struggle, circumscribing the boundaries of political discourse and contestation with regard to issues of ‘terrorism’. In this respect, it is also an image of the limits of political imagination, indexing the triumph of the counterterror state as ‘the rightful purveyor of security’, even as it uses this power to repress political expressions of dissent in public urban space.

Conclusion: Security’s fragile hegemony

As counterterrorism reshapes Nairobi, it is also reshaping urban and national imaginaries and transforming the way people experience and interact in the city. In this respect, *security urbanism* refers not only to state strategies of consolidating a project of counterterrorism through urban interventions, but also to the pervasive internalization of security and counterterrorism discourses in the everyday practices and affects of securitized urban subjects. As such, security urbanism may be thought of as the spatial expression of the rise of the counterterror state at the scale of the city: a kind of urban sociality forged in and through the spread of security ideologies, fear, classism, checkpoints, protests and police interventions. Through such processes security both produces and unmakes the scales of social integration in the city, hardening previously porous boundaries (between neighborhoods and between social groups), and forging new spatialized solidarities (from a nationally imagined security community to highly local security infrastructures). Security urbanism is thus a process through which the very relations of state and society are being reorganized.

And yet, this ascendancy of security urbanism already shows signs of its own fragility. Despite the seeming all-pervasiveness of security-talk and the spectacular violence of police raids and demolitions, we also know that security states can be highly unstable systems. Signs of the fragile hegemony of security are evident in the deep uncertainties and anxieties that still linger over many of Kenya’s ‘terrorist attacks’. As the initial performances of national unity after Westgate faded into the

cynicism of #WeAreOrdering, important questions are raised about the durability of an imagined community founded on security alone.

The kind of hegemony obtained through security is one highly dependent on coercion and fear. Walls and electric fences are infrastructures of coercion and containment, as are the expansion of counterterrorism policing and military operations; and while the promulgation of fear often succeeds in conscripting elites and middle-class consumers into a national security project, it remains an unstable interpellation for the endemically poor and marginalized who are *themselves primary objects of fear* for Nairobi's affluent. In this respect the counterterror state operates through a kind of 'selective hegemony' (Smith, 2011) in which consent is increasingly solicited only from the few (mostly rich residents), while the rest are more often confronted with the coercive and repressive powers of the security state. In moments of great calamity *wananchi* become reluctant conscripts of a securitized imagined community, but of course symbolic performances of patriotism never solve the material problems of the people. Neither symbolic gestures (such as blood donation) nor electric fences, tear gas, targeted assassinations, or xenophobic scapegoating of Somalis can solve the undergirding economic insecurity, food insecurity, unemployment, and social marginalization of Nairobi's urban poor. This makes security urbanism particularly volatile urban form.

As the Global War on Terror transforms cities and state spaces across East Africa, it is thus also ushering in new forms of instability, insecurity, and volatility. As Nairobi becomes a premier site in which state spatial strategies and securitized urban subjectivities are enacted, it also becomes a major fault line in the fragile hegemony of the Kenyan counterterror state. Security urbanism may thus be thought of as an aspiration, an unfinished project, and an experiment in precariously binding together urban polities in the age of counterterrorism.

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Notes

1. Real names of interviewees and informants have been changed.
2. The word *mille-feuille* literally translates to ‘thousand leaves’, and colloquially refers to a type of French pastry with many layers. Lefebvre uses this imagery from French pâtisserie in *The Production of Space* to describe the kind of spatial *layering* that often occurs in complex spaces.
3. This notion of a ‘securitization of the state’ intentionally turns the classic Copenhagen school’s notion of ‘securitization’ on its head. In its classic articulation, the state is the primary actor which ‘securitizes’ various problems *out in the world* through speech-acts which designate such problems as security threats. Here, through the notion of a ‘securitization of the state’, it is the state itself that is the object of its own securitization *and* reorganization. As the state is always an unfinished project, it is inevitably transformed through processes of ‘securitization’ – hence, instead of a static speech-act theory of securitization, this analysis uses ‘securitization’ to mean a *process* of state spatial formation and institutional transformation.
4. Continuities of counterterrorism’s spatial strategies with those of colonial governance in Africa abound. The attempted closure of the Dadaab refugee camp, for example, has forced many refugees back into the war zone of Southern Somalia (where famine and a cholera outbreak are raging at the time of writing in 2017). This shares startling similarities with the German campaign of forcing the Herrero out of camps and into the Kalahari Desert – precipitating death and immiseration for the evicted in both cases (Steinmetz, 2007). Both should be viewed as forms of genocide.
5. The material effects of such billboards and assassinations, is that whole neighborhoods (such as Majengo in Mombasa, or Mathare and Eastleigh in Nairobi) are periodically treated as sacrifice zones in which the killing of perceived terrorists and criminals have become a normalized and expected practice of the Kenyan security state (see, for example, Price et al., 2016).
6. This has been particularly true of the Kenya police force, which had not been significantly reformed since colonialism – a situation that the stalled agenda of Police Reform (as promulgated by the new Kenyan constitution of 2010) sought to redress.
7. Though beyond the scope of this article, there is an important argument to be made about the genealogy of the counterterrorism more generally, in which the colonial state *should* be analyzed as the true progenitor of the counterterror state. The groundwork for this argument work has already been laid out Derek Gregory in *The Colonial Present* (2004), among others. However, the central importance of colonial Kenya in the development of modern day counterterrorist statecraft has not yet been fully appreciated.
8. It is difficult to get exact figures on the cost of the Kenyan military’s activities in Southern Somalia and exactly how much is covered by international donors through AMISOM. However, it is clear that most of the costs are covered by AMISOM’s financial support mechanism for military operations and logistics, provided by a UN trust fund that is coordinated by the UN Support Office for AMISOM, located in Nairobi. Additionally, salaries for AMISOM troops are paid entirely by donors to the African Union or directly

- to Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) on a bilateral basis with European Union and donor countries (European Union, 2013; Wiklund, 2013).
9. There is of course much more to say about the international linkages, funding, logistics and concentration of regional governance functions that make Kenya and indeed Nairobi important sites in the global security empire. A longer exposition of this point would have to grapple with Nairobi's long-standing role as a governance center for East African political economy and security going back to the early 20th century and extending up through the present-day counterterrorism. This, however, is outside the scope of this article.
 10. The term 'middle-class' is not self-evident in a Kenyan context, where perceptions of who belongs in this elusive category are contested and never clear-cut. Despite the fact that the term 'middle class' is used widely by Nairobi residents, it is always (and perhaps intentionally) under-defined. I use 'middle class' here in a loosely Weberian manner to designate a kind of status group, rather than to refer to a *class* in a strictly Marxian sense. In this respect, the inclusion into middle-class-ness often hinges precisely on the forms of conspicuous consumption that a given person or family is able to perform. By 'middle-class spaces of consumption, I am thus describing the spaces in which *middle-class-ness* is performed through consumption – the spaces in which the status group is *realized* in its consumptive practice (for more on middle-class Kenyan leisure, consumption and self-perception, see Spronk, 2012).
 11. I use the word 'de-professionalized' here to capture a socio-economic reality that has affected many middle-class professionals in Nairobi in recent years. Karanja had a good job with a USAID funded project and had started to build a middle-class life for himself and his family in the city. However, after funding was cut for the project (which Karanja blames on the current government's disputes with the US government in 2013), he has been steadily unemployed for the past three years, unable to regain a foothold in a middle-class income position. The vicissitudes of international aid and tourism over the past five years have affected many highly educated Kenyan 'middle-class' residents in this way, who after losing jobs have become de-professionalized and experience an acute fall in class and status.
 12. The notion that checkpoints 'accomplish nothing' was also reinforced for me during an interview with the head of security at one of Kenya's largest companies. This security specialist shared several anecdotes about performing surprise 'security tests' at several major institutions, each of which failed in different ways (for example, he successfully got a gun onto a plane at Nairobi's international airport). But the perhaps the most glaring was the example of transporting '5000 rounds of ammunition in the trunk of my car as a civilian' when he was helping run a shooting range in the city. Upon instruction, he opened the trunk of his car at a checkpoint at one of Nairobi's major business headquarters, the guard looked at the boxes in the trunk, which read 'DANGER! Class One Explosives', then without asking any further questions allowed him to enter the building's parking garage. For this security specialist, this was taken as absolute proof that guards have no idea what they are looking for.
 13. *Wananchi* is the most common Swahili phrase used by Kenyans to refer to 'everyday people'. Its literal translation would be 'citizens', but it often translates more accurately as 'the people'.
 14. This function of checkpoints in regulating race, class, ethnicity and citizenship is also performed at the scale of the *nation* on the roadways that stretch across the country. As

one young Somali lawyer from Garissa, a town in the former North Eastern Province (a historically marginalized, majority Somali part of the country), told me in an interview, there are often six or seven checkpoints between Garissa and Nairobi. But between the Ugandan border and Nairobi, you might find one. 'Is Garissa not part of Kenya? Are we not Kenyans?' she asked pointedly. The function of checkpoints in the spatial regulation of citizenship is laid bare in such examples, often given by residents of North Eastern Kenya. Through such security practices the counterterror state regulates who *belongs* in Kenya and under what conditions such belonging and mobility can be accessed.

15. *Java* and *Art Caffé* are two of Kenya's most ubiquitous upscale coffee shops which middle-class and affluent Kenyans and expats alike tend to visit quite frequently. They are also the two most common restaurants seen at Kenya's upscale malls.
16. This twitter post from 2 October 2013 is merely one of a hundred which used the hashtag #weareondering in the wake of the Westgate debacle.
17. Thanks to Naomi van Stapele for pointing out to me this use of the #weareondering hashtag.
18. 'Uhuru' is the first name of the Kenyan president, Uhuru Kenyatta. Such signs then were directing their demands at the head of the state, asking the President himself to solve the problem of police pay.
19. Particularly, the appointment of Joseph ole Nkaissey, former major-general in the KDF, to post of Cabinet Secretary for National Security (replacing Joseph ole Lenku) is in line with a trend within the Kenyatta regime of appointing military personnel to high-ranking civilian posts. Nkaissey was also famed for his antagonistic attitude towards human rights, police reform, and civil society organizations. In this respect, his appointment, although presented as appeasing protestors, actually represented the deepening consolidation of a repressive security state project.

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