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Editorial

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Beginning in 2017, the French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA) and the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), under the Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism (STRIVE) II programme, supported the development of four academic studies exploring regional dynamics of women's involvement in violent extremism. The impetus for this research emerged in the context of a mounting interest in understanding women's involvement in violent extremism through a fresh analytical perspective. This work acknowledges the role of women's agency and avoids classifying their experiences into broad categories of either victims or perpetrators.

Research studies presented in this special issue contribute to developing this viewpoint as well as examining the norms that construct and compel women's recruitment into such groups and the differential impact of violent extremism on their lives. Together these studies provide insights on the extent of women's agency in recruitment into and support for violent extremism, the meaning they ascribe to their involvement, and how they reconcile and make sense of their

experiences. They also describe both the impact and the coping mechanisms that women develop in dealing with the consequences of violent extremism.

We are therefore honoured to present the work of our four research partners who have demonstrated tremendous academic rigour and commitment in interrogating the subtle nuances of the relationship between gender and violent extremism. We are grateful to our funding partners, the European Union and the French Embassy in Kenya and Somalia, for supporting the research and dissemination, and to the editors of the African Review for publishing this Special Issue. We are also thankful to our blind peer reviewers as well as Professor Dyan Mazurana and Phoebe Donnelly from the Fletcher School at Tufts University, USA, for their detailed reviews and critical comments.

We acknowledge the importance to East African societies of publishing research findings in a journal from the region and hope that these studies will contribute towards enriching the level of policy debate and dialogue.