

# Violent extremism in Mozambique

## Drivers and links to transnational organised crime

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Collaborative research between the Institute for Security Studies and the Judicial Training Institute of Mozambique revealed that people in Cabo Delgado see the discovery and poor governance of natural resources as a cause of the insurgency. The study also found few links between the insurgency and organised crime, and that regional rather than ethnic differences play a major role in the conflict.

## Key findings

- ▶ The discovery and poor governance of natural resources such as rubies and liquefied natural gas have escalated terrorism.
- ▶ Regional inequities, not ethnicity, are a major grievance in Cabo Delgado.
- ▶ Despite resentment of the elite, who are blamed for the region's poverty, there is no evidence that people are voluntarily joining the insurgency *en masse*.
- ▶ The criminal justice sector lacks basic resources and skills to prosecute the growing number of terrorist suspects.
- ▶ People in Cabo Delgado are more concerned about the threat of the Mashababos (Alu-Sunnah wal Jama'ah) than the Islamic State.
- ▶ Mosques, Islamic centres and local markets are believed to be meeting points and areas of recruitment and radicalisation.
- ▶ Respondents fear that the violence could easily spread to other parts of Mozambique and countries in Southern Africa.
- ▶ Evidence of a nexus between terrorism and organised crime is weak.
- ▶ Since the deployment of foreign forces, mass recruitment has stopped as Al Sunnah evolves into a professional, well-trained group, practising guerrilla warfare.

## Recommendations

Government of Mozambique:

- ▶ Partner with local organisations to address legitimate grievances
- ▶ Develop a national strategy covering all aspects of the crisis
- ▶ Effectively manage the amnesty programme
- ▶ Establish a centralised national inter-agency counter-terrorism unit, and prioritise coordination and intelligence-led military operations
- ▶ Strengthen the criminal justice system to prosecute terrorism, organised crime and corruption
- ▶ Set up a commission of inquiry into the drivers of violent extremism
- ▶ Strengthen intelligence sharing with neighbouring countries

SADC and Mozambique's neighbours:

- ▶ Assist Mozambique to tighten border security
- ▶ Regularly share intelligence

- ▶ Strengthen coordination between SAMIM, Mozambican and Rwandan forces
- ▶ Enforce the SADC Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the SADC Transnational Organised Crime Strategy and Implementation Action Plan
- ▶ Consider mission scenario six as an exit strategy

African Union:

- ▶ The Peace and Security Council should regularly review the situation
- ▶ Assist SADC in sourcing funds and increase the Peace Fund contribution to support SAMIM

International community:

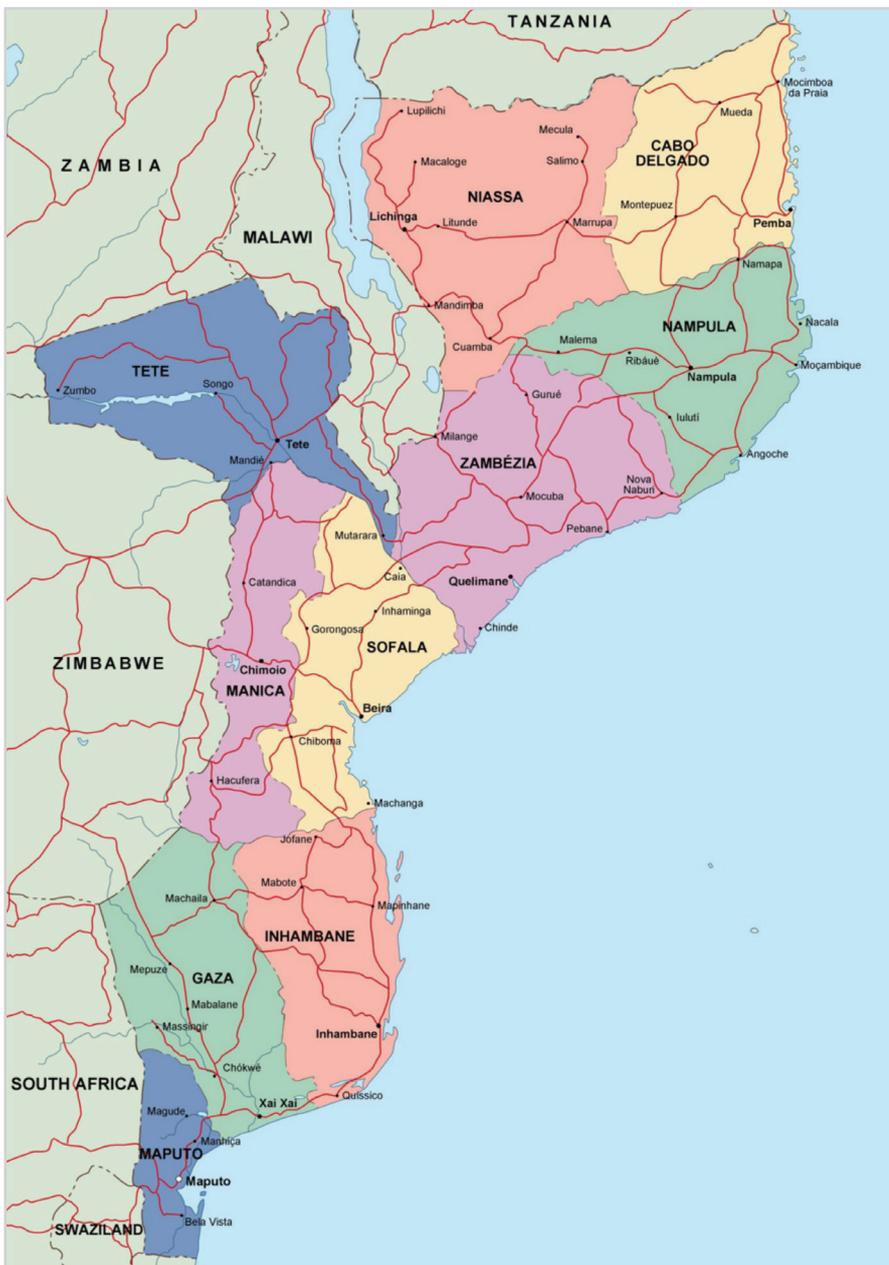
- ▶ Strengthen Mozambique's technical capacity to investigate and prosecute terrorism
- ▶ Intensify the supply of food and other basic necessities to IDPs

## Introduction

In 2016, the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) published by the Institute of Economics and Peace ranked Mozambique among the 51 countries in the world most affected by terrorism.<sup>1</sup> Four years later, in 2020, the country had become one of top 15 most affected countries in the world.

In Africa, the list includes countries such as Libya, Egypt, Cameroon, Mali, Somalia and Nigeria, which are renowned for terrorism.<sup>2</sup> Mozambique was also rated among the three countries with the largest increases in terrorist deaths from the previous year. In 2021, it moved further up the ladder of notorious countries when the 2022 GTI ranked it 13<sup>th</sup> of 163 countries surveyed.<sup>3</sup>

Chart 1: Mozambique's provinces with Cabo Delgado in the north-east



MOZAMBIQUE RANKS

13<sup>th</sup>

ON THE WORLD LIST OF  
COUNTRIES MOST AFFECTED  
BY TERRORISM

How and why did another African country with high potential for economic development and a promising democracy quickly descend into the abyss of instability? Was it a victim of the global franchising of terrorism or the result of deep-rooted internal grievances?<sup>4</sup>

On 5 October 2017, about 30 assailants attacked and vandalised police stations in Mocimboa da Praia, a strategic seaport district in Cabo Delgado,<sup>5</sup> and the nearby village of Maculo. They were armed with catanas (machetes), knives,<sup>6</sup> sticks, firearms including AK-47s, Kalashnikovs and machine guns.

One respondent stated that: 'At the time of the attack in Mocimboa da Praia, I was commanding the district and I lost one police officer at Awasse checkpoint and two others were injured. The attack lasted almost the whole day. There were many assailants. Only when we received support from the Provincial Command of Niassa was the situation brought under control. We confirmed one terrorist casualty and three suspected after recovering three weapons.'<sup>7</sup>

They were mainly youth belonging to an obscure Islamist group called Ahlu-Sunnah wal Jama'ah (ASWJ), known locally as *al-Shabaab* or *Mashabab*.<sup>8</sup> Similar riots were reported on 2 October 2017 in Mandimba, Niassa which borders on Mocimboa da Praia.<sup>9</sup> During the field interviews, some informants indicated that an attack on 4 October at Awasse presaged the tragedy in Mocimboa da Praia.<sup>10</sup> Awasse is a village where the Mueda-Mocimboa da Praia road intersects the road from Silva Macua to Mocimboa da Praia and Palma.

The insurrection mimicked similar outbreaks of mass recruitment by terror groups in other parts of the continent, such as Nigeria in 2009, Mali in 2012 and Somalia in 2006. There, Islamist groups revolted against the establishments, demanding that secular regimes in power be replaced by sharia structures.<sup>11</sup>

It became evident that the authors of the 5 October attacks in Cabo Delgado were aligned to the Islamist revivalist ideologies prevalent in Africa in the 1980s after the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979.<sup>12</sup> A key feature of these groups is their manifest disdain for Western-style education and a penchant for violence.

In a striking consistency, the Islamist assailants in Cabo Delgado, as Eric Morier-Genoud observed, '...told local

people they would not hurt them, that their fight was with the state and the police. They explained that they rejected state health and education facilities and refused to pay taxes.'<sup>13</sup> They also called on people to remove their children from Western-style schools and put them in Islamic schools and madrassas.

In the wake of the attacks, the Mozambican News Agency reported that 'they [the attackers] want to impose sharia law, ban the sale of alcohol, and remove secular monuments and Christian crosses'.<sup>14</sup> This call, including the attacks and the group itself, has been unequivocally rejected by the Muslim community in Cabo Delgado and Mozambique as a whole.<sup>15</sup>

## How did another African country with high potential for economic development descend into instability?

The situation in Cabo Delgado has recently attracted scholarly attention and expert analyses. Most of the literature, however, explains the rise of terrorism in the region as a result of historic disenfranchisement, poverty, marginalisation, endemic corruption and political exclusion.<sup>16</sup> These are factors commonly advanced as causes of conflict and terrorism in Africa.<sup>17</sup>

Understanding the specific context of Cabo Delgado demands more evidence-based explanations that transcend the usual generic factors. Joseph Hanlon, a prominent scholar on Mozambique, for example, asserts that the roots of the Cabo Delgado civil war involve a complex mix of history, ethnicity and religion. It has been fuelled by poverty, growing inequality and the 'resource curse'.<sup>18</sup>

Hanlon agrees with scholars who see terrorism in Cabo Delgado as reminiscent of the recurrent conflicts between the opposition Mozambican National Resistance Movement (RENAMO) and the ruling Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO). These have created an extremely vulnerable society whose grievances are often expressed through violence. Hanlon goes as far as even describing the situation in Cabo Delgado as civil war.<sup>19</sup>

Clearly, the end of the war of independence and the civil war did not create positive peace in Mozambique.

Instead, the silencing of the guns left behind a war industry that has nourished terrorism and other forms of violence.<sup>20</sup> It can be further argued that the frequency of this conflict in Cabo Delgado has been a major hurdle to development in the region.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the rich literature, there remains no clarity on various aspects of violent extremism in Cabo Delgado.<sup>22</sup> Thus, knowledge about al-Shabaab and the reasons for its violent attacks remain vague and poorly informed. Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'ah is loosely translated as 'the people of the Sunnah and the community'.<sup>23</sup> Its poor communication and the difficulty of accessing the group have resulted in divergent and often contradicting academic literature on ASWJ and the insurgency in Cabo Delgado.

This study bridges the knowledge gap. Importantly, it provides evidence-based analysis and recommendations for developing and strengthening operational strategies and sound policies to stem the violence in Cabo Delgado. It also seeks to understand, from a local community perspective, the root causes, drivers or conditions conducive for the implantation and spread of terrorism in northern Mozambique. It is observed that the escalation and sustenance of terrorism in Cabo Delgado are the result of intertwined foreign and domestic factors, which are evolving with the conflict.<sup>24</sup>

Although the violence is committed primarily by Mozambicans, evidence suggests that without the foreign element, terrorism would probably not have escalated in October 2017. At least, it would have been far less intense. A combination of criminal justice, and military, political and economic solutions is needed to stem terrorism and eradicate the emerging terrorist economy in Cabo Delgado and nearby regions.

## Research methodology

This study employed a mixed methodology combining qualitative and quantitative data from two main sources: an extensive literature review and a field study. The former yielded secondary data and information to understand the different perceptions and findings of other studies, and their gaps. The latter included an elaborate field survey, analyses of policy and legislative documents, case files, police reports and other judicial and investigative reports.

## Field research survey

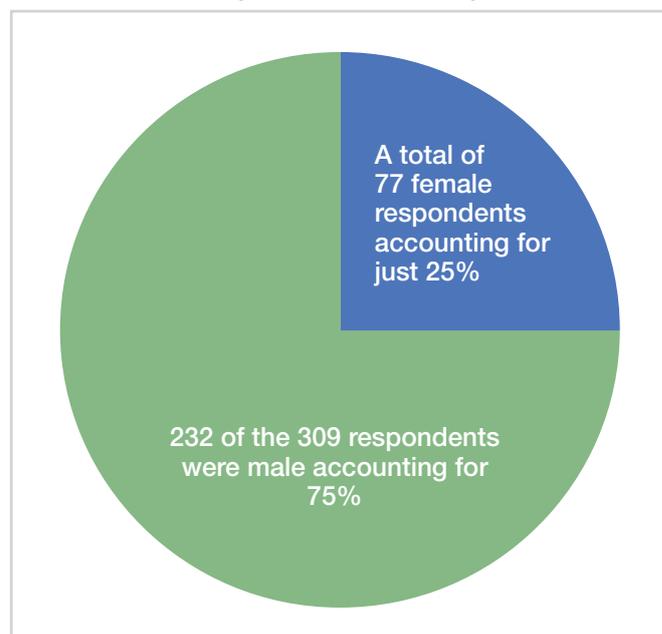
The field study took a phenomenological approach to data collection and analysis, combining live observations by the researcher and primary data from field interviews with carefully selected key informants. A semi-structured field survey containing 41 questions sought both qualitative and quantitative data on personal information and perceptions. The latter were sought on the threat of terrorism in Cabo Delgado; root causes; links with terrorism and transnational organised crime; effectiveness of current responses; solutions and respondents' involvement or victimisation.

The main field research was conducted from 28 to 30 June in Pemba and 1 to 16 July 2021 in Metuge, Ibo and Pemba. Some key informant interviews were conducted in Maputo in April and November 2021.

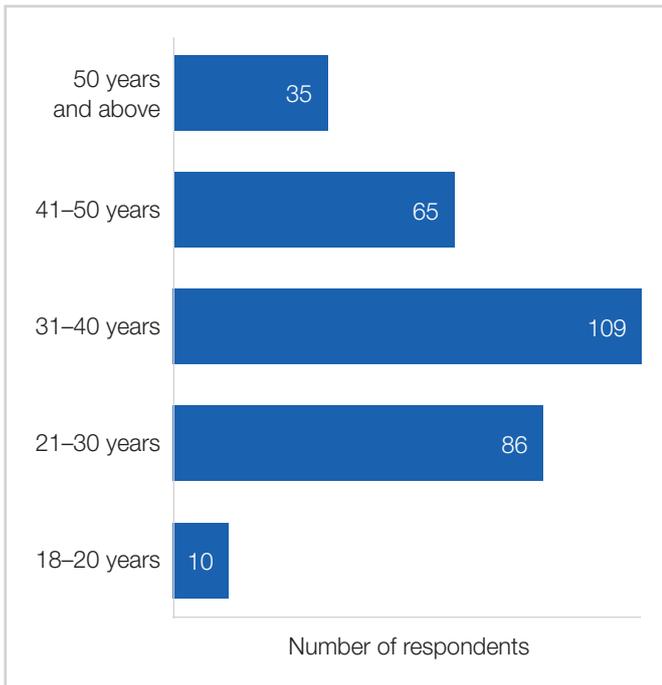
## Sample population

A total of 309 respondents volunteered for one-on-one interviews. In addition, three focused and structured group meetings were held (two groups of six and one of 13). Twenty-eight key informant interviews were conducted separately, 15 with detainees (six in Pemba and nine in Maputo) and 13 with security officials in Maputo. All the security officials were from Cabo Delgado or had been deployed there at the beginning of the violence in 2017.

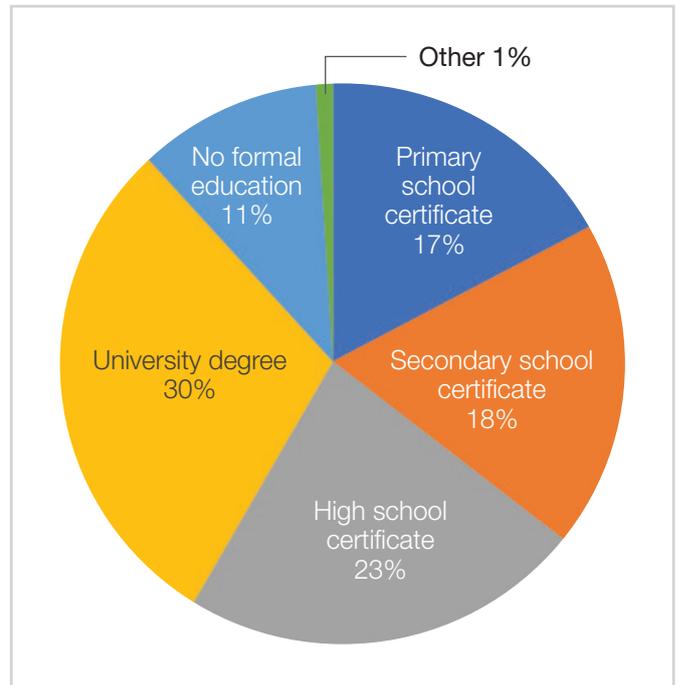
Chart 2: Gender representation of respondents



**Chart 3: Age brackets of respondents**



**Chart 4: Level of education of respondents**



Just 77, or 25% of respondents were female. This was due partly to participation being voluntary. Most females invited to take part declined. Female participation was also influenced by general fear in the heat of the conflict. Cultural roles may have also contributed as women occupy lower-key roles, giving the limelight to their male counterparts.

Given that the interviews were done during a war, there was a general reluctance to talk to researchers

Most survey participants were aged between 31 and 40, 28% between 21 and 30, 21% between 41 and 50 years and 11% 50 years or older. Most participants were educated. Many with a university degree were displaced government workers, including administrators, state counsellors, lawyers, prosecutors and students living in Pemba. Most of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) had primary or secondary school certificates. They accounted for 35% (108) of respondents.

Educational categories were also loosely defined or interpreted by respondents who chose to reveal their level of education and researchers could not

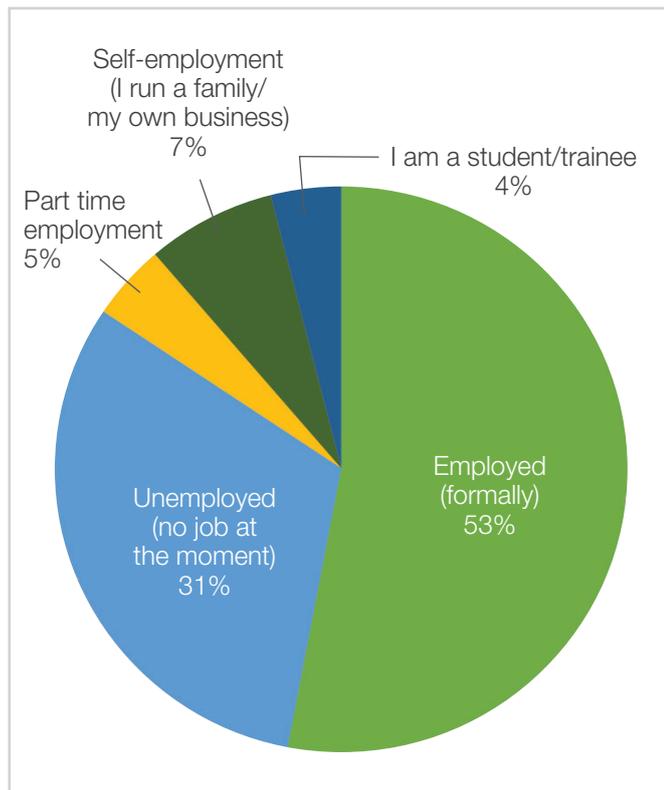
independently verify the information. About 1% chose not to do so. Given that the interviews occurred in the heat of war in June and July 2021, there was a general fear and reluctance to talk to researchers. Many local women and non-educated persons showed a particular aversion to participating. Instead, mothers and older women decided to send their children, many of whom were underage and could not be interviewed for ethical reasons.

Most of those who volunteered to participate in the interviews were employed. Many were those with university degrees and high school certificates who were not students. Some 31% were unemployed. Most part-time employees were in construction or working for aid agencies. The self-employed were mostly traders. Students represented 4% of respondents. Employment was also loosely defined and researchers could not independently confirm information.

Two hundred interviews were conducted in Pemba, 92 and 17 in IDP camps in Metuge and Ibo Island, respectively. The respondents were from Mocimboa da Praia, Mueda, Macomia, Nangade, Palma, Quissanga and Mecufi.

The six detainees in Pemba, who were invited to participate responded 'I don't know' to all questions, including those about their identity. The nine detainees

**Chart 5: Employment status of respondents**



in Maputo were more willing to speak, but from their responses and demeanours, it appeared as though they had been trained to respond to the questions. They revealed nothing about their role or participation in the violence, the groups involved or even to discuss the insurgency. They all claimed to be innocent, to have no knowledge about the insurgency or the group prior to their arrest, and to have been wrongfully arrested and incarcerated.

### Violent extremist attacks peaked in 2020, with fatalities reaching more than 1 700 in a single year

All nine interviewed<sup>25</sup> had been tried, convicted and sentenced to between 16 and 40 years. They all had appealed and were at various stages of the process. Most of the detainees stated their professions to be farmer, fisherman, mason, merchant or trader. Most grew up with a single parent, mostly the mother. Many came from large families.

Some claimed to be married and have children, while some said they were single and had never married. Many had only primary school education, Grade 8 being the highest education level. The detainees came from Palma, Mueda, Mocimboa da Praia, Macomia and Nangade.

### Definitions

Various appellations have been applied to the situation in Cabo Delgado, but with no consistency. It is possible to read five articles using different terms for the same situation. At its onset in 2017, the Mozambican media referred to it as 'Islamist uprising',<sup>26</sup> while the government called it 'banditry'.<sup>27</sup> The same news agencies subsequently referred to the violence as 'Islamic fundamentalism' and 'Islamist insurrection'.<sup>28</sup> The government of Mozambique later called it 'insurgency' and by 2019, the government began to describe it as 'terrorism'.

Other popular terms used by the media, governments, analysts and scholars include 'terrorism', 'violent extremism', 'conflict', 'war' and 'Islamic radicalisation'. In a strict linguistic and conceptual context, these terms do not have the same meaning. Colloquially, they are used interchangeably even though there are nuanced and semantic differences. In addition, there are no universally accepted definitions of the terms. However, defining these terms or attempting to resolve the problem of nomenclature is beyond the scope of this report.

The intention is, therefore, not to provide scientific or academic definitions even though the situation in Cabo Delgado begs for one. Rather, it is to give the reader the contextual meaning of some key terms used in this report.

- 'Terrorism' is the definition used in the Organisation of African Unity Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism. It defines a terrorist act as:
  - (a) Any act that is a violation of the criminal laws of a state party. The act may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to, any person or any number or group of persons or causes. It may cause damage to public or private property, natural resources, environmental or cultural

heritage. It is calculated or intended to: intimidate, put in fear, force, coerce or induce any government, body, institution, the public or any segment thereof, to do or abstain from doing any act.<sup>29</sup> It may encourage them to adopt or abandon a standpoint, act according to certain principles, disrupt a public service or delivery of essential services, create an emergency, or cause insurrection.

- (b) Any promotion, sponsoring, contribution to, command, aid, incitement, encouragement, attempt, threat, conspiracy, organising or procurement of any person, with the intent to commit any act referred to in (a).
- ‘Violent extremism’ is the use or threat to use or support violence to achieve ideological, religious or political goals. It ‘encompasses a wider category of manifestations’ than terrorism since it includes ideologically motivated violence that falls short of constituting terrorist acts.<sup>30</sup> For this study, the term is used interchangeably with ‘terrorism’.
- ‘Insurgency’ is a political movement aimed at realising a specific political goal [...], which is generally to overthrow a regime.<sup>31</sup> Mustafa Cosar Ünal distinguishes ‘insurgency’ from ‘terrorism’ in that, while the former is a political movement to take control, the latter is a method of pursuing a political goal.<sup>32</sup> In this study, the two terms are used interchangeably.
- ‘Organised crime’: There is no formal definition of organised crime. The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime provides only the definition of an organised crime group. It is a structured group of three or more persons acting in concert to commit one or more serious crimes or offences for direct or indirect financial or other material benefit.<sup>33</sup>
- ‘Mashabab’/‘Mashababos’: Mashabab is the Mozambican or Swahili word for al-Shabaab used by some communities in Cabo Delgado. Mashababos is from Mashabab and refers to members or followers of Mashabab. For this study, Mashabab is used interchangeably with al-Shabaab and ASWJ. It is sometimes also referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS Mozambique).

## Evolution of the insurgency

At the time this report was going to print at the end of August 2022, the violence in Cabo Delgado had claimed the lives of more than 4 200 people in almost 1 400 insurgent attacks, according to Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) data.<sup>34</sup> This represented an annual average of 230 attacks and 700 fatalities a year or 23 attacks and 71 deaths per month.

The insurgency had also displaced more than 856 000 men, women and children,<sup>35</sup> and closed 173 schools, affecting 96 942 students and 1 774 teachers.<sup>36</sup> The humanitarian impact is discussed in detail later in this report.

It is evident from Chart 6 that the insurgency reached its peak in 2020, which recorded 1 770 fatalities from 580 violent acts.<sup>37</sup> Despite the deployment of Rwandan forces and the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) in June and July 2021, respectively, it was still the second most deadly year. More than a thousand people perished in 340 attacks that year.

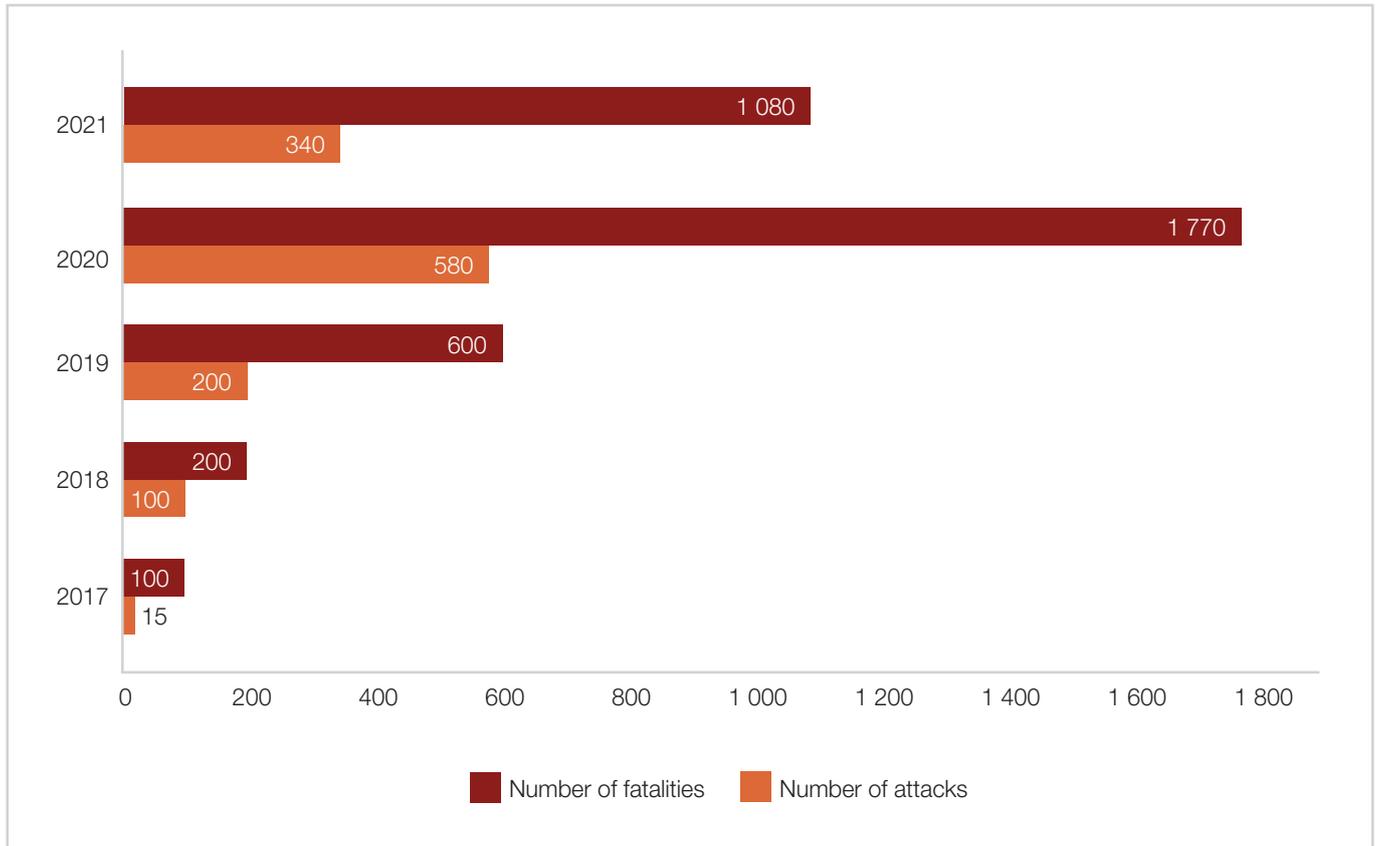
The insurgents’ strategy has switched from overwhelming villages with large numbers of fighters to using small units to terrorise communities

In 2021 the insurgency expanded into the other northern provinces – Niassa (west of Cabo Delgado) and Nampula (south of Cabo Delgado). It could also be argued that the deployment of foreign forces made 2021 less deadly than 2020 and that the insurgency’s spread could be due to pressure from foreign forces.<sup>38</sup>

Chart 7 illustrates the geography of the insurgency and territories occupied by insurgents before the deployment of foreign troops in Cabo Delgado. The map shows the concentration of insurgent attacks in the northern part of the province, sparing the southern part, which includes the provincial capital, Pemba. The northern region is also home to the liquefied natural gas (LNG) project.

In 2020, the insurgents controlled a significant number of villages and towns, including the strategic seaport town of Mocimboa da Praia. This gave them space and time for training, planning and mobilising

**Chart 6: Trends in annual attacks and fatalities**



Source: Data collected from ACLED

resources for operations. But by the end of 2021, after the deployment of foreign forces, almost all territories had been recaptured, except the pockets of insurgent hideouts.

Indeed, as Obi Anyadike and Tavares Cebola write, the arrival of foreign forces helped stop and scatter the insurgents.<sup>39</sup> ASWJ's militants no longer have a dominating presence in the streets of Mocimboa da Praia, Nangade, Quissanga, Palma and many others.

The insurgents' strategy has switched from overwhelming villages and towns with large numbers of fighters to using small units, often of a few dozen, to terrorise communities.<sup>40</sup> The consequence of which has been widespread small scale attacks in areas that have previously not experienced attacks. This is a deliberate strategy to spread thin the resources of the security forces.

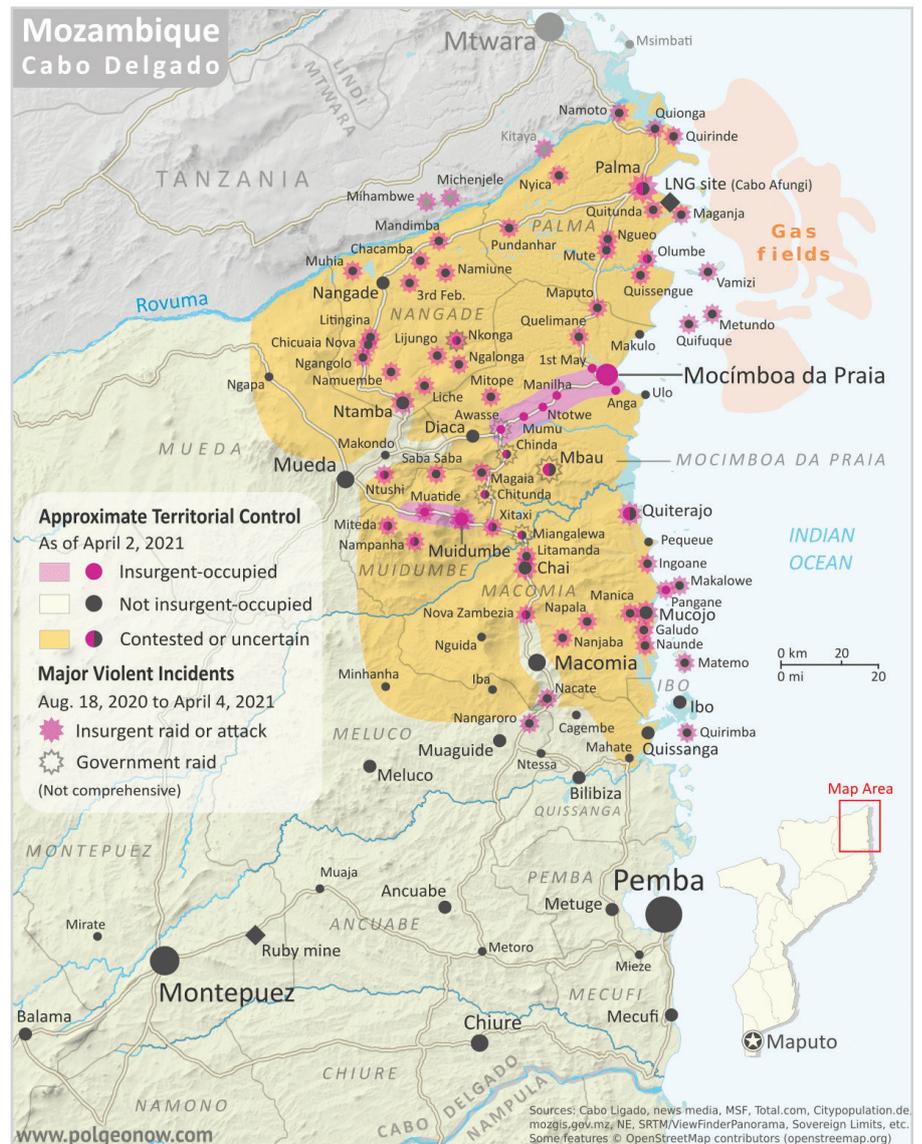
Chart 8 shows how the insurgency has spread to regions including Ntwara in Tanzania beyond its epicentre in Mocimboa da Praia. A major concern is the

extension of activities of the Ahlu Sunnah into Niassa and Nampula provinces neighbouring Cabo Delgado. In Niassa, the group launched attacks in Mecula.<sup>41</sup> In Nampula, there appeared to be active mass recruitment, when soldiers arrested 34 people en route to Cabo Delgado,<sup>42</sup> which stoked fear about the expansion of the conflict zone.

### A major concern is the extension of activities of the Ahlu Sunnah into Niassa and Nampula provinces

Of the 17 districts that constitute Cabo Delgado Province, insurgents have attacked 12 (Ibo Island, Ancuabe, Metuge, Mucufi, Palma, Nangade, Mocimboa da Praia, Mueda, Muidumbe, Macomia, Meluco and Quissanga). Although not all districts have experienced attacks, the fallout of the insurgency, particularly its economic, humanitarian and political consequences, has been felt not only by the whole province, but also the country.

Chart 7: Territories controlled by insurgents and areas of attacks, April 2021



In addition, research indicates that the insurgents began their activities in the southern districts of Balama, Namuno and Chiure, where they were driven out by hostile populations. Perhaps this led authorities to ignore warnings and the initial stages of the insurgency, believing that it would be dealt with either locally or by security forces.

A prototype of the 5 October attacks on police stations in Mocimboa da Praia is believed to have occurred on 28 August 2017. Unidentified assailants attacked a district police command in Nametil, capital of Mogovolas district of Nampula province, killing one police officer and wounding a second.<sup>43</sup> After that attack, no major terrorist activities were recorded in Nampula until the interception of recruits in 2019.

The experience of these four districts (Balama, Namuno, Chiure and Mogovolas) shows the pivotal role of communities in preventing and

# 12

## DISTRICTS IN CABO DELGADO ATTACKED BY INSURGENTS

combating violent extremism. It is also important in understanding why many southern districts have been spared while northern districts such as Mocimboa da Praia, Nangade and Macomia have become the fulcrum of the insurgency.

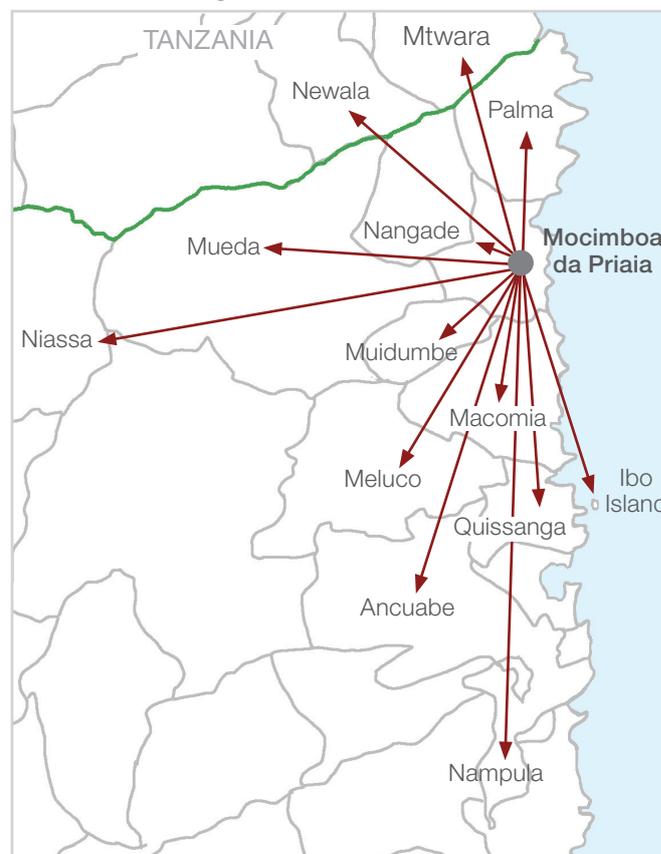
It is also important to understand why the southern districts rejected the ideology of Ahlu Sunnah while it was met with little resistance in northern districts. It will also indicate why, despite sporadic attacks in Tanzania's southern regions on the borders with Mozambique, the insurgency has not found a permanent home in Tanzania. Such knowledge could also help identify vulnerable populations and areas to which the insurgency could spread. If Boko Haram's experience can provide a lesson, it would suggest that the future spread of ASWJ beyond Mozambique would be in countries that have deployed troops in Mozambique.

It is beyond the scope of this report to engage in this necessary comparative analysis. It is argued, however, that a permanent solution that addresses the causes of the insurgency requires an understanding of the dynamics in districts experiencing the insurgency and those that are not. Of particular importance is the knowledge about what makes some communities resilient and others hospitable to radical Islamist ideologies.

Many who were captured, especially youth, were coerced into joining up and if they refused, were killed

As mentioned above, tactically the insurgency has also evolved. At its outset in 2017, people were joining the insurgency *en masse*, many of whom were lured by promises of marriages, jobs and cash (as discussed later in this report).<sup>44</sup> A sustained government campaign against the insurgency however, brought mass joining to an end in 2018. In 2019, ASWJ supported by the Islamic State, devised a mass recruitment strategy, popular with the latter, involving abductions, kidnappings and use of brutal force.<sup>45</sup> This period saw the extreme use of Islamic-style beheadings, which were calculated to intimidate and spread fear.

Chart 8: How the insurgency has spread to other regions



Research into ASWJ's tactics shows that between 2018 and 2019, incendiary attacks were the dominant strategy. These involved raids on villages and rampant burning of houses. A number of the people interviewed for this study noted that ASWJ's militants often dressed in military uniforms and red headscarf, often attacked late at night or at early dawn. They chanted 'Allah Akbar' several times, firing shots into the air before setting houses ablaze and then spraying bullets indiscriminately at anyone trying to run.<sup>46</sup>

Many who were captured, especially youth, were coerced into joining up and if they refused, were killed most often by beheading. An interviewee stated that: 'I have family members who were victims of the terrorist attack on 28 May 2020 in Macomia village. Some people were held hostage by the terrorists for a week and witnessed the beheading of young people who declined to affiliate with the terrorists.'<sup>47</sup> Some respondents stated that these beheadings took place in public places or within sight of many people.

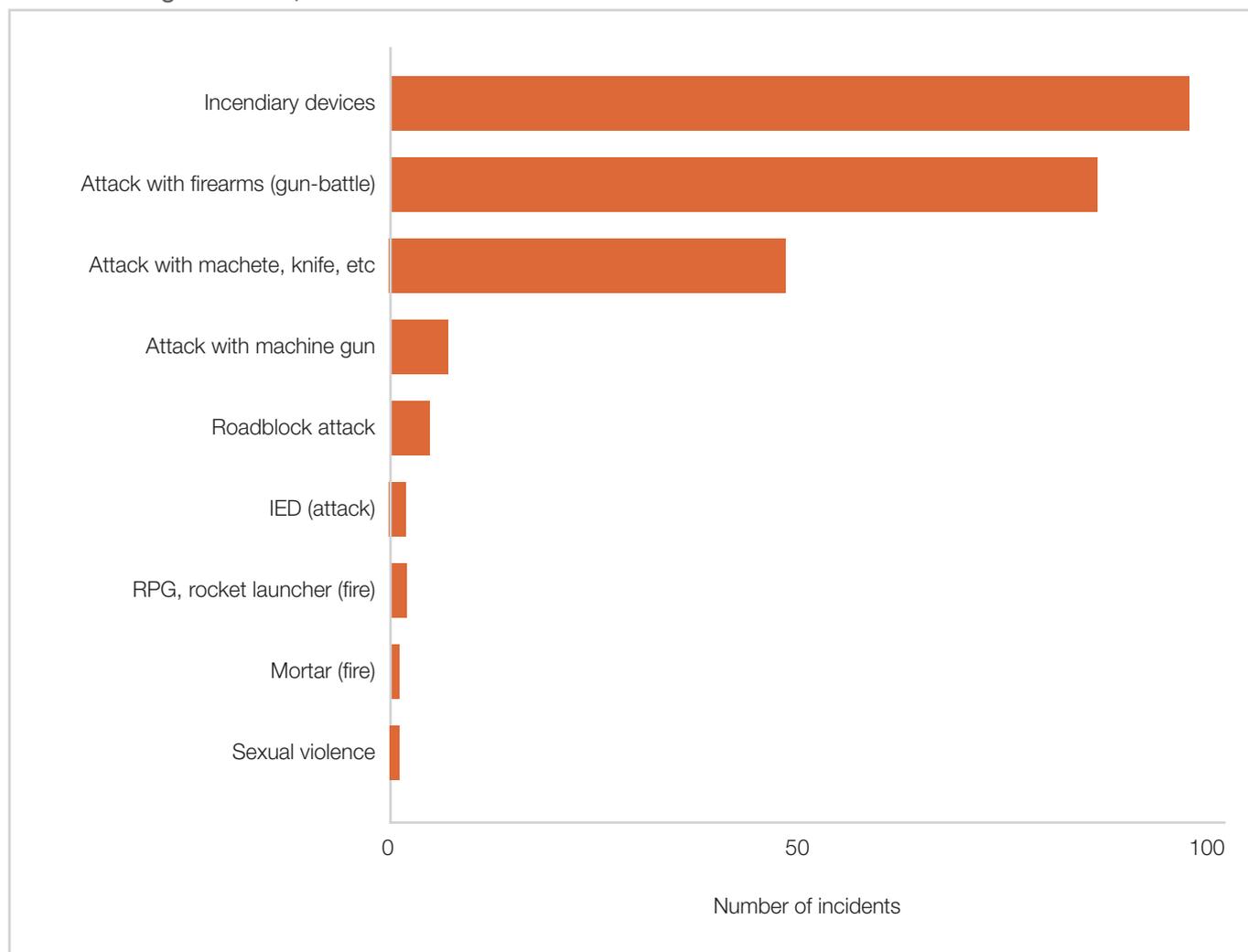
Evidence from other regions in Africa suggests that when terrorists control territories, they often impose zakat or taxes on people.<sup>48</sup> These taxes are collected through coercion. It is not clear if the terrorists who controlled Mocimboa da Praia, Macomia, Nangade, Palma and other territories collected zakat.<sup>49</sup> Respondents who briefly lived in ASWJ's controlled areas did not mention zakat as one of the group's activities. Instead, they pointed to mass kidnappings for ransom, abductions of women and children, bribery and organised crime as sources of funding.<sup>50</sup>

The second most dominant tactic of the group involved the use of firearms for gun battles with security forces, including local vigilante groups. The group is suspected of using various Chinese-made AK-47 variants, including type-80 machines, popular with the Mozambican

military.<sup>51</sup> Several interviewees claimed to have seen the group with high-calibre weapons such as AKMs/AK-47s, PKs, RPG7s and Mortar 60s, 62s and 80s, suggesting that they source many of their weapons from the Mozambican security forces.<sup>52</sup>

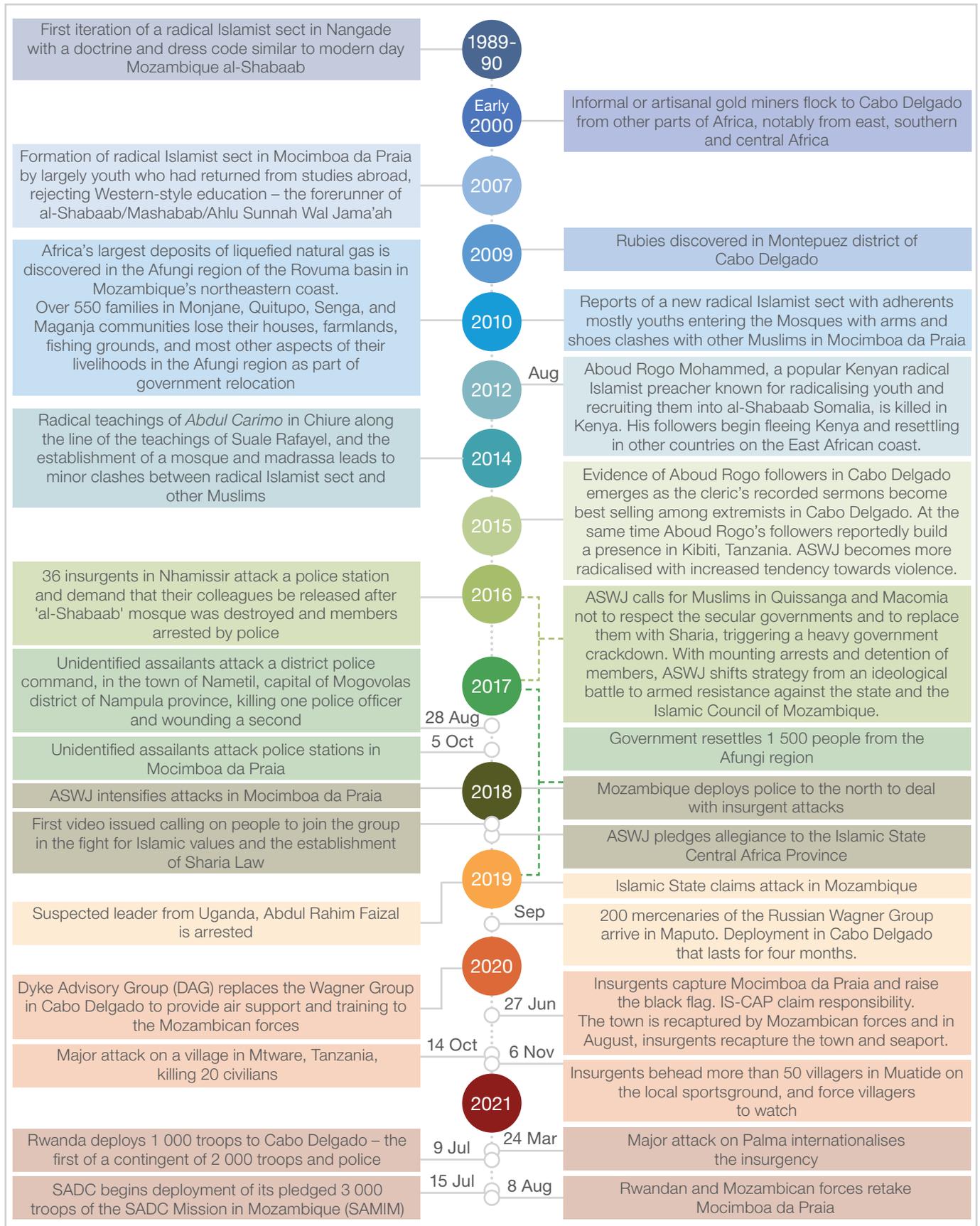
In 2020, the group's strategy shifted to territorial control, which led to the capture of Mocimboa da Praia and other towns and villages shown in Chart 9. This tactical shift fomented the use of guerrilla tactics and enabled the group to live in communities among the people, who also served as human shields during security operations. Some field interviewees indicated that the attackers use their captives as human shields. As one put it: 'They act in large groups, with children leading, women in the middle and men following armed with machetes and firearms.'<sup>53</sup>

**Chart 9: Insurgent tactics, 2018 – 2021**



Source: HIS Markit 2021

Chart 10: Major episodes in the evolution of the insurgency



Source: Compiled by author

## Context and root causes

### North-south regional inequalities

The insurgency in Cabo Delgado broke out as Mozambique was beginning to entrench democracy, but also when the disparity between the rich and the poor was becoming a serious concern. Mozambicans have always identified themselves largely in terms of their region of origin rather than ethnicity,<sup>54</sup> although the latter has been instrumentalised and politicised at different times of Mozambican history. Political control between the two main political parties – FRELIMO and RENAMO – is based more on regional lines than on ethnic affinities.

Regional inequality, particularly between the south and the north, is, therefore, an important vector for determining political stability in Mozambique. It is, according to the World Bank, a key challenge for development.<sup>55</sup> These disparities are prevalent in several key sectors, including service delivery, the rural-urban divide, and access to power and economic opportunities, natural resources, basic services and education.<sup>56</sup> The perception of regional inequity as a major grievance and a trigger for terrorism in Cabo Delgado was well summarised by one of the respondents:

‘Economic and social inequality, poverty, youth unemployment and political exclusion are some of the factors driving violent extremism in northern Mozambique. The expropriation of land by the state has further limited livelihood choices in a country where 80% of the people depend on agriculture. This has increased the number of youth willing to join ASWJ, believing the narrative that under Islamic law, things would improve.’<sup>57</sup>

Many respondents considered the situation in the north as peculiar to the region, because development has been heavily concentrated in the south. Some view terrorism as a ploy to deprive the region from benefitting from its natural resources, especially LNG and to further exclude natives from economic opportunities.

Many respondents spoke of marginalisation, social and political exclusion and the perpetual absence of the state

as reasons for the insurgency. As one respondent put it: ‘The government never cares about the northern people. It sees us as trash. The only thing it does is overcharge us with taxes and steal our land.’<sup>58</sup> Some senior FRELIMO officials confirmed that the war economy in Cabo Delgado was never transformed. Government and party focus was on development of the southern and central regions.<sup>59</sup>

### Poverty and marginalisation

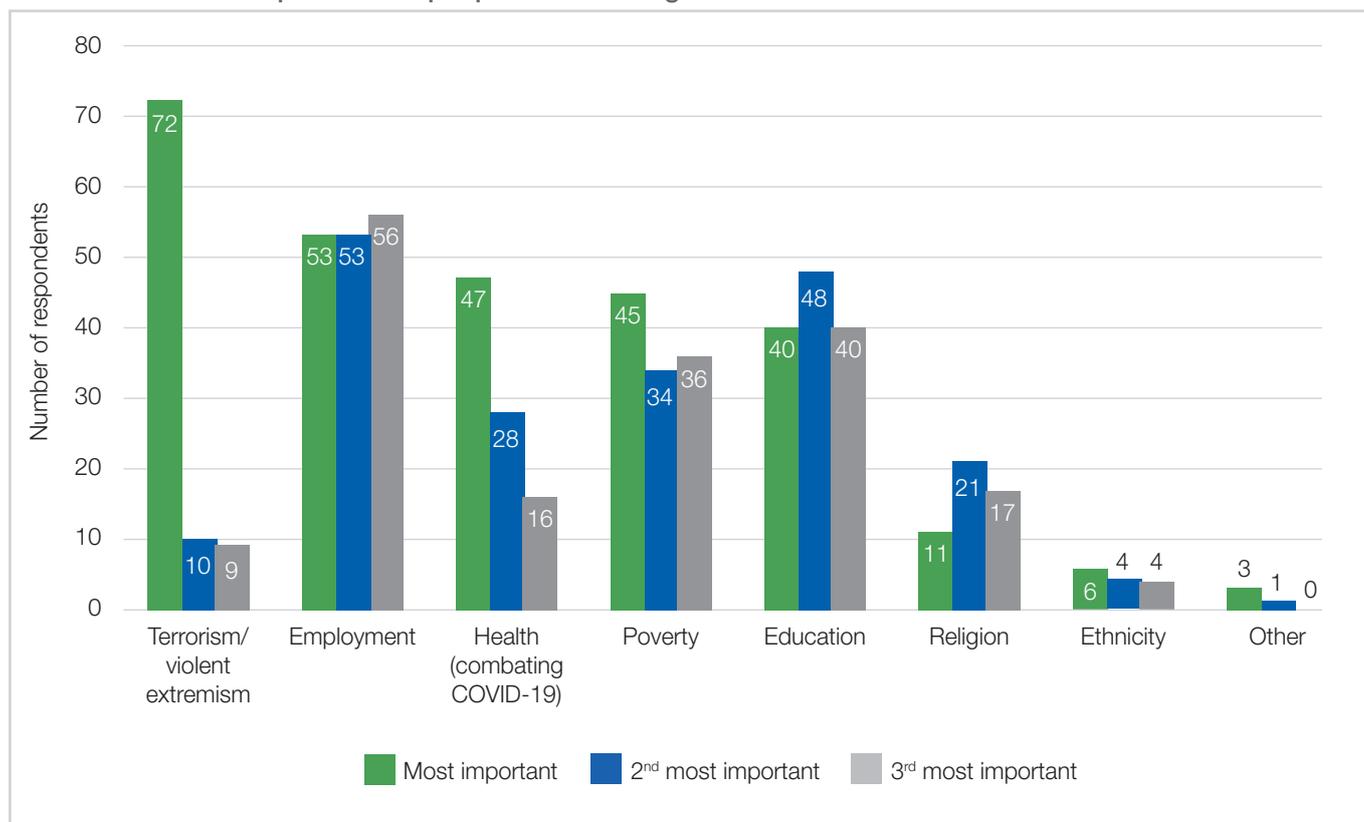
The role of poverty, marginalisation and unemployment as drivers of violent extremism in Africa remain highly contested. Africa is a poor continent and if these aspects on their own were the primary drivers, terrorism and violent extremism would rattle every corner of the continent. This is not to say that poverty and unemployment do not play a role. The specific contribution of poverty to violent extremism in Africa has been well documented.<sup>60</sup>

The poverty thesis rests on the hypothesis that poor and jobless youth are highly vulnerable to terrorist recruitment. Cabo Delgado, which is one of the poorest and most underdeveloped regions in Mozambique has thousands of unemployed youth, who are desperate to change their situation. With few livelihood options, criminality is a low hanging fruit for jobless youth.

To examine the importance of employment and other poverty-related issues, respondents were asked to rank terrorism, employment, poverty, education, health, religion and ethnicity according to their importance (one being the most important). Chart 11 shows that most respondents (72 of the 309) cited terrorism as their biggest concern. Fifty-three of respondents ranked employment as their primary preoccupation. More people ranked employment as their second and third most important concern than any other issue. COVID-19 was the biggest worry for 47 people, followed by poverty (45) and education (40). Religion and ethnicity were less concerning to interviewees.

Terrorism is the primary concern of the people, even if it is the result of underlying economic and political factors. Thus, ending or resolving the problem of terrorism is the topmost priority for most people in Cabo Delgado. Chart 11 also shows a high concern for employment, suggesting that any long-term solution

Chart 11: Issues of importance to people in Cabo Delgado



will need to address youth unemployment, and the fundamental causes of poverty and poor education in the region.

Poverty came out more prominently in the qualitative study, with almost all respondents mentioning it among the root causes and the underpinning reason for the creation of ASWJ. As one respondent put it: ‘The group stems from poverty, poor access to education and employment and the lack of a future for young people. Youngsters don’t want to suffer as their parents did and are driven to violence because the state neglects and represses their demands.’<sup>61</sup> Another respondent stated that the insurgency is caused by ‘a lack of education in communities, communication between the government and communities; it is a way the people demand their right to land and resources.’<sup>62</sup>

The extremely high level of illiteracy is a major factor contributing to the insecurity in Cabo Delgado. Studies show that 81% of females and 51% of males in Cabo Delgado are not literate.<sup>63</sup> Illiteracy, as one official rightly stated, ‘facilitates manipulation’.<sup>64</sup> Some experts go as

far as describing the insurgency as a ‘civil war’ – a mass revolt by poor and frustrated citizens against the state.<sup>65</sup>

Despite this widespread dissatisfaction, the field study did not find evidence of people joining the insurgency *en masse* as was the case at the beginning in 2017. This suggests that while there is diminished support for the insurgency, the perceived grievances that triggered it remain unaddressed.

While there is diminished support for the insurgency, the grievances that triggered it remain unaddressed

The study found strong evidence of resentment against elites who are believed to be benefitting from the province’s resources, while the rest of the people of Cabo Delgado languish in poverty and without basic services. This sentiment of usurpation gained impetus with the evacuation and relocation of communities in the Afungi region. Although many people were given better

homes, they lost their livelihoods, which aggravated the poverty of most households.

Resistance against the state was, therefore, also perceived by many respondents as a reason for the creation of ASWJ. One respondent summed this up succinctly: 'The aim is to destabilise and weaken the Mozambican government. The insurgents believe that the state is oppressive and benefits only people from southern Mozambique.'<sup>66</sup>

The government's creation in 2020 of the Agency for Integrated Development of the North (ADIN)<sup>67</sup> represented hope for many disenchanted people in the north and rightly acknowledged the importance of creating economic opportunities as a means of addressing the root causes of the insurgency. Indeed, development and a significant improvement in services such as electricity and drinking water could help stem the insurgency.

To date, €256 million has been budgeted for infrastructure in Cabo Delgado alone and further development plans have been drawn up for the three northern provinces – Cabo Delgado, Nampula and Niassa. It remains to be seen if there is enough political will to fully implement these projects.

### Role of ethnicity

Cabo Delgado, with a population of just over 2.3 million, has historically been the melting pot for various ethnic and religious groups, mainly Makondes, Mwanis and Macuas. The Makonde (around 10% of the population) are traditionally Christian, living on the high plateau inland in regions bordering Tanzania.

Today, they form the majority in three of the northern districts (Mueda, Muidumbe and Nangade), with a significant presence in Macomia and Palma.<sup>68</sup> The Mwanis (also around 10%) are in the majority in Mocimboa da Praia and Ibo Island, with significant presence in Quissanga, Macomia, Palma and Nangade.<sup>69</sup> Macuas (70%) predominate in 12 of the 17 districts in Cabo Delgado (Palma, Macomia, Quissanga, Metuge, Pemba, Mecufi, Ancuabe, Chiure, Meluco, Namuno, Balama and Montepuez), many of whom are Muslims.<sup>70</sup>

The geographic distribution and concentration of insurgent attacks did not confirm any particular ethnic preference or pattern. However, field researchers

observed some tensions between the Mwani and Macua IDPs, who accused each other of being responsible for the insurgency. Generally, ethnicity was not a popular factor in this study. Chart 11 shows that only six respondents ranked ethnicity as the most important issue, while four ranked it second and four third.

Furthermore, ethnicity was not seen as a major driver of terrorism in the region. This is further reflected in Chart 12 below, which shows responses when interviewees were asked to identify the root causes of terrorism in Cabo Delgado. Only 12 (3.88%) ranked it the top factor, while 15 others (4.85%) and 14 (4.53%) ranked it second and third, respectively. This confirms that Mozambicans identify more with their region than with their ethnicity.

### Respondents talked of how the elite of a certain ethnic group control most Mozambican resources

This is not to suggest, however, that there is no ethnic problem in Mozambique. Ethnicity or ethnic discrimination in Mozambique is an inherent feature of the discourse on corruption – the elephant in the room of Mozambican society. Respondents talked of nepotism and endemic corruption at the top and how the elite of a certain ethnic group control most Mozambican resources and determine who gets jobs and who doesn't.<sup>71</sup> They also cited growing inter-ethnic tensions among the Makonde, Mwanis and Macuas, and how the Makondes are favoured for most high-level jobs, especially strategic military positions, where they dominate.<sup>72</sup>

A study conducted by Fraym found that the pattern of ASWJ attacks in Cabo Delgado between 2017 and 2019 suggested the targeting of some ethnic groups. It observed that 93% of attacks were conducted in areas with a low density of Macua speakers.<sup>73</sup> Whether this was purely fortuitous or a deliberate strategy remains debatable. Proponents of the ethnic hypothesis also argue that most ASWJ members are drawn from the Mwani tribe. The tribe has been very jealous of its erstwhile neighbours, the Makondes, who have for several decades held the reins of power and lived in greater affluence.<sup>74</sup>

That the earlier manifestation of the insurgency in Macua-dominated Balama, Chiure and Namuno did not succeed, as the insurgents were pushed out, lends further credence to the ethnic factor. There is, however, no evidence that the insurgents' decision to move further north to Mocimboa da Praia to attack districts such as Nangade, Macomia, Palma and Quissanga was influenced by ethnic considerations. But it would make sense if the insurgents intended to disrupt LNG exploitation to attack Mocimboa da Praia, Palma and Nangade, rather than districts further south with high Macua populations.

### Role of religion

Religion can be a tool for both solace and radicalisation or incitement to violence. It is, therefore, important to examine its role in the insurgency. The 2017 population census shows about 60% of Mozambicans claim to be Christians, mostly Catholics, and about 30% are Muslims. Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Nampula are the only three out of 10 Mozambican provinces with a significant Muslim population. In Cabo Delgado, 60% of the population claim to be Muslims.<sup>75</sup> These religious groups have co-habited peacefully for most of Mozambique's post-independence history.

Cabo Delgado borders Tanzania, long seen as potentially prone to threats of radicalisation.<sup>76</sup> Porous borders and regular flow of citizens from Tanzania to the region and vice versa have made it vulnerable to violent extremist groups and ideologies from Tanzania and further north.<sup>77</sup> The field survey indicates that most people in Cabo Delgado believe that religion plays no major role.<sup>78</sup>

Most Mozambican Muslims belong to the Shadhuliyya and Qadiriyya Sufi orders, linking them culturally, economically (or commercially) and linguistically to the Swahili coast of Africa.<sup>79</sup> Sufism or tasawwuf, 'a mystical form of Islam, a school of practice that emphasises the inward search for God and shuns materialism',<sup>80</sup> is believed to have arrived in Mozambique, mostly in the north, in 1896.<sup>81</sup> Sufis profess a more tolerant and peaceful Islam in harmony with Allah, and strive to attain perfection and purification of the soul through spirituality.

Despite universal acceptance as the model, the ideal or as University of Kashmir scholar Shahida Bilqies states,

the heartbeat of Islam,<sup>82</sup> the philosophical tenets of Sufism are opposed by Salafists or Wahhabists. They profess a more dogmatic form of Islam as in the time of the prophet. Although both strive for perfection, there are key differences between Sufism and Salafism or Wahhabism, which keep both schools of Islamic thought in a state of perpetual tension.

While Sufism sees Islam as a responsibility of the individual to Allah, Salafism approaches it more as a community responsibility. Furthermore, the Sufi cosmology emphasises jihad of the heart or the 'carnal soul', which is accomplished by fighting temptation through the purification of the soul.<sup>83</sup> Salafism, which undergirds the ideology of terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, embraces various forms of jihad,<sup>84</sup> including jihad of the sword, an all-out war against infidels or non-believers.

Salafists reject the asceticism and mysticism of Sufis, and see such practices as heretic, apostasy or polytheism that should be killed.<sup>85</sup> It is this tension that has fuelled violent Islamic revivalism, which first swept across Africa in the 1980s following the Iranian revolution of 1979.

### Different religious groups have co-habited peacefully for most of Mozambique's post-independence history

In Mozambique, the relationship dynamics between Sufis and other Muslims, especially pro-Sunnis, and the region's exposure to Islamic currents from the greater Swahili coast and Africa are documented by Liazzat Bonate. This scholar and researcher on Mozambique observes that:<sup>86</sup> 'The 1980s and 1990s were marked by an acute rivalry and conflicts between the two emerging national umbrella Islamic organisations, the Islamic Council and the Islamic Congress, representing largely pro-Sufi and anti-Sufi positions. In the 2000s, these organisations became overshadowed by new and more dynamic organisations, such as ASWJ.'<sup>87</sup>

This confirms that the insurgency in northern Mozambique is linked to the global wave of Islamic revivalism, which has affected various regions in Africa.

These include the Maghreb, and northern, eastern, central Africa and western Africa, and the Sahel. The involvement of foreign fighters and the Islamic State in the insurgency further strengthens its global and regional roots.

Indeed, the narrative of the insurgency often begins with the return of Mozambicans who went to study in Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Egypt and other Muslim countries with Sunni majority. On their return to Mozambique, they introduced radical beliefs that opposed the Sufi establishment and rejected Western-style education. They desecrated the mosque by storming and entering it with their shoes on, and started building their own mosques. Similar stories have been told about Boko Haram in Nigeria and the Islamic State in Egypt, and ASWJ evinces the same tactical and organisational traits.<sup>88</sup>

Aboud Rogo Mohamed, the Kenyan radical Muslim cleric from Mombasa, is perhaps the most influential figure in reconnecting northern Mozambique to radical Islamism on the greater Swahili coast. He became the most popular preacher among the Cabo Delgado youth and remained so even long after his death in

2012. His preaching is believed to have provided the inspiration for ASWJ's ideology.

When asked about the role of religion in the insurgency, 102 respondents (37.23% of the total) believed that religion has no role. These respondents believed that by using religion for such horrific acts, the group's real intention is to destroy Islam and trust for the religion. Another 12.77% claimed that religion or Islam is instrumentalised only for propaganda, material interest, legitimacy, opportunism and mobilisation. Whereas 81 (29.56%) of respondents agreed that religion is a key driver of violent extremism, 18.61% (51) believed that it plays only a limited role.

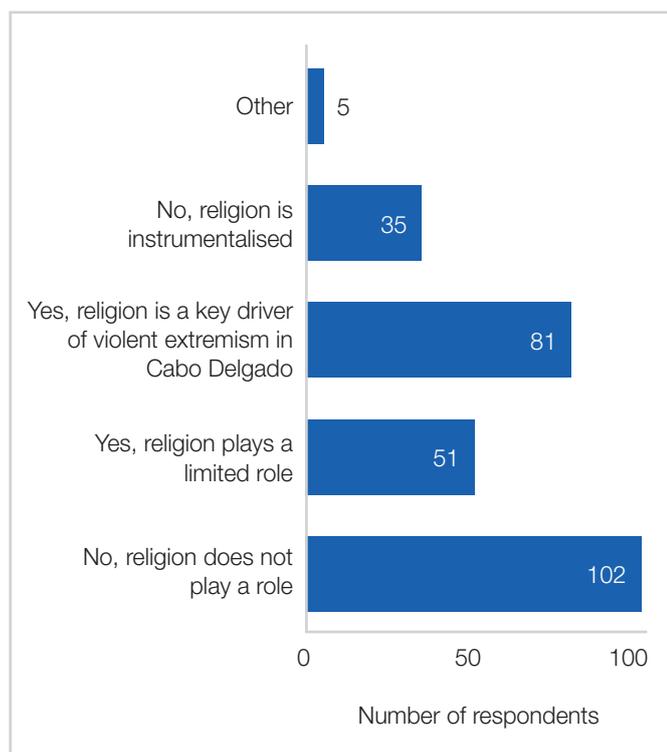
### Islam on its own is not the cause of the insurgency but it is instrumentalised by criminal actors

Those who see a role, argued that about 80% of ASWJ's membership are Muslims and about 20% are non-Muslims,<sup>89</sup> and that without Islam such mobilisation would not occur. They also argued that the group espouses Islamic goals, including implantation of Islam and sharia law to replace secular government. This suggests that Islam on its own is not the cause of the insurgency but that it is perverted and instrumentalised by criminal actors.

Ignoring or overlooking the religious roots of the insurgency could be dangerous as it may limit the quest for lasting peace. But recognising it suggests two levels of intervention. The first is internal among Muslims, particularly the tension between Sufis and non-Sufis or pro-Sunnis. The need for understanding and reconciliation between the two is important for lasting peace.

The second is between Muslims and non-Muslims. This emphasises the need for inter-faith dialogue and reconciliation. For Mozambique to continue to be the melting pot of religions requires certain basic principles of cohabitation. The insurgency has helped to bring some solidarity among the faiths. The Catholic Church, for example, plays an important role in Mozambique, which was boosted by the visit of Pope Francis in September 2019.

**Chart 12: Role of religion in Mozambique's insurgency**



The church has not only reached out to Muslims, but continues to play a visible role in the humanitarian response and alleviating the plight of IDPs.<sup>90</sup> Beyond the contribution of Muslim charity organisations and the Catholic Church, there has also been a positive response from the Council of Churches and the Christian Council of Mozambique. Pentecostal churches and the Methodist Church have shown solidarity with Muslims and provided humanitarian support to victims of the insurgency, including IDPs.

Religious leaders complain that their calls to the government for action to stem the tragedy were not heard. Despite this, attempts at dialogue led by religious leaders and faith-based organisations are ongoing. In December 2021, for example, an inter-religious meeting in Pemba, Cabo Delgado, rejected violence and the ‘instrumentalisation of religion’, while calling for dialogue and reconciliation.<sup>91</sup> The role of faith-based institutions, particularly at this moment of solidarity, is critical and should be exploited more by the state for dialogue and reconciliation.

### Role of natural resources

People in Cabo Delgado clearly perceive natural resources to be a main root cause of the conflict. Asked to rate the most important causes, 139 of the 309 respondents rated the discovery of natural gas number one. This was followed by illicit arms flows (42), economic marginalisation (21), middle class/elite greed (17) and poor management of natural resources (15).

One respondent said that the main reason for Cabo Delgado’s vulnerability is the granary [of] the wealth there, natural gas, rubies, wood and agricultural activities.<sup>92</sup> Another commented that ASWJ was probably motivated by the desire to occupy an area rich in minerals and gas, the sale of which could enable it to finance its terrorist actions in Africa and globally.<sup>93</sup>

In the early 2000s, it became apparent that Cabo Delgado was heavily endowed with mineral resources, notably rubies and gold. Informal or artisanal miners flocked here from other parts of the continent, notably from east, southern and central Africa. Ruby mines

Chart 13: Root causes of violent extremism in Cabo Delgado

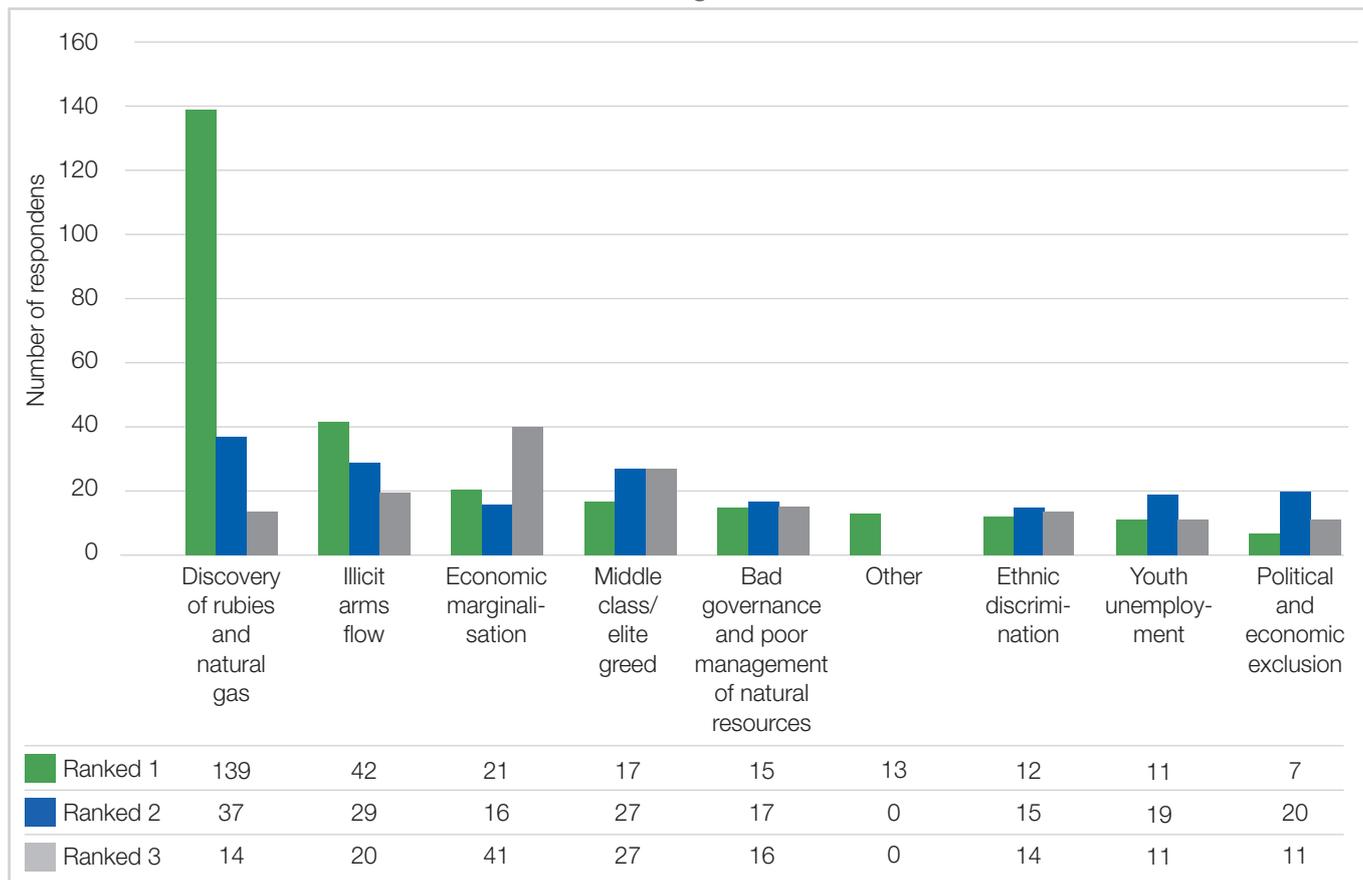
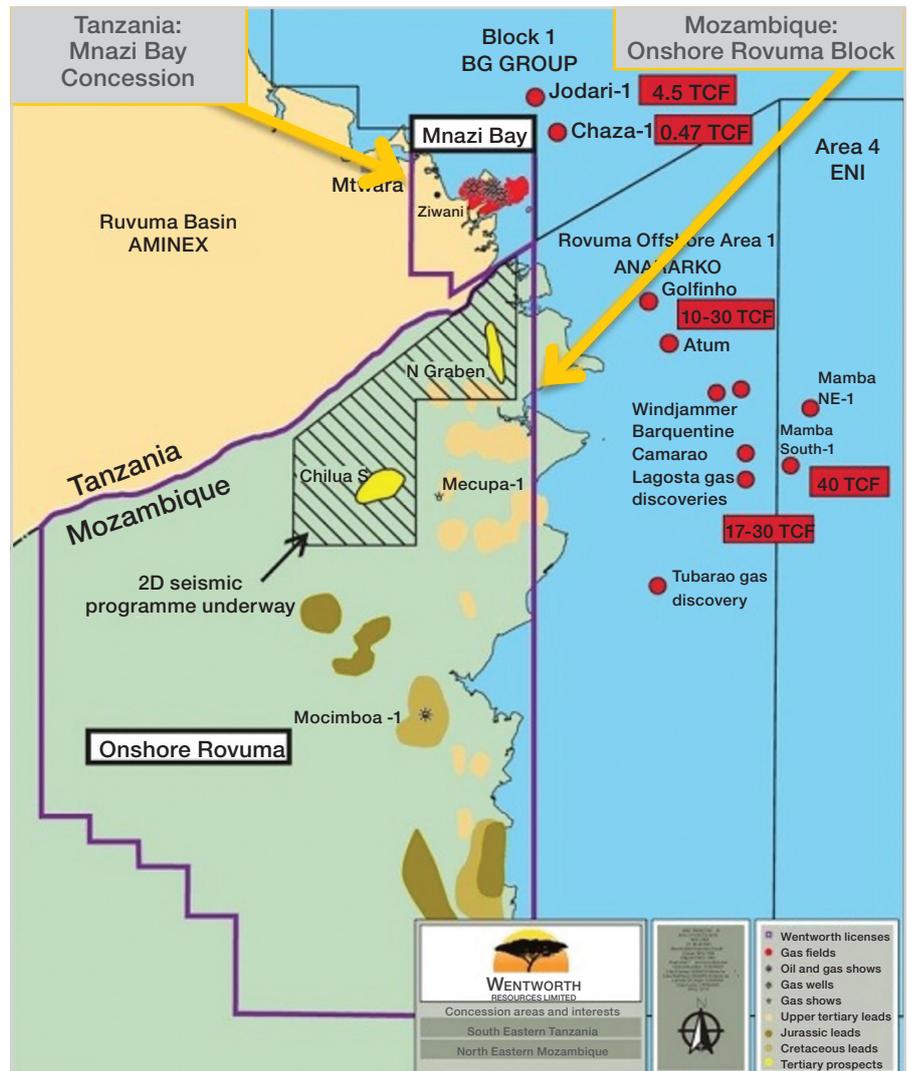


Chart 14: Rovuma Basin and natural gas



Source: Wentworth Resources

were formally opened around Montepuez in 2012.<sup>94</sup> Despite assurances to the contrary and the creation of some formal jobs by the company Gemfields, displacement and loss of land, and informal miners' loss of livelihoods created huge discontent among the population.

Some believe mining is directly responsible for the crisis. One noted: 'According to the police commander, the mashababos started as a group trafficking rubies and minerals from Montepuez. They would travel up to the Olumba where they washed the stones and send them by dhows elsewhere.'<sup>95</sup>

In 2016, it was announced that some of the world's biggest LNG reserves were in Rovuma Basin, straddling northern Mozambique and southern Tanzania. These were to be exploited by various consortiums of multinational gas and oil companies. Of these, the consortiums led by TotalEnergies of France and Eni of Italy have reached finality. There was huge optimism that gas would double gross domestic product per capita, and create more than 55 000 skilled and 100 000 unskilled jobs within the first few years. It was

45%

OF RESPONDENTS RATED THE DISCOVERY OF NATURAL GAS AS THE MOST IMPORTANT CAUSE OF THE CONFLICT

hoped that this may propel Cabo Delgado into becoming an economic miracle such as that of Guangdong province of China.<sup>96</sup>

Assurances were made that local inhabitants would benefit first from LNG projects and that those displaced would be compensated. However, perceptions have been of the contrary and many see natural gas and its promises of prosperity as aggravating inequality and resentment against those in government who would benefit from the projects. Many of those who lost their land and livelihoods through exploitation of natural resources now have to deal with the added burden of having to flee their homes due to insecurity. Land issues are also seen as a potential driver of the insurgency.<sup>97</sup>

Meanwhile, it has become known that Cabo Delgado is also rich in graphite, an essential element in the manufacture of electric cars.<sup>98</sup> In December 2021, magnate Elon Musk signed a deal with Australian company Syrah to provide graphite from Cabo Delgado's Balama mine.<sup>99</sup> This has raised fears that in addition to natural gas and rubies, graphite and its place in so-called 'just transition' to cleaner energy will become a factor in the northern Mozambique crisis.

The conflict has now also changed the development trajectory of the province since many unskilled IDPs have been employed by private companies as sharecroppers to produce cotton<sup>100</sup> and other commodities. This has created huge resentment by people who used to work their own land or sustained themselves through fishing. To take peoples' land without compensation and move them against their will remains one of their most bitter grievances. 'We are not killed. It is worse because they destroy our roots, our ancestors' trees, the burial ground of our parents, sons and daughters,' said one respondent.<sup>101</sup>

### Political context

Examining the political context in which the insurgency occurred in Mozambique may help identify drivers and causal factors. Studies from other regions have highlighted issues such as political exclusion, disenfranchisement, structure of government and political culture, bad governance and elite competition as catalysts for violent extremism. In some cases, elite competition can be so intense that some rapacious

elites may resort to the instrumentalisation of non-state armed groups, including thugs, gangs and terrorists or violent extremists.

The contemporary political dispensation in Mozambique has been shaped largely by the civil war, which left behind two dominant political parties, which have very little in common. The war ended in 1992, but frustration, mistrust and political contestations have persisted.

The nature of political rivalry and the tendency for zero sum or winner-takes-all politics have contributed to the bifurcation of the country along party, regional and, to some extent, ethnic lines. This political rivalry and mistrust between the two parties have impeded efforts to achieve national unity, sustainable peace, millennium development goals, democratisation and implementation of peace agreements signed by both parties.

### The civil war ended in 1992, but frustration, mistrust and political contestations have persisted

The insurgency in Cabo Delgado emerged at a time when Mozambique was considered an African success story of democracy, post-conflict reconstruction and development. However, despite significant progress in post-conflict transition to democracy, Mozambique has two major problems: electoral violence and corruption. No single issue has caused post-civil war political instability in Mozambique more than elections.

Violence, boycotts and intense contestations characterised Mozambique's post-civil war elections of 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019.<sup>102</sup> In September 2005, for example, 12 people were killed and 47 injured, and 128 houses set ablaze in post-election riots in Mocimboa da Praia.<sup>103</sup> In December 2019, 10 people were killed and nine injured in post-electoral violence, when assailants set up a roadblock and ambushed vehicles in Mutindiri, Sofala.<sup>104</sup> In the same month, five people, including two police officers, were killed when assailants attacked Gorongosa district, Sofala.<sup>105</sup>

A low-level insurgency ended with an agreement between the government and Renamo in mid-2019 and a demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration

(DDR) process in the military. This DDR spurred the initial reluctance of the Mozambican government to use the military as first responder to the situation in Cabo Delgado. Observers claimed that the 2019 elections were marked by widespread irregularities, which gave room for disputing the results.<sup>106</sup> In Cabo Delgado, the insurgency impeded the opening of polling stations in some places.

Corruption is the other big challenge for Mozambique. Although the government is taking measures to address it, the problem continues to hamper the effective functioning of the state. It has allowed state-embedded actors to flourish in organised crime economies such as drug trafficking, flora and fauna crimes, and illegal mining, particularly in the north. The so-called hidden debt scandal, involving illicit spending of up to \$2 billion, decimated the country's budget. Financial institutions stopped lending to the country, setting its growth trajectory back by several years. Following an international outcry, Mozambique has tried to address this with the prosecution of 19 suspects.<sup>107</sup>

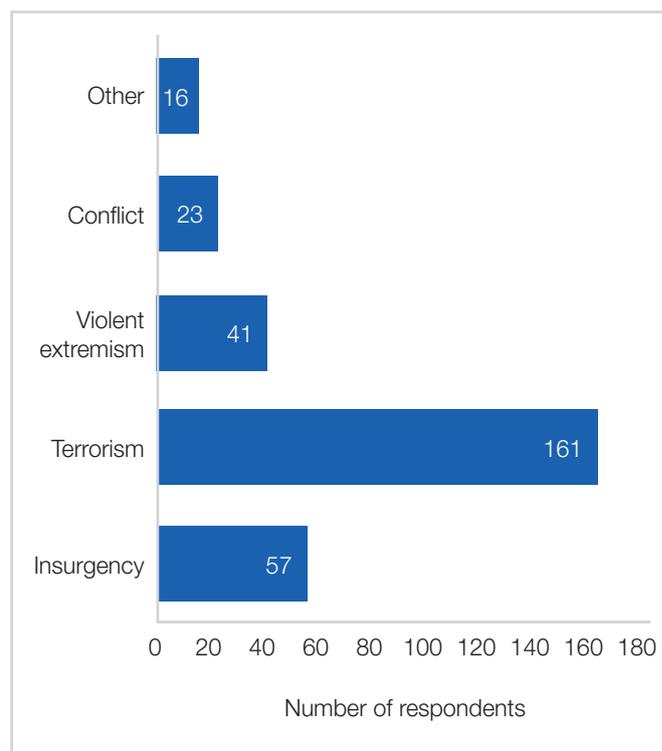
The political context in Mozambique, therefore, exhibits some of the underlying factors conducive to terrorism as per the first pillar of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The consequences of corruption and state-embedded actors can be far-reaching, including the rapid depletion of the environment as well as undermining peace, security and development. It is, therefore, imperative for Mozambique to address these factors.

### Profile of armed groups and radicalisation

To establish a common understanding of the situation in Cabo Delgado from the perception of its people, the following question was asked: 'In your opinion, how should we refer to the situation in Cabo Delgado?' The response was decisive and did not reflect the wide-ranging appellations used by media, experts and scholars. There seems to be a common understanding among respondents of the situation. Chart 15 shows how respondents described or referred to the situation in Cabo Delgado.

More than half the respondents (161 or 54.03%) described the situation as terrorism, while 57 or 19.13% perceived it as an insurgency. Those who see or regard the violence as violent extremism represented only

**Chart 15: How Mozambicans refer to the situation in Cabo Delgado**



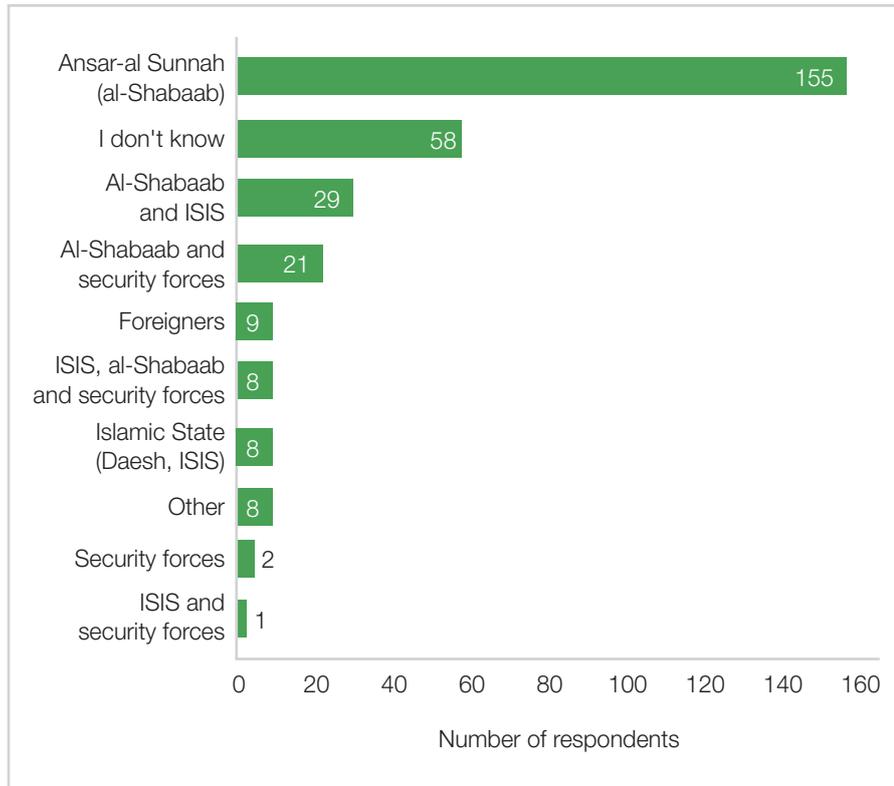
13.76% (41 respondents), while another small number of respondents (23 or 7.72%) preferred to call it a conflict. A few respondents (16 or 5.37%) were undecided and offered various nomenclatures such as 'war,' 'religious war,' 'criminality,' or 'opportunism behind religion'.

### Main actors in the attacks

Once the situation was defined, respondents were asked who they thought was responsible for the violent attacks. Just over half named Ahlu Sunnah or al-Shabaab, while 9.70% and 7.02% placed responsibility on al-Shabaab and ISIS (combined) and al-Shabaab and security forces respectively. Only 2.68% of respondents thought that ISIS alone was responsible. Almost a fifth of the respondents did not know what group was responsible.

A key finding, however, was that only two or 0.67% of respondents believed that security forces were responsible for the attacks or represented a threat to the people. While the number may appear insignificant, it contradicts the findings of most studies on Cabo Delgado, media reports and the findings of human rights organisations, which largely blame the security forces.<sup>108</sup>

**Chart 16: Major perpetrators of terrorism in Cabo Delgado**



It seems to corroborate, however, a 2018 study conducted by Afrobarometer. This found high approval of the Mozambique government’s performance in countering armed extremists (reaching 66% and 77%) and high trust in the military (reaching 68%).<sup>109</sup>

There are possible explanations for this discrepancy. One may be respondents’ hesitancy to name security forces as perpetrators for fear of retaliation. Another is the view that initially, attacks were carried out by ‘White People (Arabs), who only killed local chiefs, but when Mozambicans joined, they started killing indiscriminately.’

**Formation of ASWJ**

According to respondents, the formation of ASWJ can be attributed to factors such as greed, grievances and poor governance. As mentioned earlier in the report, respondents emphasised that the discovery of natural resources such as rubies and gas in the region motivated the group’s formation ‘to take advantage of our mineral resources.’<sup>110</sup> Participants also cited social inequality and exclusion as grievances.

Other factors that may have contributed to the emergence of ASWJ in Cabo Delgado were state failure and lack of political participation. Failure to provide basic services was another issue mentioned. The government’s failure to listen to the community’s needs, one respondent alleged, provided fertile ground for the group to take root as ‘the government underestimated the denunciations of the communities ...’<sup>111,112</sup> Having thus gained a foothold in

ONLY  
**2.7%**  
 OF RESPONDENTS BLAMED  
 ISIS FOR THE INSURGENCY

the community and capitalising on its grievances, ASWJ sought to further 'destabilise the government' and the 'development of Mozambicans' for its own benefit.<sup>113</sup>

To understand the political economy of conflict, Cater identified four sources of economic and political differentiations between groups that can result in conflict. These are political participation, economic assets, employment, and social access and situation.<sup>114</sup> From the research, it can be seen that ASWJ in Mozambique has capitalised on various aspects of these four sources.

Asked about why ASWJ was created, some respondents mentioned social inequality, absolute poverty and social exclusion resulting from and deepened by the economic exploitation of the region. Other issues were state negligence in the distribution of infrastructure, unemployment and expropriation of land by 'landowners', many of them high political cadres.<sup>115</sup>

## Structure

As important as the factors behind a group's formation is determining the group's structure. Respondents were asked whether they knew the insurgents and their leadership structure. It emerged that little was known about the group's structure and leaders predominantly because it does not seem to have an active public relations strategy.

One exception was a post in May 2018 by the Islamic State group-aligned Amaq news agency. Six militant members from the group were photographed in front of the traditional black flag often associated with the Islamic State. The perceived relationship was further reinforced when the Islamic State issued a communiqué on 4 June 2019 claiming an attack. Another post on 3 June 2020 showed the Islamic State mocking the west in the Al-Naba news bulletin for its inability to quell the insurgency in Mozambique.<sup>116</sup> These posts did not identify the leaders.

This dearth of information around identity was also prevalent among government leaders. During an election campaign in Chiure, Cabo Delgado, when Mozambique's President Filipe Nyusi was questioned about the government's willingness to negotiate with the insurgents, he referred to the leaders as 'faceless' individuals.<sup>117</sup>

It was against this backdrop that respondents were questioned. Several respondents had limited knowledge of the leaders and responses were varied and elusive. However, it was evident that the leading figures were believed to be from the local community.

Various names came up many times, including Nuro Adremane, Ibin Omar, Ibin Mario and Muhamed Rui Chomar. Interestingly, as far back as 2018, Adremane was mentioned as one of the leaders in Mocimboa da Praia in a report by Global Initiative.<sup>118</sup> That year, media reports noted that Mozambican security forces had identified six individuals allegedly behind the insurgency. They were Abdul Faizal, Abdul Remane, Abdul Raim, Nuno Remane, Ibin Omar and a sixth known only as Salimo.<sup>119</sup>

## The field research revealed that very little was known about the violent extremist groups' structure and leaders

The predominant name mentioned was Bin Omar, with variations such as Bino Omar, Obini Omar, Binomar and Bonomade Machude Omar, also known as Abu Sulafya Muhammad and Ibin Omar. Other names featured included Nuro [Adremane], Abu Yasir Hassan, Zacarias, Abdulah, Mamude Safue, Amade, Anfoi Saualehe and Ibrahim Musa e Abu Dardai.<sup>120</sup>

Another name spoken quite frequently was Faruk or Farugue, who some respondents noted was a foreign national. One respondent pointed to the area from which the leaders originate: 'There are nationals [and foreigners], Ibin from Mocimboa da Praia, Toronda and Wamiza from Tanzania, and another who killed himself.'<sup>121</sup> On the number of insurgents in the group, respondents were very elusive, showing that this remains unknown.

## Leadership and commanders

Amade Muahamed Daude, a 32-year-old man believed to be a member of ASWJ, was captured by SAMIM forces on 8 January 2022, in Namoro on the banks of Rovuma River.<sup>122</sup> He revealed some names and bases of terrorists in Cabo Delgado. Daude also mentioned the nationalities and countries of training of the terrorist commanders, including Mozambique (Nacala), Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.<sup>123</sup> He

**Chart 17: ASWJ bases and commanders**

| Base location | Base manager   | Base commander                  |
|---------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Pundanhar     | Abu Munir (Tanzanian)  | Nteco (Mozambican)              |
| N/A           | Sheik Namatil (Mozambican)<br>(base used for training and recruitment) | N/A                             |
| Chai          | Abu Bazar  | N/A                             |
| N/A           | Sheik Ibrahimimo (Tanzanian)   | Ndavela (Mozambican)            |
| N/A           | Sheik Muhamud (Congolese)  | Ngubo (Kenyan)                  |
| N/A           | Sheik Hassane (Tanzanian)  | Abu Surat (Benomade Machu Omar) |

confirmed six ASWJ bases in Cabo Delgado and their commanders, as outlined in Chart 17.<sup>124</sup>

This was the first breakthrough in understanding ASWJ’s bases and commanders, even though the information was incomplete. The authors could not confirm the information, which came from SAMIM’s twitter feed. No other information was provided on how the individuals fit into ASWJ’s structure.

**Modus operandi of the group**

The modus operandi of the group developed and evolved over time. One respondent explained that: ‘They always act at the end of the month after the payment of civil servants’ salaries. At night time, they cut the access roads, whether by sea or land; put up roadblocks, barricades, tree trunks. They enter in large numbers of over 400 men carrying heavy weapons. On entering the district they start shooting without stopping. In the villages they first fire in the air uttering the words Alah Akbar. In the case of the FDS, they fired directly. They mobilised the population in the first attack.’<sup>125</sup>

Group members initially selected targets such as police, soldiers and councillors. But they became more indiscriminate. A respondent noted that in the beginning they did not kill Muslims, but now they do not choose.<sup>126</sup>

The approach by ASWJ in Mozambique resembles that of other terrorist groups, such as Boko Haram’s beheading of captured religious leaders and soldiers. In an al-Shabaab attack in Kenya men were beheaded.<sup>127</sup>

The clothing and weapons used created some confusion among residents as the insurgents wore,

in most cases, Mozambican military uniforms and weapons stolen during raids and attacks. This made it difficult for civilians to distinguish them from the Mozambican defence force and police and it prevented them from identifying the attackers.

It became clear during the study that the insurgents targeted men to be killed and beheaded, while children and young women were abducted.<sup>128</sup> The members followed no specific modus operandi, their action determined by the objectives and required outcomes of the attack.

*The insurgents targeted men for beheadings, while children and young women were abducted and put to work*

On closer examination, a recurring pattern emerged from the responses. First, shouts of Allah Akbar announce an attack, after which the insurgents chase people from their houses. Those selected are killed and beheaded and/or dismembered, and young women and children of use captured. After looting foodstuffs and useful items, the insurgents set fire to houses and infrastructure.<sup>129</sup>

One respondent observed: ‘They act in large groups, with children leading, women in the middle and men following armed with machetes and firearms.’<sup>130</sup> This scenario shows why children and women are targeted and abducted, also indicating the use of child soldiers and human shields. This was confirmed by another

participant, who highlighted that children were used as shields during the attack on 23 March 2020 in Mocimboa da Praia.<sup>131</sup>

Unlike terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), or ISIS, the group does not seem yet to have a signature attack. However, given the trends observed with other groups, ASWJ may develop its own identity or signature attacks as it evolves and adapts to its environment.

The group is known to be using ISIS methods such as beheading, torture tactics, kidnapping and mele-style attacks. One witness described: 'We saw them beheading men ... They would hold them by the ears and tie them to a post. They would behead them and take the heads and bring them inside the house to show us [captives]. They said, 'this is the work that we do'.<sup>132</sup> Respondents also talked of the group's practices of forcing its captives to drink blood and of using dismembered human organs for rituals.<sup>133</sup>

### ASWJ's ideology

Ideology is a central feature of terrorism.<sup>134</sup> It can be considered a closed system of thought that demands a monopoly of truth while refusing to accommodate opposing beliefs. Respondents were asked: 'Does ASWJ have a specific ideology? If yes, what are its main tenets?' The question was open-ended to accommodate the fact that most respondents were either unaware or had little knowledge of what the group's ideology entailed.

The responses can be divided into key themes such as exploiting natural resources in Cabo Delgado, and the failure of governance in the region to form a rebellion, and facilitating the rise of illicit trade and organised crime. Interestingly, most respondents alluded to the group's primary ideology as some form of exploitation of Islam based on erroneous interpretation of the Koran. This argument, explored in the next section, is in line with narratives on the conflict put forth by the media, scholars and various organisations.

ASWJ's ideology is aligned to the ideology of other Islamist groups in Africa such as Boko Haram, AQIM and Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM). These groups profess a radical Salafi doctrine that rejects Western style-education, which they view as inherently corrupt

and anti-Islam. Under Allah's commandments, all those who profess other religions and/or Muslims who interpret the Koran differently should be exterminated.<sup>135</sup>

The exact ideology of ASWJ can be best explained only by its leaders. The 13 detainees suspected of being members of the group could not answer questions about the group. According to media reports, group members are believed to have stated the reasons for their insurgency thus: 'We want everyone here to apply Islamic law'. They continued: 'We don't want a government from unbelievers, we want a government from Allah', and 'the establishment of an Islamist state regulated by sharia rule'.<sup>136</sup> This seems to confirm ASWJ's alignment with the ISIS agenda, reflecting broader Islamist goals.

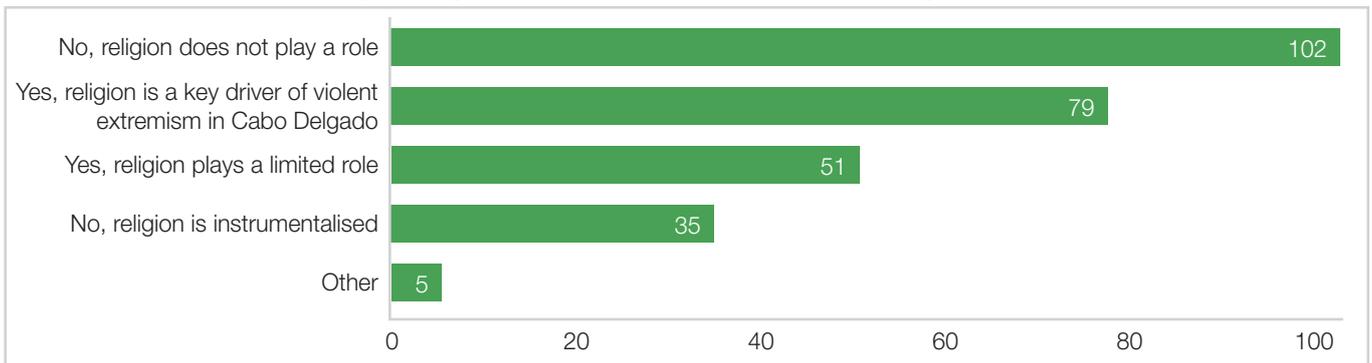
### Role of religion

Asked whether religion plays a role in the group's motives, 47.79% of respondents agreed while 37.5% disagreed. Of the 47.79%, 29.04% emphasised that religion is a major driver of violent extremism in Cabo Delgado, while 18.75% believed that religion plays a limited role. Furthermore, 12.87% stated that while religion may play a role in the conflict, it is predominantly used by the group to achieve its objectives.

Almost two-thirds of the (60.66%) of respondents cited religion as playing some role in ASWJ's ideology, which strongly indicates that the group may fall within the category of religious extremism. Religious extremists adhere to an ideology based on interpretation of religious texts and any person who disagrees with their perspective is portrayed as an enemy. The common characteristics among religious extremists are as follows:<sup>137</sup>

- Their preference for uniformity over diversity. This is supported by a respondent's view that 'the fundamental principles of ASWJ ideology are to establish the group's values and preferences and include an action programme for defined objectives'.<sup>138</sup> To achieve this state of uniformity, it is important for everyone under the group's control to abide by a common ideology. With ASWJ, this can be achieved by forming an Islamic state governed by sharia law.<sup>139</sup>
- The use of force and belligerence instead of persuasion. As expressed in various media reports,

**Chart 18: What role does religion play in the violent extremism in Cabo Delgado?**



ASWJ is synonymous with use of violence and force against populations. This was captured aptly by several respondents:

‘Because many people did not want to join the Africa Muslim mosques, ASWJ unleashed the fight by destroying communities, killing people who did not join.’<sup>140</sup>

‘The characteristic action attacks and mass action without retreat and the beheading of targets (people) and destruction.’<sup>141</sup>

‘Burn houses, destroy houses, mutilate people, kidnap.’<sup>142</sup>

‘In some places, kill using knives and in others using guns.’<sup>143</sup>

- The preference of collective goals over individual freedom. Several responses indicated that the collective goal is ‘forming a radical state dominated by Islamic ideology where sharia law is enforced.’<sup>144</sup> The aim of a collective goal or objective is to create some form of unity through the ‘denial of an established state [Mozambique] and the use of proper laws and customs where Islamic law prevails.’<sup>145</sup>
- Lacking tolerance for those who disagree with them. This is a fundamental tenet of a religious extremist group – no beliefs are true except those that the group espouses. ASWJ members ‘call themselves pure followers of Islam and do not tolerate the existence of other faiths.’<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, the group ‘aims to prohibit [how one] practices the Islamic religion and impose the

practice [of their form of Islamic religion], and want the populations to follow.’<sup>147</sup>

- Strong emphasis on ideology, which provides extremists with justification to commit violent and criminal acts. In the word of one respondent: ‘They proclaim themselves to be pure Muslims and holy soldiers (jihadists or mujahideen). They do not recognise the authority of the state and even less formal education. They do not recognise other religious beliefs. But their way of acting is against the whole Islamic doctrine of which they call themselves faithful followers.’<sup>148</sup>

With religious extremism, religion facilitates a narrative to gain support or legitimise operations by gaining community trust. This can be achieved by ‘... inculcating the belief that Mozambicans are being ruled badly so that they rebel.’<sup>149</sup> Quite often, the challenge arising from creating a narrative to gain support is that this ideology results in, what John Plamenatz calls, ‘a false illusion.’<sup>150</sup> In other words, the ideology of a group can change. This was reflected in responses that noted that ASWJ declared in the beginning that its motive was religious but now has changed to the desire to overthrow the government.<sup>151</sup>

Ideology is a means through which terrorists overcome their fear and express themselves. As one respondent observed: ‘What unites them is their will to break with the passive, resigned or complacent position their parents’ generation took with authorities.’<sup>152</sup> Another respondent noted: ‘It [the group] uses Islamic religion to disseminate to its followers the message to participate in terrorism *without fearing [for] their lives* (emphasis added) as long as they please Allah.’<sup>153</sup>

Common among religious terrorists is the glorification of martyrdom for all those who fall in the battlefield fighting, the ultimate sacrifice of one's life for the group. For instance:

'... dying for the sake of Allah, one will have a better life in heaven.'<sup>154</sup>

'When an al-Shabbad [member of ASWJ] dies for the cause of the majority, he gains a new eternity in heaven.'<sup>155</sup>

'... dying for the cause of the majority is not a sin. You gain eternal life in Allah.'<sup>156</sup>

Through a religious ideology, individuals tend to be satisfied with their condition as they are provided with a sense of direction and purpose for their future.<sup>157</sup> This emerges strongly as an objective of the group 'to install

sharia, which is its principal weapon to control all aspects of the lives of people.'<sup>158</sup>

### Categories of recruits

The research revealed that ASWJ's choice of recruits is no different from that of groups such as al-Shabaab in Somalia, AQIM, ISIS, Boko Haram in Nigeria and the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP).

The youth were perceived to be the preferred targets for recruitment by ASWJ, but its recruits also include older men, women and children. The categories of individuals recruited are shown below in Chart 19.

Chart 19 shows that poverty and unemployment may not cause terrorism but are factors that facilitate the recruitment of individuals by terrorist groups.<sup>159</sup> Interestingly, respondents revealed that ASWJ often targets those with low levels of education for the opportunity to easily influence them with their ideology

**Chart 19: Vulnerable recruits for ASWJ**

| Category of recruits  | Main victims according to respondents   |
|---|---|
| <b>Poor people and those with no economic opportunities</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people without future prospects</li> <li>• Young people needing income</li> <li>• Jobless men in economically vulnerable situations</li> <li>• Individuals in absolute poverty seeking better living conditions</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Uneducated people</b>                                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young unemployed boys without access to education</li> <li>• Individuals without academic level</li> <li>• Illiterate people</li> <li>• The less educated</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Disgruntled former state officials</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demobilised army personnel and FDS deserters</li> <li>• People frustrated about perennial poor service delivery</li> <li>• Officials expelled by the state, members of the police who are outside the corporation and the unemployed</li> <li>• Individuals who feel vengeful because of government atrocities and contempt of the local population</li> </ul>   |
| <b>People facing discrimination and marginalisation</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socially excluded people</li> <li>• Those who have suffered repression/violence by security officers</li> <li>• Unemployed youth tired of illicit charges by some members of the police</li> <li>• People having conflicts with the government looking to retaliate</li> <li>• People from minority ethnic groups discriminated against</li> <li>• Young people who have not benefitted from the state and see it as a hurdle to their progress</li> </ul> |

or entice them with the promise of money, knowing the difficulty the uneducated face in securing work.

A key finding of the research is recruitment of disgruntled state officials from the security forces. Their dissatisfaction is often due to perceived discrimination, lack of promotion or rejection by the state they once served. Some fought in the civil war and had undergone DDR and were then left to fend for themselves, while others were expelled and have since struggled to find employment. While the number of former security forces and their roles in the group remain unknown, it is concerning that those with specialised security skills are being recruited.

### **Youth: a primary target**

Overall, respondents believed that financial motivations and employment promises were the primary reasons for susceptible youngsters to join the group. As a number of respondents noted, the group promised young people big sums of money ranging from MT100 000 (US\$1 500) to MT500 000 (US\$7 700). Faced with limited livelihood options, many of the young people accepted the offers.' Another observed that the sums of money promised to youth ranged from MT2 000 (US\$31) to MT50 000 (US\$775).<sup>160</sup>

Despite the discrepancies in the amounts mentioned, promises of money are a major recruiting factor. In some cases, these amounts were offered to recruits as loans and if they could not pay on the agreed date, they were forced to join the group.

That said, ASWJ recruitment strategies are perceived to be situation/context dependent as 'some are taken forcibly, while others are enticed and funded...'.<sup>161</sup> Forced recruitment was cited by some respondents as a sign of the evolution of the group's recruitment strategy rather than context dependent. 'In the past, the group had a clear strategy [monetary and employment promises], but now it invades settlements, burns houses, appropriates goods and takes people of interest.'<sup>162</sup> This could signify that the group has changed tactics, having found that its previous strategy of employment and better conditions is not as effective as it was.

### **Radicalisation of new recruits**

Youth being the primary targets of recruitment to ASWJ, it is important to determine how these youths

are radicalised. Respondents were asked: 'What strategies/measures are used to radicalise youth and other vulnerable groups?' The term 'radicalisation' in this report refers to the process through which an individual embraces opinions, views and ideas that could lead to acts of terrorism.<sup>163</sup> It is also understood as the deliberate strategies taken by a terrorist group to indoctrinate or manipulate an individual to accept an ideology.

According to Alex P Schmid, radicalisation may include the use of (non-violent) pressure and coercion, political violence other than terrorism or violent extremism in the form of terrorism and war crimes, which is generally accompanied by an ideological socialisation away from mainstream or status quo-oriented positions towards more radical or extremist positions.<sup>164</sup> Schmid also points out that this involves a dichotomous world view and acceptance of an alternative focal point of political mobilisation outside the dominant political order, as what exists is no longer recognised as appropriate or legitimate.<sup>165</sup>

### **Promises of money are a major recruiting factor as many young people have few livelihood choices**

This definition was used to examine the respondents' perspective on how recruits accept and internalise terrorist ideologies and perpetrate violent acts stemming from them. Not all individuals who are radicalised display violent characteristics, but this research examines the socialisation and mobilisation towards terrorism and violence through radicalisation and the strategies of ASWJ in achieving this.

Schmid's reference to the acceptance of an alternative focal point of political mobilisation outside the dominant political order is echoed in some responses. One described '... [members of the group] fighting for a just cause against a government that works against their interests in a violent way.'<sup>166</sup>

With ASWJ, this acceptance of an alternative focal point is often through the use of force, as new recruits, according to a respondent, '... are taken to the camp [where] they are taught/trained (on) terrorist practices, frightened, threatened and held captive.'<sup>167</sup> Other

practices of group/camp leaders include ‘intimidation and beheading in front of everyone of those who do not obey.’<sup>168</sup>

Several respondents recounted incidents where new recruits were given narcotics and controlled substances.<sup>169</sup> This aligns with literature examining the use of stimulants or controlled substances by terrorists, military personnel and rebel fighters who use these drugs to ‘inhibit fear and prevent tiredness.’<sup>170</sup> In Mozambique and Cabo Delgado, evidence of the types of drug is scant and anecdotal, but one respondent claimed that ASWJ members ‘use/consume heroin that lasts 72 hours and gives them strength and courage. They see everything as nothing.’<sup>171</sup>

Respondents noted that ideological and psychological socialisation were pivotal in ‘indoctrinating’ recruits into the group.<sup>172</sup> Most respondents who shared this position referred to ‘religious ideology’ being instilled in new recruits. One stated ‘[ASWJ] prevent[s] the youth from studying and makes them spend more time in the madrassas [where they] instil in the minds of the youth that the government is the enemy.’<sup>173</sup>

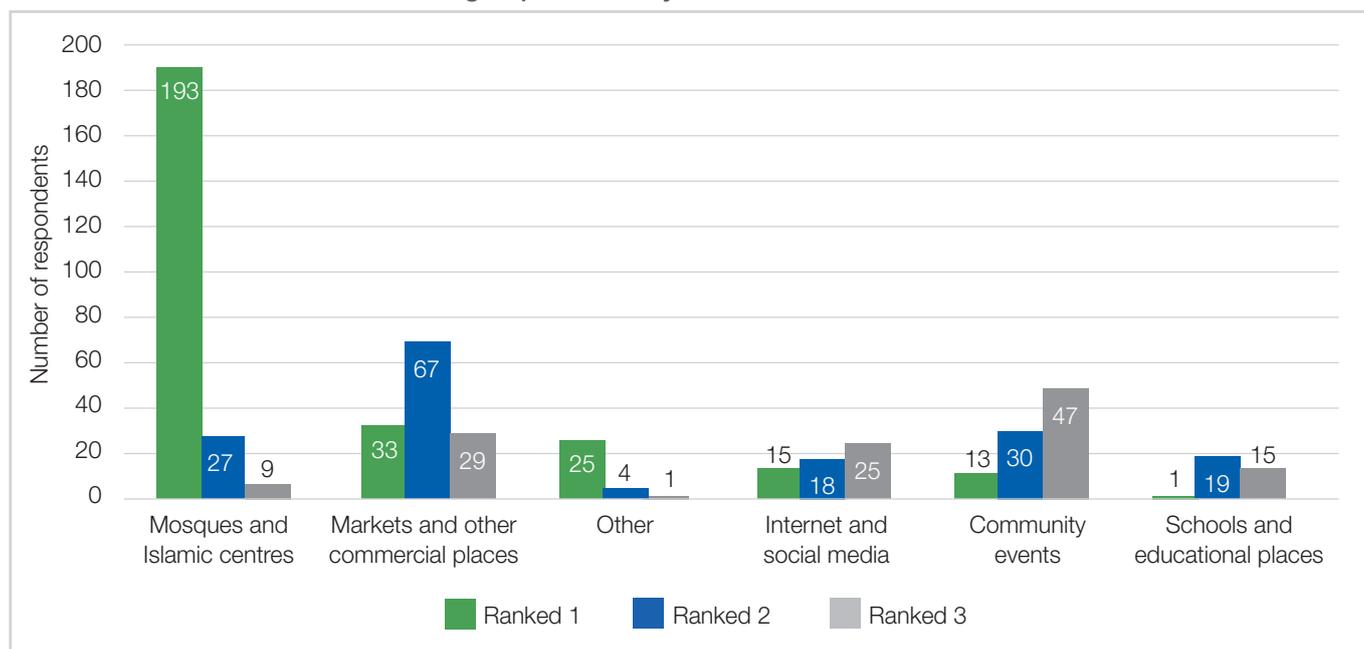
One respondent referred to ASWJ’s ideology as ‘violence-oriented radicalisation.’<sup>174</sup> The method depends on the age, as younger recruits ‘are subjected to classes in the madrassas and are given promises’, and

older people are ‘given promises while those captured are forced into training and well controlled.’<sup>175</sup> Several respondents alluded to a form of Islamic fundamentalism, but did not generalise under the broad umbrella of Islamic teachings. Two described the radical ideology as ‘misrepresented passages from the Muslim religion’, ‘misuse of the Muslim religion to manipulate young people on the pretext that they are waging jihad’. Another described it as ‘lectures in which some Koranic passages are misrepresented.’<sup>176</sup>

Having examined the dynamics behind the recruitment and radicalisation of recruits, the next question aimed to shed light on where individuals are likely to be radicalised. As Chart 20 below shows, mosques and Islamic centres were ranked number one by most respondents (68.93% or 193 out of 280 who answered the question) as the most likely radicalisation area.

Overall, 193 or 81.2% of respondents believed that mosques and Islamic centres were the primary institutions for radicalisation, a sharp contrast with findings from other studies.<sup>177</sup> Markets and other commercial places were ranked the second (45.7% of 129 respondents). Third was community events, which was selected by 33, or 31.9%, of those who answered this question. The internet and social media were fourth, with 15, or 20.5%, ranking it first.

**Chart 20: Where are members of the group most likely to be radicalised?**



The main finding here is that the group remains reliant on traditional networks such as mosques and Islamic centres. Other terrorist networks in Europe and Africa (such as Boko Haram) have moved away from these for 'security and safety, accessibility and anonymity.'<sup>178</sup> However, the trend of internet and social media, schools and educational institutions in radicalisation should cause concern.

## Humanitarian impact of the crisis

There is little doubt about the devastating impact of the war in Cabo Delgado on the lives and livelihoods of the province's citizens. As this report went to print, Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED), which monitors the situation, estimated that the death toll had surpassed 4 100, including more than 1 600 civilians.<sup>179</sup> The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimated in December 2021 that there were more than 850 000 IDPs in Cabo Delgado.<sup>180</sup> Most live with local families, putting huge pressure on the limited resources of those in safer areas such as Pemba.<sup>181</sup>

Makeshift IDP sites such as those in the sports arena in Pemba were described by field researchers as 'like descending into Dante's Inferno.'<sup>182</sup> The personal stories of IDPs interviewed speak for themselves. The conflict affected a cross-section of people in the province. Among IDPs are villagers, farmers, fishermen, traders and also government officials.

Asked whether he personally experienced the conflict, a state official in a local administration wrote: 'Yes. I have experienced this in Mocimboa da Praia since 5 October 2017. It is very sad and difficult. The population is suffering. We ask the government to make more efforts (all possible efforts) to end this situation. The population is losing property, family members. It is very difficult here in Pemba and in the accommodation centres. Very difficult the scenario that people are facing here in Cabo Delgado. Help! Cabo Delgado is also Mozambique.'<sup>183</sup>

In IDP sites, people are frustrated and eager to return to their homes and villages: 'My sister broke her arm when we were running away. I hope the war will be over because I have nothing to do here and the only thing they give us is food, rice and peas,' said one IDP.<sup>184</sup>

The perverse effects of the humanitarian crisis are visible across the province. They include lack of food and water,

a struggle for land and settlement sites, and pressure on health and educational facilities. People who have been displaced due to the war try by all means possible to retrieve their livelihoods. For example, fishermen who now live as IDPs around Macomia often try to fish in their old areas in Quissanga, Mucojo or Quiterajo. They also try to use the many islands of Quirimbas archipelago. Yet they are often caught in the crossfire between the machababos and security forces.<sup>185</sup>

Another perverse affect is the increase in the number of sex workers due to the crisis. 'They are clearly visible on some roads such as those at the crossings between the tarred road to Mecufi and roads that lead to beaches such as Muerebue. Young women can be seen here well dressed and waiting for business.'<sup>186</sup>

## IDPs are often considered suspects on arrival in host communities, exposing them to inhumane treatment

Although the war has disrupted agriculture, the provincial director of agriculture told field researchers that commercialisation levels of sesame, cashew nuts and other products have increased.<sup>187</sup> As commercialisation and trade are affected by the war, people have been forced to find strategies to produce in safer places.

The majority of IDPs are, however, obliged to accept aid to survive. Organisations distributing aid include Caritas, United Nations (UN) World Food Programme, UN Food and Agricultural Organisation, the International Committee of the Red Cross, Medecins sans Frontieres, and various faith-based organisations, both Muslim and Christian.

Extremely concerning is that IDPs are often considered suspects and possible infiltrators when they arrive after fleeing their villages. Non-governmental organisation (NGOs) workers and health officials say that the treatment of IDPs on arrival often violates their human rights.

One respondent stated: 'On 27 June 2020, the attack started in Mocimboa da Praia. I lived with my wife, sister, grandparents and others. ASWJ came in firing. I fled to Nurela. The family was dispersed. Two days later a

boat appeared going to Nuvula. Because I was starving, I asked for a lift to Nkomangano. The boat stopped halfway and was intercepted by the military. The boat and crew were searched. The military took the money I had in my pocket. Some people were beaten up. I was taken in the military ship to Pemba.<sup>188</sup>

Many people told researchers of arriving at the Metuge local administration having travelled by foot on dirt roads and very old postal roads. 'People who come by sea from their places of origin use dhows and use the various islands as staging posts,' one said. 'Then they travel to Pemba, arriving at the beach of white sand in Paquitequete. They are processed by security personnel. Many aid workers and even persons from the provincial administration consider this a very bad situation due to the way security personnel treat the IDPs.'<sup>189</sup>

## IDPs and host communities clash over community resources like farming land and fishing points

According to some interviewees, IDPs should be received by qualified aid organisations. They believe that once processed and checked for health problems and trauma, IDPs should receive identity cards, counselled and taken to a place to settle and be cared for by trained personnel. Initially, various faith-based organisations and individuals from Pemba helped IDPs on arrival, but they had to stop doing this following instructions from the government, which believes IDPs should be strictly controlled.<sup>190</sup>

According to these interviewees, when there is no interference from provincial or central government, the collaboration between NGOs and health and other government bodies works well. However, there is often 'an excess of nationalism.' The local government, even Catholic clergy – which also receives international community donations – accuse the aid agencies of 'costing too much money, employing foreigners and displaying their wealth despite a dire humanitarian situation.' Some say they have 'big cars and pay high rents,' which creates tension with local organisations.<sup>191</sup>

In addition, camps such as those in Metuge are seen as 'showrooms' or *vitruines* where ambassadors and other visitors are taken. Camps such as the private

Chabane camp and the transit camps in the sports centre in Pemba are in a deplorable state and not frequently visited.

There are also accusations of corruption and tensions between IDPs and locals, who believe IDPs cared for by aid agencies receive preferential treatment. One Chiure inhabitant, for example, said 'it is better to be an IDP because in some houses they have three bags of sugar, seven bags of rice and we locals have nothing.' Although the interviewee spoke sitting around his sesame seed crop, which was drying in racks, and has a state pension, he criticised the preferential treatment given to other segments of the population.<sup>192</sup>

A state functionary said he refused to work on food distribution systems. He had been told by politicians, senior city administrators and heads of neighbourhood to put the names of important local people on the list as receivers of aid.

Clearly, these issues could be solved as IDPs arrive, given well-functioning emergency care and support centre working 24/7 with trained personnel, equipment and means. Creating a team with qualified members of both government and the donor community would help to reduce confrontation and conflict.

## Nexus between terrorism and organised crime

The term 'nexus' is used in this section to describe a range of relationships or linkages between organised crime and terrorism. Such linkages could be by congruence, convergence, association, confluence or be intertwined. The nexus is most often viewed from the narrow context of terrorism financing, as the champions of the debate have been mostly counter-terrorism experts.

The nexus is much more complex and explains the dynamic relationship between the two to understand the makers and breakers of the relationship. To evaluate the nature and dynamics of the nexus between the insurgency in Cabo Delgado and organised crime, this section uses Sam Mullins and James K Wither's theoretical framework, which describes four types of nexus:<sup>193</sup>

- Interaction: terrorists and criminals either work together somehow, or else compete or come into conflict with one another

- Appropriation: one incorporates the methods of the other (i.e. where terrorists rely on their own 'in-house' criminal capabilities, or where criminals use the tactics of terrorism)
- Assimilation: 'hybrid' organisations emerge, which regularly engage in both terrorism and crime to the extent that it is difficult to say which is predominant
- Transformation: a change in identity occurs, so that one becomes the other

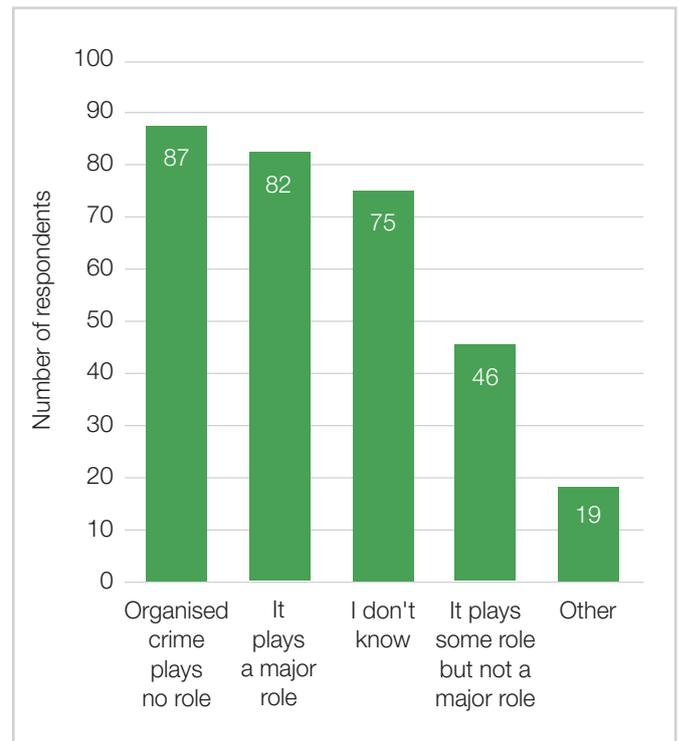
It is important to note that the nexus, whatever form it takes, is not static, but evolves over time into a continuum.<sup>194</sup> Since 2017, there have been imagined, alleged, claimed and reported connections between terrorism and the illicit harvesting, manufacture, exploitation, trafficking and smuggling of various illicit commodities in Cabo Delgado. The literature review also suggests that the nexus is shaped by the presence of the state and actions of security forces, natural resources, actors and environmental factors.<sup>195</sup>

### Organised crime had existed in Cabo Delgado for several decades before violent extremism started

Unlike Boko Haram in north-eastern Nigeria, and more like the Sahel region, organised crime in Cabo Delgado had existed for several decades before terrorism. The latter did not replace organised crime, but rather lived alongside it. The field research confirmed that because organised crime preceded terrorism, there is an inherent nexus or what is called the 'original link'.<sup>196</sup> Insurgents were recruited from among disgruntled ruby miners. As one respondent put it, the insurgency was sparked by an incident on 26 July 2017 in Namanhumbir, Montepuez, where artisanal ruby miners were alleged to have been tortured and imprisoned by the police.<sup>197</sup>

This 'original link' is supported by Hanlon, who traces the formation of ASWJ or Mashabab to 'itinerant street traders' and argues that Mozambique's smuggling barons nurtured jihadists.<sup>198</sup> In the same vein, Saide Habibe et al found in their study entitled 'Islamic radicalisation in northern Mozambique: The case of

**Chart 21: What role does organised crime play in the insurgency?**



Mocimboa da Praia', that the money used for financing ASWJ's activities comes from the illicit local economy and donations.<sup>199</sup> The former include illegal timber,<sup>200</sup> charcoal, rubies and ivories.<sup>201</sup> Joan Swart also asserts that: 'ASWJ survives by looting, illegal ivory trading, heroin trafficking and selling contraband.'<sup>202</sup>

Respondents were asked, What role does organised crime play in the insurgency in Cabo Delgado? The responses do not show an outright confirmation of whether organised crime plays a role. As Chart 21 illustrates, 87 respondents (37.18%) stated that organised crime plays no role. Slightly fewer (82 or 35.04%) believe organised crime plays a major role. Several (75 or 24.27%) respondents said they did not know, while 46 (14.89%), stated that it plays some role but not a major one. Nineteen, or 6.15%, provided various other answers. In all, nearly half of respondents (49.93%) believe organised crime plays a role, but it may not be a major role.

A Global Initiative against Transnational Organised Crime study found no evidence that ASWJ controls the illicit economy, but noted that its members may be implicated in illicit schemes.<sup>203</sup> This is corroborated by the findings in Charts 21 and 23.

The available open source evidence supporting claims that the insurgents are being financed by drug trafficking, fauna crimes, illegal artisanal mining and other organised crime acts, is weak. This is a question of evidence rather than a lack of context, because it is difficult to imagine how a criminal group sets itself up in the heart of an organised crime environment and yet is not part of the ecological system. But there is no solid or consistent

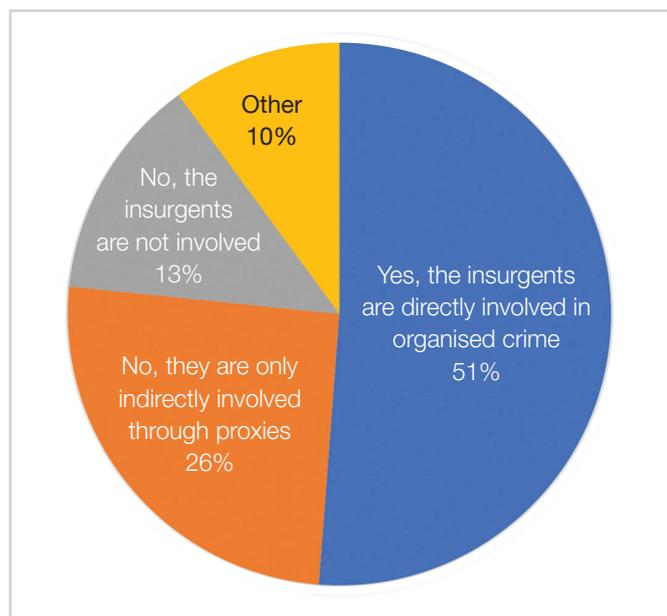
evidence linking the group or its members to organised crime. The most substantial argument to date is a recent SAMIM report stating that a raid of a house occupied by the terrorists uncovered 250 kg of drugs. This section analyses the perception of the respondents to the nexus.

Chart 21 illustrates how participants were divided on the role of organised crime in the insurgency. While 37% indicated no link, 35% believed it plays a major role and 20% said 'some role'. If 'major role' is taken out, 55% of the 309 respondents agreed that organised crime plays a role. A similar quantitative question asked respondents: 'Are the insurgents involved in organised crime?'

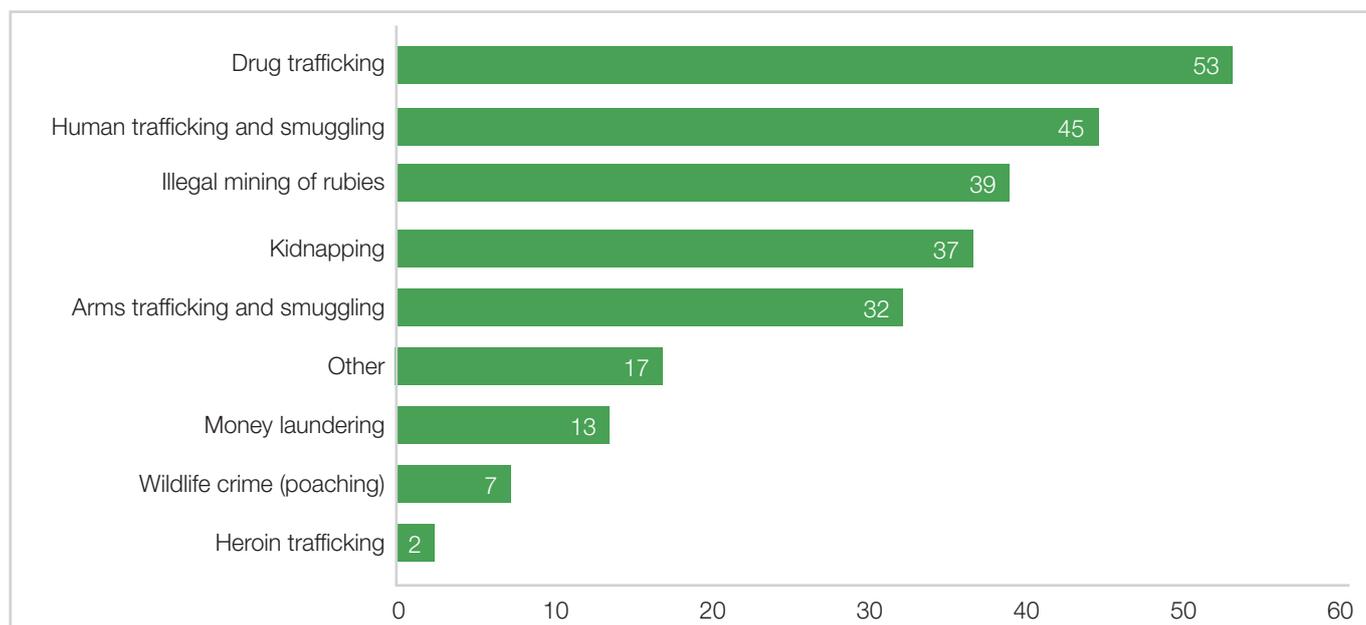
Respondents were firmer and more decisive in their perception of insurgents' participation in organised crime, with 51% indicating direct involvement. A quarter believed the involvement was indirect, while only 13% drew no connection and a significant 10% chose 'other' without specifying what. These responses seem to contradict answers to the question about the role of organised crime in the insurgency.

The discrepancy may have come from the fact that respondents could not categorically state that organised crime is financing or driving the insurgency as most government reports have stated. Respondents were asked to rank insurgents' involvement in various organised crime activities. To fully appraise the nexus,

**Chart 22: 'Are insurgents involved in organised crime?'**



**Chart 23: Organised crime activities in which insurgents are most involved**



this section examines the link with some major organised crime markets (Chart 23).

## Drugs nexus

Drug trafficking in Mozambique dates back nearly 150 years when the Portuguese cultivated two large opium poppies in the Zambezi River in central Mozambique, close to the banks of the Cuacua tributary.<sup>204</sup> Opium cultivation and trafficking are described by University of Johannesburg scholar Thembeisa Waetjen as 'largely a corollary of imperial networks, formed through the successes and failures of their expansionist struggles and policies.'<sup>205</sup>

Although Mozambique is not a huge consumer of drugs, it is a hub for the trafficking of drugs such as heroin, cocaine and crystal methamphetamine, most from Asia (especially Afghanistan and Pakistan). They transit through Cabo Delgado en route to South Africa, north Africa and Europe.<sup>206</sup> It is believed that some of the drugs end up in the United States.<sup>207</sup> Cannabis and synthetic drugs also form part of the illicit trade mostly for local consumption and markets in South Africa.

## Although Mozambique is not a huge consumer, it is a hub for the trafficking of drugs

Although most of the drugs transit through the ports of Pemba and Mocimboa da Praia, where the insurgency is taking place, evidence linking the insurgents and drugs has historically been weak. This began to shift in 2021 when security forces recovered 250 kg of heroin from a building formerly occupied by ASWJ militants.<sup>208</sup> The size and packaging of the drugs suggested that they were meant for commercial purpose and not personal consumption.

This is by far the strongest evidence linking terrorists and drug trafficking in Cabo Delgado. However, the owners of the drugs were never arrested, thus any conclusion drawn at this point remains speculative. Other drugs seized in the region have included 24 kg of cocaine seized at sea off the coast of Pemba, 179 kg of ephedrine and 22 kg of cannabis discovered in Pemba's Cariaco neighbourhoods. Heroin weighing 400 kg was

seized in Quelimane, Zambezia Province.<sup>209</sup> These were not however, in the immediate conflict areas.

Most respondents didn't know about links between ASWJ and drug trafficking. Of those who answered, 53 (Chart 23) stated that drug trafficking was the most common organised crime activity in which terrorists are involved. In the qualitative section, one respondent stated that 'al-Shabaab has an 80% Muslim insurgent group that focuses on drug trafficking, human organs and even human trafficking.'<sup>210</sup> This could not be verified on the ground or even in police records that were available to researchers.

Other respondents even believed that ASWJ was formed to take advantage of and gain free access to drugs.<sup>211</sup> None of the respondents suggesting a nexus between terrorism and organised crime gave a concrete example. According to one, the group is constituted of 'youth, who use/consume heroin for 72 hours, which gives them strength and courage. They also consume human blood and mix it into their food to alter their reality.'<sup>212</sup> Several of the respondents noted that ASWJ members are known to also use cocaine and mandrax.

Using the Mullins and Wither framework mentioned above, the relationship between ASWJ and drug trafficking based on available evidence, and beyond the 250kg of heroin seized in October 2021, remains weak. But the 250 kg would suggest some interaction or that the relationship between terrorists and drug traffickers is transactional, with both generating revenue from it.

But it could also mean a form of appropriation or assimilation – some may refer to it as convergence – where the terrorists play roles of both traffickers and terrorists. This could be the strongest argument of drugs financing terrorism and terrorism enabling drug trafficking. The two also seem to co-exist and share space, although new reports indicate that drug barons have changed their roots, increasingly using Nampula<sup>213</sup> and Pemba, where there is no insurgency.

## Heroin use and trade

According to extant literature, heroin is perhaps the largest-growing criminal economy along the Mozambican channels, estimated by Hanlon in 2018 to be worth between US\$600 and US\$800 million.<sup>214</sup> When respondents were asked to identify the sources of

funding, despite heroin being the fastest growing illicit economy, they did not see much link with the insurgents. Only two respondents indicated that terrorists were most involved in heroin trafficking. This may reflect the general lack of evidence.

Most respondents indicated that the terrorists consume heroin to become high, which enables them do whatever they wish. Such a view could undermine the argument that the 250 kg of heroin was for commercial rather than personal use.

It also suggests a stronger link between terrorists and drugs as the former rely on the latter for the commission of terrorist acts. This could create inter-dependency. There is no evidence yet about ASWJ's involvement in the trade (supply) of heroin, as Boko Haram and AQIM have been implicated. Heroin could be the most likely drug for ASWJ to traffic given its steady supply through the Mozambican channels and its high value.

### **Kidnapping for ransom**

Kidnapping is perhaps the strongest link between the insurgents and organised crime. Kidnapping and forced abduction have been major recruitment tactics for ASWJ. Terrorist groups kidnap for various reasons. Beside recruitment into active combat, victims of kidnapping, especially girls, become jihadi brides, sex slaves or domestic workers, or are trafficked. Only a small proportion of kidnappings have been for ransom. A total of 37 respondents indicated that kidnapping represented a major organised crime activity involving terrorists (Chart 23). This is likely since most kidnapping incidents, including those for ransom, are not reported.

Kidnapping for ransom is one of the main sources of funding for terrorist groups and ASWJ is no exception. Although kidnapping was the fourth-ranked issue as Chart 23 shows, it was one of the most mentioned organised crime activities involving terrorists. According to respondents who indicated that they had survived kidnapping by the group, ASWJ kidnaps mainly young people.<sup>215</sup> In one incident, 51 children, many of them girls, were abducted by insurgents.<sup>216</sup> Using the Mullins and Wither framework, the relationship or nexus between ASWJ and kidnapping is that of appropriation, as ASWJ has incorporated kidnapping for ransom into its existential strategies.

### **Human trafficking**

As Chart 23 shows, 45 respondents cited human trafficking as the second-most common organised crime activity involving terrorists. Respondents noted that ASWJ militants are involved in trafficking and smuggling of persons and human organs.<sup>217</sup> The Mozambican channels also lie on a notorious human trafficking route linking the Swahili coast and the Horn of Africa.

Terrorist groups in the Sahel are known for kidnapping children, including girls who are often sold to traffickers who, in turn, prostitute them or sell them into slavery. Although no specific incidents were cited by respondents, human and organ trafficking was mentioned repeatedly as part of ASWJ's strategy and a major source of funding. There was also no evidence of cooperation between terrorists and human trafficking syndicates, suggesting a nexus of appropriation or convergence. It may also indicate ASWJ's opportunistic tendencies.

### **Wildlife crime**

Although some reports have claimed a major role for wildlife crime, especially illegal timber logging and poaching, in funding ASWJ,<sup>218</sup> only seven respondents saw it as an important organised crime. This is perhaps due to a lack of corroborated incidents. The lack of evidence makes the relationship or nexus between wildlife crime and ASWJ opaque.

### **Arms trafficking**

Arms trafficking was the fifth most common organised crime activity for ASWJ (Chart 23). The group is believed to have amassed arms including AK-47s, AKMs, PKs, Mortar 60s/62s, RPJs, bazookas, grenades and sniper rifles, some from police and military, and others from sources outside Mozambique.<sup>219</sup> Some respondents also noted that RENAMO and FRELIMO stockpiles of remnant weapons from the civil war were also an important source for the insurgents. This seems consistent with the literature.<sup>220</sup>

Arms are central to terrorism. They are the tools of intimidation, terror and for most other terrorist activities. There is, therefore, a tight and intertwined nexus between ASWJ and arms trafficking and smuggling. It is not clear if ASWJ is also involved in the sale of arms.

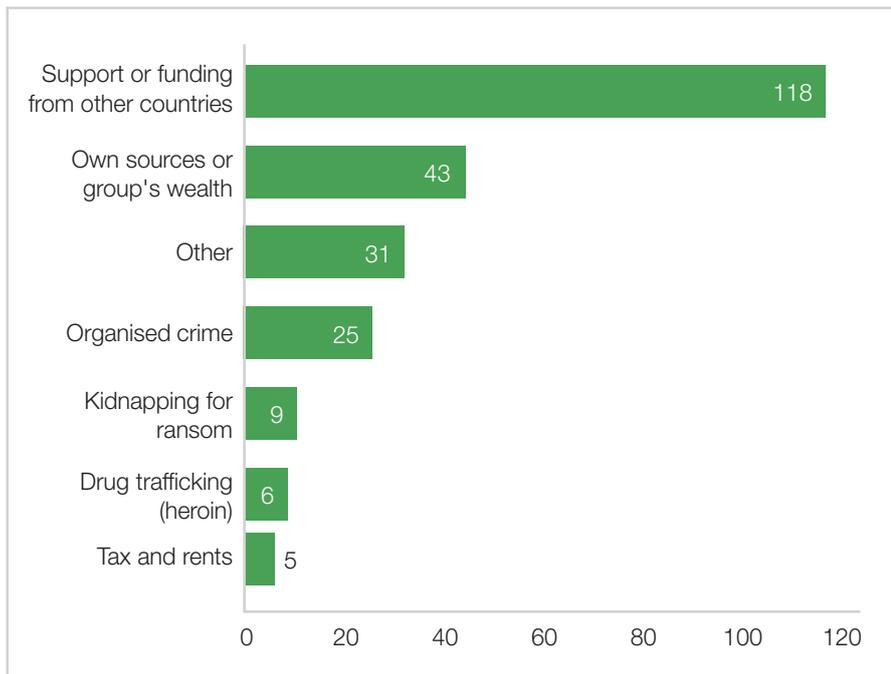
## Illegal mining and money-laundering

As discussed above, illegal mining of rubies provided the ‘original link’ as many ASWJ members were recruited from among illegal artisanal miners. Many reports have claimed that illegal mining and trade in rubies remain core activities of the group. A study conducted by Saide Habibe, Salvador Forquilha and João Pereira in 2019 found that ASWJ was funded principally by illegal timber logging and illicit ruby mining.<sup>221</sup>

According to the authors: ‘A very well-established network with strong financial clout in Tanzania hired local people to fell timber and process it into planks. After processing, boats were sent to the Quiterajo area of Macomia and/or other islands to carry it to Tanzania or sell to Chinese buyers, one interviewee explained.’<sup>222</sup> The nexus with illegal mining is, therefore, by appropriation as the group has appropriated what is largely an organised crime strategy.

ASWJ is also known to be involved in money-laundering through strategies including using locals to launder money.<sup>223</sup> For example, the group was known to provide fake loans (money obtained from criminal activities) to youth who were asked to repay them.

Chart 24: What are the sources of funding for ASWJ?



An overwhelming perception exists that the terrorists or insurgents are funded by foreign countries (Chart 24). This was followed by terrorists’ own sources (43), likely to be through links with the Islamic State. The outliers and contradictions are organised crime, drug trafficking and kidnapping.

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US\$1 million

AMOUNT ROBBED FROM  
BANKS AND BUSINESSES  
IN THE MARCH 2021  
PALMA ATTACK

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This is perhaps due to a lack of hard evidence linking the insurgency to transnational organised crime despite analysts' claim that terrorists are capitalising on drug trafficking, illegal mining and wildlife crimes. During the March 2021 attack in Palma, the terrorists also robbed banks and other businesses in the area, snatching at least US\$1 million.

This perception of funding sources seems to reflect the literature. Habibe et al, for example, conclude that funding for ASWJ's activities came essentially from two sources, namely the illicit local economy and donations. The donations are from people with connections to the group's leaders in Mocimboa da Praia. Money transfers were done electronically through Mpesa, Mkesh, Mmola. Of the two sources, illicit economy moved large sums of money to finance the group.<sup>224</sup>

More research is needed to determine the full scale of ASWJ's sources of funding. This cannot be confined to Mozambique alone but should include the whole region and beyond. Before the 250 kg heroin incident mentioned above, the best evidence of ASWJ's link with organised crime came from South Africa. In 2020, South African authorities raided an ISIS' cell in Kliprivier, outside Johannesburg, where they arrested nine people associated with extortions, kidnapping for ransom and drug trafficking.<sup>225</sup> In their possession were ISIS' manuals, drugs and guns.

Several reports have emerged about South Africans financing terror groups in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Mozambique. In March 2022, the United States' Treasury Department blacklisted Farhad Hooper, 76 (South African), Abdella Hussein Abadigga, 48 (Ethiopian), Peter Charles Mbagwa, 76 (Tanzanian) and Sirraaj Miller, 77 (South African) for what it called, 'South Africa-based ISIS organisers and financial facilitators.'<sup>226</sup>

The four were accused of running terrorist cells in South Africa and facilitating the mobilisation and transfer of funds to ISIS in DRC and Mozambique.<sup>227</sup> The US government did not provide any details with regard to specific incidents and the modus operandi used. It did, however mention extortions, kidnapping for ransom, and the use of the informal hawala system by the four men to transfer money.<sup>228</sup>

An investigative report published in May 2022, by South African *Times Live*, corroborated the US government's

claim. According to *Times Live*, ISIS sympathisers and terrorist cells in South Africa use 'crime, legitimate businesses, smuggling and kidnapping to raise funds.'<sup>229</sup> These cells – mostly in Johannesburg, Cape Town and KwaZulu-Natal – are believed to have exploited spaza shops, third-party payment providers and remittance payment systems including hawala and other legitimate and illegitimate financial systems. The cells accrued more than ZAR 6 billion (US\$400 million), which benefited several ISIS groups abroad including in Mozambique.<sup>230</sup> Since the *Times Live* report did not provide specific incidents, the findings could not be independently verified.

### Evidence about the nexus between the insurgency and organised crime in Cabo Delgado is inconclusive

The evidence about the nexus between the insurgency and organised crime in Cabo Delgado is inconclusive. The number of arrests or seizures, particularly in the area affected by the insurgency, is not significant to draw a definitive conclusion. Data collected so far is insufficient due to limited access to ASWJ and the region, which has prevented ethnographic studies and access to all actors. If accurate, the *Times Live* investigation suggests that a huge chunk of ASWJ's funding is coming from outside Mozambique. It would also confirm the link between organised crime and ASWJ.

The reported increase in the volume of trafficking and smuggling in the Cabo Delgado and adjoining regions since the conflict began suggests that the traffickers and smugglers are benefiting from the insurgency.<sup>231</sup> The use of the Mullins and Wither theoretical framework has helped to bring further clarity to the contextual and dynamic character of the nexus.

It can be concluded that the nexus between the insurgency and organised crime varies from transactional or interactional to convergence or appropriation. Combating the nexus may involve depriving the group of access to the commodities and stemming corruption, especially that of state-embedded actors, and stemming cross-border flows and external sources of funding, particularly from South Africa to ASWJ.

## Responses and challenges

Mozambique's response to terrorism in Cabo Delgado began in earnest following the first attacks. In the initial stages of the conflict, the government labelled the insurgents 'criminals' or *malfeitores*, evildoers who could be handled swiftly by police.<sup>232</sup> After the 5 October 2017 attacks, the government arrested 75 suspected participants and ordered the closure of three Pemba mosques, in Cariaco, Alto Gigone and Chiuba, which were believed to have terrorist connections.<sup>233</sup> Government action included military, legislative, executive and developmental measures.

### Military response

Military measures have been the most conspicuous, expensive and experimental response to terrorism in Cabo Delgado. The government initially put in place a special rapid reaction unit of national police, the Unidade Intervenção Rápida to stem the insurgency. When it became clear that the threat was beyond the police, the government sought foreign support. The first foreign boots on the ground came from a Russian private military company (PMC) called the Wagner Group contracted in September 2019 for counterinsurgency operations.<sup>234</sup> Wagner's failure to master the threat and the terrain in Mozambique led to its premature exit in November 2019.

The government's strategy continued to rely on the services of private military companies to buttress the elite police. The Wagner Group was replaced by the South African Dyck Advisory Group (DAG). When DAG could also not accomplish the task, it was replaced by a consortium of Paramount Group (based in South Africa) and Burnham Global (based in Dubai). As the conflict further escalated, the military replaced the police, applying heavy-handed measures that attracted concern and condemnation from international human rights organisations.<sup>235</sup>

In addition, some communities in Cabo Delgado have formed vigilante groups of militias that are fighting the insurgency to complement and sometimes in partnership with state defence forces. The contribution of these groups has been controversial and many of them have been accused of gross human rights abuses.<sup>236</sup>

The deployment of foreign troops marked another phase in the military response to the insurgency. The field interviews for this study were conducted before the deployment of Rwandan and SAMIM forces. Respondents were asked 'How would you evaluate the current military [Mozambican] responses?' Most respondents gave the Mozambican Defence Forces the thumbs up as Chart 25 shows.

Some 30.63% of respondents saw the military operations as 'somewhat effective'. Combined with the 17.71% who felt the military had improved the situation and the 13.28% who believed the military very effective in curtailing attacks, this accounts for nearly two-thirds of the group. Almost 22% of

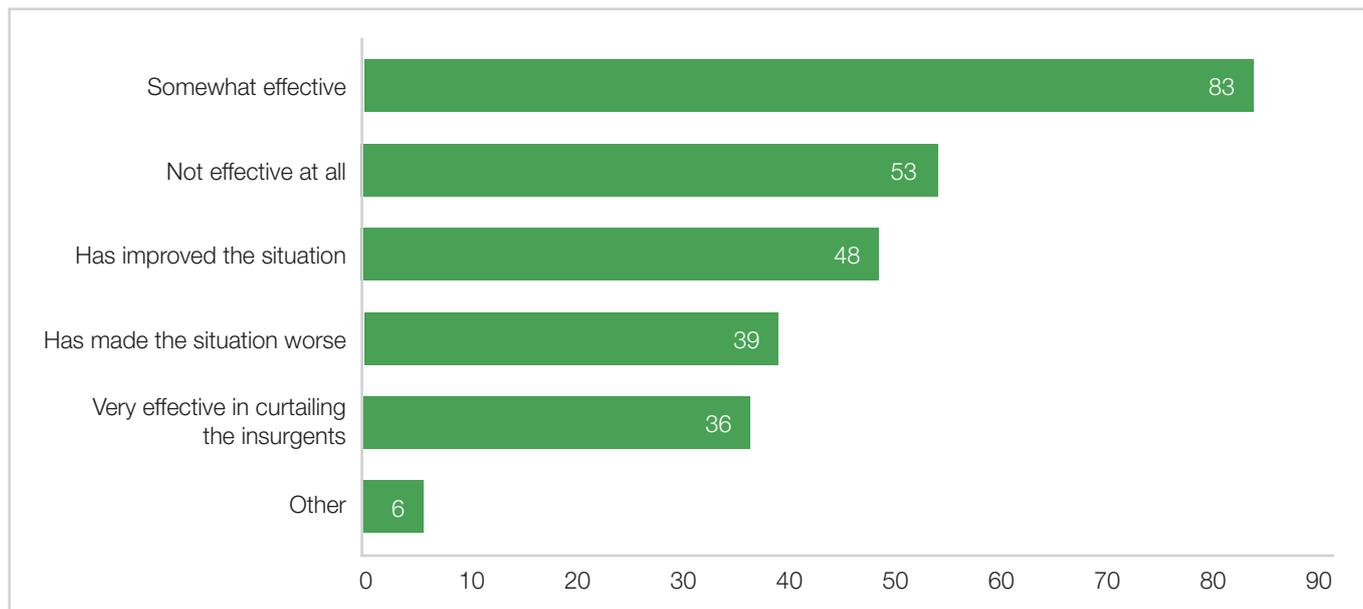
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# 2019

WAGNER GROUP LEAVES  
CABO DELGADO

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Chart 25: How effective is the military response?



respondents felt that the military response was not effective. Added to the 14.39% who felt it had worsened the situation, it meant a negative perception from 36.16% of participants.

The approval of a majority of respondents contradicts popular reports by human rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. It also differs from reports on Boko Haram (Nigeria) and al-Shabaab (Somalia), which revealed that heavy-handed military operations contributed to greater radicalisation and intensity in terrorist activities.<sup>237</sup>

### The deployment of foreign troops marked another phase in the response to the insurgency

The persistence of attacks epitomised by the attack on Palma in March 2021 signalled the failure of private military companies, especially when DAG was accused of human rights violations. This put huge pressure on Nyusi and the Mozambican government to pursue multilateral cooperation and support to deal with terrorism in Cabo Delgado. This pressure came from multinationals such as Total and Exxon Mobil, exploiting LNG resources, and from neighbouring states, SADC and civil society in Mozambique and the region.

The aid community, including UN agencies active in Mozambique, also called for more assistance with the humanitarian crisis.

Nyusi's bilateral approach helped secured the support of Portugal, France, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and the European Union. All promised only training of Mozambican forces and other forms of soft power, but not the military hardware that Mozambique desperately needed. Rwanda was the only country to intervene militarily.

After lengthy negotiations and repeated summits, Mozambique succumbed to SADC pressure and accepted its offer to deploy a regional force. In July and August 2021, the government of Rwanda and SADC deployed 1 000 and 1 500 troops (half the number pledged), respectively, to Cabo Delgado.<sup>238</sup> Very little is known about the Rwandan contingents. The conditions for deployment, the stakes for Rwanda, the mandate, duration and source of funding are not known.

The Southern African Mission to Mozambique (SAMIM) was adopted by the SADC summit held in Maputo on 23 June 2021. The 3 000-strong SAMIM force comprises of troops from eight personnel-contributing SADC countries, namely Angola, Botswana, DRC, Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia.<sup>239</sup> The force is mandated to, among other tasks, support Mozambique to combat

terrorism, restore law and order in Cabo Delgado, provide logistics and training to Mozambican defence forces and provide humanitarian relief.<sup>240</sup>

The forces have recorded significant gains in the first year of operations and the situation in Cabo Delgado was seen to be stabilised and improving.<sup>241</sup> Gains included retaking control of all formerly terrorist-controlled towns, including Mocimboa da Praia, Quissanga, Macomia and Nangade, the neutralisation of several key terrorist commanders, and the dismantling and destruction of their bases. As already mentioned, ASWJ is now significantly smaller and weaker, though still deadly. Observers have warned that it is not time to celebrate as the situation remains extremely capricious.

### Legislative responses

According to the US State Department Country Report on Terrorism, Mozambique adopted counter-terrorism legislation in 2018.<sup>242</sup> The report notes that the law provides for punishment of anyone committing, planning, preparing or participating in terrorism and for individuals who travel or attempt to travel to join a terrorist organisation.<sup>243</sup> To further

strengthen its penal procedures in line with the new law, the Parliament of Mozambique amended the country's penal procedure code.

This increased the time a suspect may be held in custody without charge from four to six months. It also extended the period of detention without trial from four to 10 months for crimes such as 'terrorism, and violent or highly organised crime.'<sup>244</sup> Missing in Mozambique's counter-terrorism architecture are a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy in line with the 2006 UN Global Counter-terrorism Strategy, and an action plan or strategy for preventing and countering violent extremism. These strategic documents are necessary to complement the implementation of counter-terrorism legislation.

### Prosecution

The investigation and prosecution of terrorist suspects are important in deterring and preventing participation in terrorism. Many arrests have been made but very few convictions. Of the 431 accused between 2017 and 2021, 161 (37.35%) were convicted. Acquittals are attributed to compromised procedures and lack of evidence. During the field research, respondents complained that judges, prosecutors and state counsels were not appropriately trained and that many did not understand terrorism.

### Conclusion and recommendations

This report has provided evidence-based analyses on the agency of terrorism in Cabo Delgado to support the design of informed strategies to effectively address the situation. The study has aired the voice of Cabo Delgado's people. It has done so through the perceptions of IDPs and other conflict victims, community leaders, youth and women leaders, security forces, students, judicial officers, central government and local government officials and experts.

This report analysed field research on the drivers of terrorism and violent extremism and its convergence with transnational organised crime in Cabo Delgado through the eyes of 309 respondents and 28 key informants. One of the report's findings is that there is widespread discontentment in Cabo Delgado, most of which is directed against the state for poor service

**Chart 26: Rate of prosecutions of terrorist suspects, 2017 – 2021**

| Number of accused  | Number convicted | Sentences              |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| <b>2017</b>        |                  |                        |
| 189                | 89               | 8 – 40 years in prison |
| <b>2018</b>        |                  |                        |
| 98                 | 76               | 18 months – 20 years   |
| <b>2019</b>        |                  |                        |
| 70                 | 37               | 0 – 24 years           |
| <b>2020</b>        |                  |                        |
| 46                 | 36               | 0 – 24 Years           |
| <b>(July) 2021</b> |                  |                        |
| 30                 | 0                | 0                      |
| <b>Total</b>       |                  |                        |
| 431                | 161<br>(37.35%)  | 0 – 40 Years           |

delivery, corruption, marginalisation, lack of development and widespread youth unemployment. Even before the escalation of terrorism in 2017, anger was growing in Cabo Delgado. At the time, organised crime was gaining currency at an alarming rate, to the point that it had become the alternative economy in the region.

Artisanal ruby mining, farming and fishing provided the main sources of livelihoods. However, the forced evacuation of people, land expropriation and poor infrastructure left many people in a region already devastated by floods and droughts, without any sources of income.

### Respondents complained that judges, prosecutors and state counsels weren't appropriately trained

Beside the pressing issues of livelihoods, this study found that the people were most aggrieved by the state's failure to listen to their grievances. The government failed to heed early warning signals about the insurgency. These and other complaints have fuelled conspiracy theories about terrorism in Cabo Delgado. The most dangerous of these sees the problem as a ploy by the state to usurp resources. The general perception was that dialogue and a political solution should be sought. Respondents also fully supported foreign deployment to buttress government's efforts to stem the insurgency.

The insurgency and prevalence of organised crime have added more stresses to the lives of the people of Cabo Delgado and further aggravated poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, underdevelopment and lack of livelihoods. Despite improvement in the fight against ASWJ, current military efforts are not addressing the root causes and the political and socioeconomic factors that undergird the insurgency.

Although the study found weak evidence to support the nexus between the insurgency and organised crime, it observes that the latter is benefiting from the violence. This report has offered recommendations for effectively addressing the situation. It calls for a whole-of-society approach in which all Mozambicans can play a part.

## Recommendations

### Government of Mozambique:

- Empower communities to take ownership of their security and protection against violent extremism and to be a key partner of the state for intelligence and early warning. It should ensure that state measures, including military responses, are designed to win hearts and minds, rather than antagonise communities.
- Listen to and show compassion for the grievances of people, particularly regional inequities, unemployment, ethnic discrimination. This it can do by holding regular townhall meetings with community leaders, youth, women and faith-based elite etc and by involving the *regulos* in all decision-making processes affecting their communities.
- Don't do it alone – pursue a whole-of-society approach to preventing and countering violent extremism. Identify specific roles and partner with civil society organisations, community actors, youth and women organisations, the private sector, and academic and research institutions.
- Strengthen and effectively manage the amnesty programme by under-taking confidence-building measures to instil trust and show transparency. This will reassure those who wish to benefit from it that the government has learnt valuable lessons from the failed previous amnesty programme in 2018.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive and integrated national strategy that addresses the political, humanitarian, socio-economic and security aspects of preventing and countering violent extremism and radicalisation. This should draw inspiration from UN, African Union and SADC frameworks. The Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Strategy should provide for an inclusive disarmament, demobilisation, deradicalisation and reinsertion programme for combatants.
- Establish a centralised national inter-agency counter-terrorism unit to coordinate the national response, and promote information sharing, specialised training and capacity-building.
- Promote peace education and a national mass media campaign both online and physically to

sensitise the population and to counter terrorist messaging. Set up a hotline and encourage people to report suspicious activities.

- Address the perennial problem of lack of livelihoods in Cabo Delgado, and protect the properties, including land and houses, of those displaced to facilitate their return and prevent further discontent.
- Prioritise pro-poor and pro-youth development projects that seek to generate employment and address regional inequalities.
- Promote dialogue, strengthen intercommunity, interfaith and interpersonal reconciliation programmes, and open up opportunities to pursue dialogue with groups' leaders either directly or indirectly. Provide regular training for imams, clerics and other religious figures on preaching, homilies and other religious statements to prevent incitement and hate speech or mobilisation.
- Equip and capacitate criminal justice system institutions to investigate, prosecute and effectively bring to justice all those suspected of participating in the violence. Consider the establishment of a national special court or tribunal to investigate and prosecute terrorist offences.
- Consider setting up a national commission of inquiry to study and investigate the root causes and drivers of violent extremism in Cabo Delgado and submit recommendations for ending the violence.
- Prioritise intelligence-led operations and effective coordination among Mozambican, Rwandan, SAMIM and any other forces involved in the fight against ASWJ.
- Strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation with neighbouring countries for regular intelligence sharing on the movements and activities of terrorist and organised crime groups. This will also promote increased border security and control to stem the flow of illegal persons and the trafficking of illicit commodities.
- Institute zero-tolerance against corruption in the fight against transnational organised crime, by enhancing intelligence to detect sources, routes, enablers,

individuals and groups perpetrating such acts in Cabo Delgado and its environs.

### **Government of Tanzania and Mozambique's neighbours:**

- Assist Mozambique to tighten security at the borders and to regularly share intelligence.
- Undertake joint border surveillance and control, and ensure that there is police-to-police cooperation that facilitates the search for fugitives, the pursuit of criminals and other cross-border operations.
- Undertake preventive actions and urge border communities to be vigilant, not to host any person suspected of terrorism and to promptly report such persons.

### **SADC:**

- Strengthen SAMIM so that it can attain its full potential, by providing resources, including equipment.
- Strengthen operational coordination among all the forces on the ground involved in the fight against ASWJ. Invite Rwanda and Uganda to SADC meetings, including summits that discuss Cabo Delgado.
- Establish a taskforce to study the situation in Cabo Delgado, to understand the origin, motivations, sources of funding, leadership and how it has evolved. Use the conclusion of the study to strengthen and adapt SAMIM and to draw lessons for other member states.
- Enforce SADC instruments, including the SADC Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the SADC Transnational Organised Crime Strategy and Implementation Action Plan 2022 to 2026.
- Mobilise the countries neighbouring Mozambique to strengthen cooperation and joint actions, particularly on border security.
- Train Mozambican forces on critical aspects of SAMIM work. Appeal to the international community for additional funding to SAMIM and for other aspects of the fight against terrorism in Mozambique.
- Consider mission scenario six as an exit strategy and to address growing resource concerns for sustaining the current deployment.

### **African Union:**

- Support SADC to achieve the objectives of SAMIM and consider mission scenario six should SADC invite the AU to take over.
- The Peace and Security Council should regularly review the situation and adopt a decision on Cabo Delgado.
- Forge greater collaboration among SAMIM, Rwandan and Mozambican forces and emphasise the need for close collaboration in the fight against ASWJ among all the actors with presence in Mozambique.
- The AU Commission should support and assist SADC in sourcing funds for SAMIM, especially to provide the mission with air combat and night vision capabilities.

### **European Union, UN and international community and aid agencies:**

- Strengthen Mozambique's technical capacity to investigate and prosecute terrorist crimes.
- UN aid agencies should intensify the supply of food and other basic necessities to IDPs.
- International development partners should support Mozambique and the other countries with military presence in Mozambique.
- Similar to the successful amnesty programme for Niger Delta militants, offer an option for militants who are ready to lay down their arms to undergo their DDR programme in European countries and their final reintegration in Mozambique.

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## Notes

- 1 See 2016 Global Terrorism Index, published by the Institute for Economics and Peace (11), available at: <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/reports/>.
- 2 For more on the 2020 Global Terrorism Index, see the Institute of Economics and Peace: [www.economicsandpeace.org/reports/](http://www.economicsandpeace.org/reports/).
- 3 See 2022 GTI, 8. Accessible at: [www.visionofhumanity.org/](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/).
- 4 The advent of terrorism in Cabo Delgado coincided with the expansion of the Islamic State in Africa, which began in 2014 with establishment of five wilayats or provinces – three in Libya, one in Algeria and one in Egypt. By end of 2015, the wilayat for West Africa was established. In 2016, a wilayats for the Sahel or Greater Sahara and Somalia were added to the list, with the Islamic State vying to establish more to bring the whole of Africa under its influence. For a detailed discussion on the Islamic State's spread in Africa, see Jason Warner et al, *Outlasting the caliphate: The evolution of the Islamic State threat in Africa*, *CTC Sentinel*, Vol 13/11, November/December 2020.
- 5 See ACLED update on Mozambique: <https://acleddata.com/2018/07/21/mozambique-update/>.
- 6 See for example, interviews with respondents: 53352902 and 53283169.
- 7 Interview with respondent 53092730.
- 8 Research indicates that the reason for the outburst of violence on 5 October 2017 was 'the state detaining many al-Shabaab men in Quissanga and Macomia districts for calling on the population not to respect the secular state'. The Muslim youth demanded that sharia law should replace secular law in places such as Mocimboa da Praia and Quissanga. For more details, see T Lister, *Jihadi insurgency in Mozambique grows in sophistication and reach*, *Sentinel*, Vol 13/10, October 2020, available at: <https://ctc.usma.edu/jihadi-insurgency-in-mozambique-grows-in-sophistication-and-reach/>.
- 9 See 'Four deaths in Mandimba,' AIM Report, 5 October 2017, <https://www.mozambiquenews.agency/newsletter/aim553.html>.
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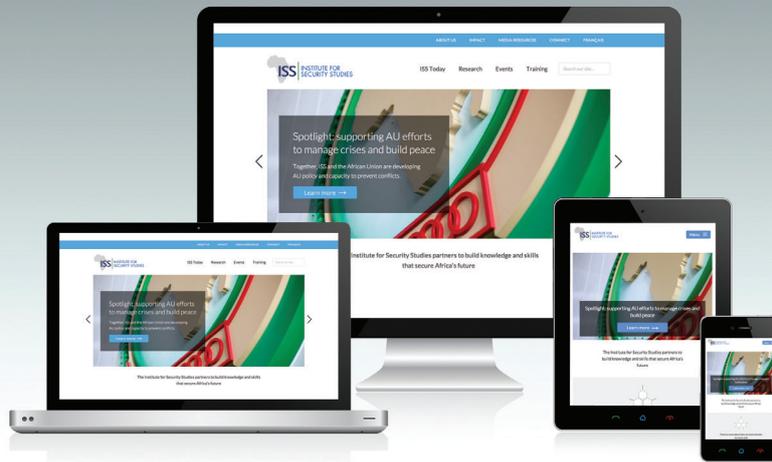
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