

# MOZAMBIQUE: VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM IN CABO DELGADO PROVINCE

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## Introduction

The paper analyzes the terrorism in the Cabo Delgado Province, in the north of Mozambique, aiming to understand the conflict, inspect the process of radicalization of young Mozambicans and verify its causes using categories and typologies. Why has the province of Cabo Delgado become the newest epicenter of violent religious extremism and terrorism in Sub-Saharan Africa? This is the question that guides the paper. The violent extremism and the terrorism pose significant challenges for the human security and the socioeconomic development of the African continent.

Reports and studies point out that the African continent, particularly the Sub-Saharan region, is becoming the epicenter of terrorism in the world, highlighted the emergence of extremists islamics groups in the Sahel States such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. In the Western Africa, Nigeria is the target from the Boko Haram terrorists stationed in Borno, in the northwest of the country, which has expanded to its neighbors Niger and Cameroon. In the Eastern region, Somalia experienced a civil war that lasted more than thirty-three years and faces the Somali group Al-Shabaab since the beginning of the 21st century, which has been spreading its tentacles through foreign states like Ethiopia, Eritrea and Kenya (González 2020).

In Southern Africa, Mozambique has been facing violent extremism since 2017, in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, although instances of radicalization and religious extremism have been reported since 2010. The

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terrorists attacks are carried out by the islamist group Al-Shabaab, composed mostly by young Mozambicans and a minority of foreigners from the central and eastern regions of Africa. The violent extremism and terrorism in the province of Cabo Delgado constitute an internationalized interstate violent conflict that involves young jihadists and the Mozambican state. Since the beginning of the conflict there have been reports of the presence of a small number of international jihadists fighting in the forests of Cabo Delgado, originated from the Central and Eastern regions of Africa such as Democratic Republic of Congo (RDC), Uganda, Burundi, Somalia and Tanzania, as well as from Middle Eastern states such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Iran. These states are believed to provide the ideologues, clerics and financial sponsors of the jihadist movement.

Cabo Delgado Province and its districts constitute Mozambique's richest region in terms of natural, mineral and energy resources. It has dense forests, diverse wildlife, large deposits of minerals and precious stones, rubies, tourmalines, gold, graphite, lithium, heavy sands, critical minerals, etc. Additionally, it hosts one of Africa's largest oil and gas reserves. In this province are located medium-sized and mega-projects for the extraction and exploitation of these resources by Western and Chinese national and multinational companies. Paradoxically, it is the most impoverished province in Mozambique, with low levels of economic, social and human development.

Faced with the ineffectiveness of the defense and security forces (DSF) — made up of different units of the Police of the Republic of Mozambique (PRM) and the Armed Defense Forces of Mozambique (ADFM) — in combating terrorism, between 2019 and 2020, the government of President Felipe Nyusi sent private military corporations (PMCs) to the conflict. First the Russians of the Wagner Group, then the British of the Paramount Group, and finally the Zimbabweans and South Africans of the Dyck Advisory Group (DAG) (Coloma 2020; International Crisis Group 2021). Following the failure of the PMCs on the ground, from March 2021, the Mozambican State started counting with the support of troops from Rwanda and the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), stationed in Cabo Delgado to help the DSF in the fight against terrorism.

Different authors and groups have analyzed the origins, causes and consequences of violent extremism and terrorism in Mozambique. The terrorist attacks represent the biggest military phenomenon in Mozambique since the end of the civil war in 1992. By 2023, terrorism had caused the destruction of socio-economic infrastructure and homes, thousands of deaths, injuries, mutilations and forced displacement of populations from their homes and

areas of origin, along with widespread violence and trauma affecting men, women and children. Thus, the aim is to understand terrorism in Mozambique using typologies and categories from conflict analysis, as well as notions such as violent extremism, relative deprivation and new wars.

## Theory

In order to understand violent extremism and terrorism in Cabo Delgado, conflict theories were analyzed, drawing on the perspectives of Samuel Huntington, Mary Kaldor and Ted Gurr. In the clash of civilizations theory, Huntington (1997) stated that with the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the USSR and its bloc, we would no longer have the great ideological clashes that characterized the bipolar conflict between the capitalist and socialist sides. Instead, there would be cultural and religious disputes, small wars between different groups, usually of an ethnic, identity and religious nature. For Huntington (1997), the dominant paradigm explained by Fukuyama (1992) assumed that the end of the Cold War represented the end of significant conflicts in global politics and the emergence of a relatively harmonious world, characterized by what Fukuyama described as the “end of History”.

In Fukuyama’s view (1992), the post-Cold War world represented the end point of humanity’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the pinnacle of human government. Undoubtedly, conflicts might still occur in places of the Third World, but the global conflict was over, and not just in Europe. The war of ideas in the non-European world, the Soviet Union and China was over. Although there are states that believe in Marxism-Leninism, liberal democracy had, in general, triumphed. Huntington (1997) argued that the post-Cold War world would be made up of seven or eight main civilizations: Western, Islamic, Confucian, Hindu, Buddhist, Orthodox, Latin American, Sub-Saharan and Japanese. These civilizations would correspond to the geographical, cultural and religious regions where they are located. They represent distinct identities, and the clash between them would be the source of the main international conflicts in the 21st century.

The conflict in Cabo Delgado is close to the phenomenon that Mary Kaldor (2012) refers to as “new wars”, a concept influenced by Huntington’s (1997) perspective on the clash of civilizations. According to Kaldor (2012), contemporary conflicts take place differently, with new war tactics

and strategies being employed. The traditional wars, or conventional wars, typically took place between two or more states, using a more traditional military apparatus with armed forces, regular combat and conventional armies facing each other, usually with the aim of conquering territories or forcing ideological change. However, conventional warfare is no longer sufficient to explain contemporary conflicts, which are characterized by new forms of confrontation, irregular tactics and different strategies (Kaldor 2012; 2013). Thus, the author proposes the term “new wars” as a hermeneutic perspective to explain current conflicts.

Kaldor (2013) argues that in the 21st century, organized violence is different from the wars of the 20th century. Contemporary wars are fought by combinations of state and non-state networks such as regular armed forces, private security companies, mercenaries, jihadists, warlords, paramilitaries etc. They are fought in the name of ethnic, religious or tribal identity. In the new wars, violence is largely directed against civilians as a way of controlling territory rather than against enemy forces. Banditry, rape, kidnapping of women, forced displacement of populations, massacres and atrocities against civilians are common weapons in the new wars.

The funding for the new wars often comes from private groups, looting, taxation of residents, traders, kidnapping, smuggling and trafficking of drugs, mineral and energy resources. New wars are associated with fragile or weak states that are unable to meet the demands of different national population groups in scenarios dominated by socio-economic problems, social inequality, climate change, etc (Kaldor 2013). According to this conflict expert, these wars are no longer merely conflicts between two or more sovereign states, but within the same state, between the established government and opposing groups, which may include clandestine, insurgents, guerrillas or even legitimate groups such as political or religious parties that have become radicalized. They often have an identity, ethnic or religious basis or are driven by a search for legitimacy, questioning the legitimacy of the state and its values.

These wars differ from the traditional wars in their objectives, which are generally related to particular identities, and in their methods of combat based on guerrilla warfare, insurgencies, or counter-insurgency between armed groups and the state. The financing of such conflicts is often linked to criminal activities and the support of external agents sympathetic to the causes involved. Such wars call into question the authority and legitimacy of states, privatizing the monopoly of violence over citizens. This type of conflict is different from traditional wars, with unpredictable tactics and the civilian

population becoming the main target of the conflict (Kaldor 2012). The new wars are becoming deeper and more complex, deeply rooted within states, and increasingly difficult to combat.

Ted Gurr is another theorist who contributes to the understanding of the conflicts in Mozambique through the theory of relative deprivation. Gurr (1985; 1993) defines conflicts as open and coercive interactions of contending collectivities. Such interactions encompass all forms of relations between groups and nations that involve threat, force and violence. However, not all conflicts manifest themselves through physical confrontations between opposing groups. Conflict between groups competing for positions and scarce resources is a regular feature of social life.

Gurr (1985) is interested in conflicts that have four main characteristics: there are two or more parties involved; the parties engage in acts of reciprocal opposition; they use coercive behavior aimed at destroying, injuring, frustrating or any form of controlling their opponents and; the contentious interactions are public, and their occurrence can be easily detected and recognized by independent observers. In his view, the feeling of deprivation and political, social and material disadvantage leads individuals to frustration. In turn, frustration leads to violence, and violence is a form of political participation by individuals who feel excluded in societies (Gurr 1970; 1993). The theory of relative deprivation makes it possible to understand the point of view of Mozambican jihadists. The feeling of being deprived of political and material resources, the lack of technical and educational training and the absence of jobs and opportunities have generated revolt among the local population, particularly among young people. These individuals have found in religion a source of security and identity.

With the end of the Cold War and the civil war in 1992, Mozambique was considered a success story in terms of political and economic liberalization, pacification and the transition to democracy. However, some twenty years later, in 2012 there was an upsurge of armed conflict between the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo), the party that controls the state, and the Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo). And in 2017, terrorism emerged in the country. The post-civil war conflicts in Mozambique are linked to the curse of abundance, the discovery, exploitation and dispute over natural and energy resources in regions where Frelimo traditionally had no political influence, or where the opposition had influence. There are two opposing projects in Mozambique. On one hand, the deprivation of resources for the majority of the population and the attempts by various social groups to survive; and on the other, the project of personal enrichment for the political

and military elites of Frelimo, the party-state. As a result, the tendency is for cleavages and intra-state conflicts to increase between the government on one hand and opposition parties, military juntas, rebel or insurgent groups on the other.

In Mozambique, violent extremism and terrorism are practiced by unemployed young people with no technical or educational training and no prospects of social inclusion. This phenomenon emerged with the beginning of the exploitation of natural and mineral resources, wood, fauna, precious stones, precious metals, graphite, lithium, oil and gas. Some of the young people worked in artisanal mining sites and saw their business violently usurped by the political-military elite of the Frelimo party-state, which now holds the licenses to exploit these resources. Violent religious extremism and terrorism would be a way for young people to make themselves heard and (re)enter the political economy of the region where they were born and reside. Local population groups, particularly young people, have been excluded from small, medium and megaprojects related to the exploitation of natural, mineral and energy resources.

The feeling of disadvantage, social and material deprivation caused by unemployment, lack of income, the perceived threat to the identities of local ethno-linguistic groups, and the presence of national workers from other regions of the country and foreigners, are some of the agents that have contributed to the conflict. The unilateral violence and war perpetrated by Al-Shabaab are manifestations of the conflict rather than goals or ends in themselves. Violence and terror are used as a means by young people to express their discontent with the state, which has come to be seen as a threat. The Cabo Delgado conflict centers on the inequitable way in which power, wealth and resources are distributed in Mozambique. Religious extremism and terrorism reflect how the State has dealt with this relative deprivation of resources. Violence and war would be consequences of the mismanagement of the conflict.

## Methodology

A qualitative approach was used, consisting of a literature review and documentary research. The literature review was conducted from two perspectives, on one hand, a theoretical analysis of conflicts and, on the other, an analysis of the literature on violent extremism and terrorism in Mozambique. The documentary research consisted of examining reports

and newsletters produced by Mozambican pressure groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the Centre for Public Integrity (CPI), the Centre for the Defence of Democracy (CDD) and the Institute for Social and Economic Studies (ISES), as well as international organizations such as the International Crisis Group (ICG) and the United Nations National Development Programme (UNDP). Additionally, it was employed the technique of building a bibliographic collection on terrorism in Mozambique, which included news articles and newspaper reports, technical and research reports and scientific articles.

In his review of the literature, Jeong (2008) analyzes conflicts from the perspective of International Relations, outlining the existing tools for studying conflicts in a comprehensive way, combining behavioral and structural analysis. He points out different categories for understanding conflicts: nature, context, socio-psychological dynamics, conflict situations, type of conflict (whether intractable, constructive or destructive), causes, levels of analysis, etc. When analyzing conflicts, he refers to different examples of conflicts, massacres, genocides and wars around the world.

This expert examines the dynamic forces that shape and reshape conflicts, the sources of discontent and animosity, identifies phases and the evolution of relations between the belligerents, the escalation of violence and the recession of violent cycles towards the peaceful resolution of differences (Jeong 2008). His work highlights the phases of conflict as escalation, entrapment, termination and resolution in both violent and non-violent conflicts, pointing out the usefulness and limitations of external intervention. The author seeks a more comprehensive interpretation of conflicts, comparing them, mobilizing concepts and theories to understand them and the prospects for resolution.

Ohana (2012) argues that conflict analysis is the systematic study of the profile, cause, actors and dynamics of conflict. It is understood as a systematic framework for obtaining an in-depth understanding of the origin of the conflict, the parties involved, the actors and the power they have or do not have to influence the course of the conflict. The author classifies conflicts from a typology, whose criteria encompasses, among others: the parties involved, the context, the motivations, the consequences, the duration, the intensity, the presence or absence of violence, the way in which it manifests itself, the scale.

The scholar distinguishes different methods for analyzing conflicts. In her view, there is no one correct method for analyzing conflicts, with a variety of methods that can be employed. Thus, some of these methods



include: conflict mapping; the ABC triangle; the onion of positions; interests and needs; the conflict tree; and the conflict pyramid (Ohana 2012). Among the methods listed by the author, two stand out, which I consider to be the most appropriate for the Mozambican case: the conflict tree and the conflict pyramid.

## Origins, causes and nature of terrorism

Various national and international authors have studied and analyzed terrorism in Mozambique. This text highlights some works, articles and research reports that present innovative perspectives, concepts and theories that explain the origins, causes and nature of terrorism in Mozambique. The focus is on authors who have carried out field research, including Habibe, Forquilha and Pereira (2019), Morier-Genoud (2019), Weimer (2020), Rogeiro (2020), Feijó (2020), Chichava (2020a; 2020b; 2020c; 2020d), Macalane and Jafar (2021), International Crisis Group (2021), Sönmez and Arslan (2021), Siteo (2020; 2022) and Bonate (2022).

In a dense manner, Siteo (2020) analyzes terrorism in Africa, its main groups, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, the regions in which they operate, in particular the presence of the terrorist threat in Mozambique. He seeks to understand who the attackers are, what they are claiming and whether the country was facing terrorist violence in the form of Islamic extremism. This internationalist carries out a conceptual debate on the categories of terrorism, extremism, radicalism and radicalization, isolating each concept, presenting the main differences and similarities, with the aim of producing distinctions that enrich the theoretical debate on terrorism (Siteo 2022).

In his view, it is necessary to adapt the concept of terrorism and extremism to the Mozambican reality. He defines terrorism as an act of violence perpetrated by individuals, groups or even states against civilian targets, aiming to impact a wider audience beyond the immediate victims and with a specific political objective. Extremism, on the other hand, is defined as an ideology, behavior or attitude adopted by an individual or group that holds a certain worldview that is intolerant of others and is willing to impose that view through violence. Extremism can be of two types: violent or non-violent. Non-violent extremism occurs when convictions are limited to the sphere of ideas and thoughts, while violent extremism imposes its beliefs and generates transformations through violence (Siteo 2020; 2022).



Morier-Genoud (2019) highlighted the rise of sectarianism and jihadism in Mozambique in the context of the growing dynamics of violent extremism in neighboring countries such as Tanzania, Kenya and the Great Lakes region. According to the author, after the first attacks, the insurgency turned into a typical guerrilla war. The attacks, which were initially carried out at night against small villages, started to be carried out during the day and against towns, army outposts, buses on the roads and, finally, district headquarters, releasing videos with a clear jihadi agenda. In 2019, the guerrillas pledged allegiance to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS). From then on, ISIS began claiming responsibility for an increasing number of attacks in Mozambique and releasing videos through Amaq on social media.

Habibe, Forquilha and Pereira (2019) conducted field research in Cabo Delgado a month after the first armed attack by Al-Shabaab, between November 2017 and February 2018. The authors questioned the nature of the terrorist group, its motivations, ideology, funding and the political, social and economic implications of the phenomenon in Mozambique. They identified poverty and social exclusion as causes of the conflict. In their view, Mozambican Al-Shabaab is a religious fundamentalist group that has incorporated military cells. It claimed to follow the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad, opposing Western influence, advocating for the implementation of Sharia law and maintaining links with Somali Al-Shabaab as well as cells of Islamic fundamentalist groups in Tanzania, Kenya and the Great Lakes region. However, from the point of view of religious leaders and Islamic communities, the group preached and practiced a degraded form of Islam that deviated from the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad.

Feijó (2020) identified asymmetries and socio-spatial and ethno-linguistic inequalities in access to power, disparities in housing conditions, ownership of durable goods, access to pensions for former combatants and state support, access to business, training and employment as factors that help explain the conflict in Cabo Delgado. Rogeiro (2020) highlighted the presence of Mozambican preachers in the mosques of Cabo Delgado, who had contact with militant jihadist groups from Kenya, the African Great Lakes region, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Sudan, Algeria and Somalia. These preachers gained notoriety in Cabo Delgado's districts disputes regarding jobs, under-development, lack of opportunities for young people, control of state structures, regional and municipal structures by Frelimo bureaucrats. These two factors made clashes between radical and traditional groups commonplace within the Muslim community, mosques, Koranic schools and associations.

The presence of a new wave of preachers from Tanzania, the DRC and Uganda has led young people to interpret the Koran in other ways and to adopt new practices in relation to fundamental issues such as women's rights, dress and worldview, alcohol consumption, food preparation rituals, school curricula, conditions of practice and worship, the application of Sharia law, banking and money lending rules, incorporation into the armed forces, and attitudes towards natural resources and their exploitation in a context of social inequality and income imbalance. In 2019, the Mozambican insurgency allied itself with ISIS, which capitalized on the situation by investing in local jihadist movements in this Muslim-majority province (Rogeiro 2020).

Chichava (2020a) argued that the party-state that has ruled Mozambique since independence was the one that created the conditions for the emergence of terrorism in the country. According to this analyst, it was the state's inability to deal with poverty, unemployment and the lack of expectations for young people, coupled with the brutality of the police in helping to set up companies that exploit natural and mineral resources, that contributed to the penetration of Islamists. In this scenario, some of the artisanal miners who were violently expelled by the police joined the Al-Shabaab terrorist group (CDD 2022). In this way, the actions and omissions of the party-state and the political and economic elites associated with it paved the way for the emergence of Al-Shabaab as a violent extremist movement. The author also highlighted the international dimension of the conflict, noting the presence of foreign jihadists, especially Tanzanians and Ugandans in Cabo Delgado, as well as the declaration of allegiance to the Islamic State (Chichava 2020d).

Weimer (2020) seeks to explain the violent attacks perpetrated against local institutions and representatives of the Mozambican state. From a historical perspective, he conducts a case study in three Mozambican provinces based on documents, interviews and an analysis of literature from anthropology and political economy. The scholar identified three causes of local conflicts: firstly, the political economy with historical roots dominated by Frelimo, which deals with discontent and dissent in an authoritarian and violent way, using war as governance. Secondly, the order of limited access to resources firmly established in Mozambique, which produces socio-economic exclusion of local social, economic and political actors and interests, particularly with regard to the extraction of natural resources. Thirdly, the prospect that there is no future for Mozambican youth, who are alienated from local communities and cultures, but have not been absorbed into society and the economy. This alienation renders young men particularly susceptible to global influences and promises, sometimes associated with radical religious

thinking and criminality. In this way, Cabo Delgado province has become vulnerable to the influence of militant Islam (Weimer 2020).

With a multidisciplinary team composed of teachers and researchers, Macalane and Jafar (2021) conducted fieldwork to investigate the causes of terrorism, its evolution and the mechanisms of resilience, based on the narratives of the populations affected. They employed a qualitative and quantitative methodology mixed with data collection, semi-structured interviews, documentary analysis and non-participant observation in four districts of Cabo Delgado province. The fieldwork spanned three months, between October 2020 and January 2021, involving 206 participants, of whom 94 were women. A total of 83 interviews were conducted, subdivided into 58 individual and 25 group interviews, utilizing the *snowball* sampling technique. The authors sought to understand the way terrorists act and the means they use, the empathy of the population with terrorists, civil-military relations, etc. These relations were characterized by extortion, aggression, violation of physical integrity and privacy, etc.

The terrorist attacks perpetrated by Al-Shabaab began in Mocímboa da Praia and spread to other districts with multidimensional consequences: destruction of private homes, public and private buildings, paralysis of social, education and health services, looting of commercial establishments, stagnation of economic activity, the death of thousands of people and the displacement of thousands more. Mocímboa da Praia became the epicenter of the terrorist attacks due to its geostrategic location, the occurrence of ethnic conflicts between *Makondes* and *Mwanis*, the spread of Islamic extremism and the adherence of a significant number of local youths to the terrorist group. There have also been excesses by the DSF against the population (Macalane and Jafar 2021).

According to the authors, Al-Shabaab is an Islamic jihadist-inspired group composed of people from various ethnicities and nationalities, which recruits and radicalizes young people. The radicalization process began in 2012 in Mocímboa da Praia. The government failed to pay attention to the initial signs of recruitment, radicalization and training of young people, and the DSF has demonstrated an inability to contain the wave of attacks, which require improvements in training and external support. The government needs to improve control of land and sea borders to prevent outsiders from entering the country, as well as provide young people with technical-professional training and employment, and inclusion in the mega-projects in the region (Macalane and Jafar 2021).

Another important report for understanding terrorism in Cabo Delgado is that of the International Crisis Group (2021), which highlights the need to contain the insurgency in Cabo Delgado. The report pointed out that Cabo Delgado could become the next frontier for the jihadist insurgency in Africa. By 2021, terrorist attacks and DSF operations had claimed around 3,000 lives, and insecurity had led to the suspension of a gas megaproject. The Islamic State (ISIS) claimed links to the insurgency, and states in the region were pressuring for troops to be sent to assist Mozambique.

The Mozambican jihadists were motivated by discontent with the state, which did little for them in the face of the exploitation of vast mineral and hydrocarbon reserves. Thus, Tanzanians and foreigners from other nationalities joined the cause, fueling the insurrection. Considered historically weak, the DSF has been seen as incapable of containing the offensive. And if not contained, the insurrection could spread, threatening national stability, in a context where the Mozambican state was trying to reach a peace agreement with the main opposition group in the country and ahead of the local elections in 2023 and the presidential elections in 2024. Instability on the East African coast could worsen, providing ISIS with a new front to exploit. The report recommended that the Maputo government accept military support from its external partners and use force to contain the insurgency, while also building a relationship of trust with the local inhabitants and an open dialog with the insurgents. It further advised regional governments to intensify their efforts to enforce laws and prevent transnational jihadist action (International Crisis Group 2021).

One of the innovations of this report is its presentation of the evolution and composition of Al-Shabaab, whose fighters are mostly Mozambicans, poor fishermen, frustrated small traders, old farmers and unemployed young people. The fighters from Tanzania belong to Islamist networks that proliferate on the East African coast and form the leading and ideological group. Young Mozambicans have joined jihadism for various reasons, primarily economic and to obtain material benefits, rather than ideological ones.

In turn, Bonate (2022) analyzed the conflict from the perspective of transnational jihadism as an ideology and a political movement that capitalized on local demands and grievances, especially against the state, triggering insurgency or channeling existing resistance, as well as seeing the conflict as a resistance against the world order dominated by the West. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (2023a; 2023b) pointed to economic pressures, poverty and unemployment as central factors for the violence in Cabo Delgado. In this report, Mozambique was identified as the global

epicenter of violence and extremism. According to Morier-Genoud (2021), material deprivation would be one of the causes of the conflict, particularly poverty, marginalization and a lack of prospects among young people, in a scenario where it would only serve as a meeting point. In this context, the fact that Cabo Delgado is one of the poorest provinces in Mozambique, while simultaneously holding vast natural gas reserves, created unmet expectations.

Analysts such as Santos (2012), Sönmez and Arslan (2021) and groups like CDD (2022) claim that Cabo Delgado is experiencing the curse of natural resources, in which all states where huge reserves of natural mineral resources are discovered end up experiencing conflicts and wars. In an emblematic opinion piece on Mozambique, Santos (2012) used the expression “curse of abundance” to characterize the risks faced by poor countries where natural resources are discovered that are coveted internationally. According to the author, the promise of abundance arising from the immense commercial value of the resources and the investments required to exploit them is so compelling that it begins to condition the pattern of economic, social, political and cultural development.

Another hypothesis suggests that the emergence of terrorism in Mozambique has geopolitical and economic reasons and points to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Persian Gulf states as the main financiers of terrorism in Cabo Delgado. With the discovery of Mozambican oil and gas reserves, these Islamic states might fear losing their hegemony in the international market to a competitor that could sell hydrocarbons at lower prices to the Western world. In this way, the Saudis, Qataris, etc. are allegedly financing terrorism in Cabo Delgado to hinder the exploitation of Mozambique’s oil and gas reserves.

Thus, the analysis of extremist violence and terrorism in Mozambique points to three perspectives. The first highlights internal factors such as state fragility, structural violence on the part of the state and rebel groups, social asymmetries and inequalities, ethnic tensions, lack of employment and prospects for young people, which provide the emergence of Al-Shabaab as a violent religious extremist group. The second focuses on external or international factors such as the expansion of ISIS across sub-Saharan Africa and the transnational jihadism caused by the expulsion of Al-Shabaab from Kenya and Tanzania, which found fertile ground in Mozambique, a fragile state that did not have full control of the illegal operations taking place in Cabo Delgado. A small group of authors point to a combination of both internal and external factors as being at the root of the conflict. The third argues the “curse of abundance” as an explanatory hypothesis, citing the greed and

financial support from Middle Eastern countries that feared competition from Mozambican oil and gas on the international market.

## Conflict classification

In order to understand the situation in Cabo Delgado, the conflict analysis method is applied to examine the profile, causes, actors and dynamics of the conflict in a systematical way. Using the typology, classifications and categories proposed by authors such as Jeong (2012) and Ohana (2015), we can say that the armed jihadist insurgency in Cabo Delgado falls under the heading of violent intrastate conflict, involving jihadists on one side and the Mozambican state on the other. However, the conflict took on an international dimension when the Mozambican state requested external support from Rwandan troops and SAMIM, that began fighting terrorism in Cabo Delgado.

Violent religious extremism and terrorism in Cabo Delgado are rooted in jihadism, a violent subbranch of Salafism, a Sunni revivalist movement that rejects democracy and points out that human legislation contradicts divine law. They therefore want to establish an Islamic state governed by Sharia law. The purpose of the attacks in Cabo Delgado is to spread terror, since it is almost impossible to establish an Islamic state in Mozambique, a secular country where different religions have always coexisted.

The conflict in Cabo Delgado stems from material resources, such as the exploitation of oil, precious stones and timber. But it also encompasses issues of well-being, such as job opportunities, distribution of wealth, power-sharing with local populations and authorities, as well as cultural disputes and different moral values between the three ethnolinguistic and religious groups, namely the *Mwanis*, *Makwas* and *Makondes*, and between Christians and Muslims. Terrorism and war in Cabo Delgado are a consequence of how the Mozambican state has conducted its policies, managed resources, and addressed conflicts in the region. They reflect authoritarianism, violence, exclusion and other ways in which the state and local elites have been dealing with local populations, particularly young people and different ethno-religious groups.

Violent extremism, terrorism and war in Cabo Delgado are not the conflict itself, but rather the results of how the state has addressed underlying tensions. They are part of the weapons and trump cards that certain groups, particularly young people, use to engage in and influence politics. The conflict in Cabo Delgado is economic, political and social in nature, linked to

participation, wealth distribution and religion. It is driven by material needs and resources. They are related to the distribution of power between the state and the three ethnolinguistic groups of *Makondes*, *Makwas* and *Mwanis*. Additionally, it encompasses cultural and spiritual dimensions, involving moral and religious principles and values.

The conflict in Cabo Delgado is both intrastate and internationalized. It originated with attacks by Al-Shabaab targeting coastal populations of Cabo Delgado, which prompted an armed response from the Mozambican state. However, due to the weakness and fragility of the DSF, the state requested external assistance from the armed forces of Rwanda and SADC, thereby internationalizing the conflict.

The conflict was latent between 2011 and 2015, a period marked by religious formation and organization, during which, extremist and radical speeches were confined to mosques and madrasahs, alongside with the sending of young people to study in Islamic countries. From 2015 onwards, the conflict became manifest with sporadic attacks on government institutions and local populations, then direct confrontation and ambushes on the DSF and attacks on barracks, finally confrontation with Rwanda Defense Force (RDF) and SAMIM troops.

The conflict in Cabo Delgado developed quickly and impetuously. With the presence of the DSF, Rwandan troops and SAMIM, there was a certain stability in the region, with areas controlled by the jihadists and areas controlled by the DSF, RDF and SAMIM, without much progress in the operational theater. Thus, from being impetuous, the conflict has stabilized and tends to have long-term characteristics.

None of the warring parties is capable of winning the war militarily and the conflict is continuing without any major progress on the ground. Political elite figures with economic interests in the areas affected by the conflict — such as former president Joaquim Chissano — are already talking about negotiating with the jihadists. In less than five years, Al-Shabaab has carried out cruel and bloody attacks, something that Renamo took decades to do. On the other hand, the conflict can be classified as a low-intensity war, on a micro-social scale, as it is confined to Cabo Delgado Province, but with destructive consequences.



## The radicalization process

According to religious leaders and local communities in Cabo Delgado, the young Mozambicans have been led astray by teachers who have studied abroad and interpret the Koran in Salafist and Wahhabi currents, which are different from those taught in Mozambican madrasahs. Some members of the group maintained indirect connections with spiritual leaders from Saudi Arabia, Tanzania, Libya, Sudan and Algeria, through videos or people who had studied in these countries, with scholarships funded by local and foreign businessmen, loggers and illegal miners from Tanzania, Somalia and the Great Lakes. On the other hand, Cabo Delgado and Mocímboa da Praia are located along an immigration route that originates in Somalia and passes through Mozambique towards South Africa. Along this route, the province is home to two mosques known for welcoming international immigrants, usually Somalis (Habibe, Forquilha and Pereira 2019).

After a few years abroad, when they returned to Cabo Delgado they joined the local Wahhabi mosques or built their own places of prayer, presenting different religious approaches to those normally practiced in Mozambique. During services, they advocated for civil disobedience and fostered tensions with the existing mosques. In addition, they demanded the removal of Christian symbols and statues of national heroes such as Samora Machel and Eduardo Mondlane, accepting only Muslim symbols. Domestic and community conflicts were to be resolved according to Islamic law rather than through local police stations.

In order to differentiate themselves from other Muslims, the members of Al-Shabaab built their own identity: they wore distinctive clothes, especially white turbans, short black gowns and pants that extended a little below the knees, short or shaved hair and large beards, they didn't allow their children to attend state schools, only Koranic schools built by them. They carried white weapons like knives and machetes to symbolize jihad, incited violence and disrespected community leaders, calling them *kafir*, and would not accept dialogue with state structures or groups different from their own<sup>2</sup>. Their family members were forced to watch videos of speeches by a Kenyan cleric who preached radical Islam and women were compelled to wear burkas (Habibe, Forquilha and Pereira 2019).

Al-Shabaab has kidnapped hundreds of young women. The group comprises individuals from diverse socio-demographic backgrounds, the majority from the northern coast of Cabo Delgado, individuals from the

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2 In Arabic, *kafir* means one who hides the truth, an unbeliever.

Mueda plateau, the Nampula coast, as well as foreigners from the east coast of Africa, such as Tanzanians, Somalis and Persian Gulf countries (International Crisis Group 2021).

According to Feijó (2021), Al-Shabaab rose up against the state and its traditional structures. They have built various bases in villages abandoned by the population or in the forests. These individuals maintain links with their families of origin, who provide logistics, camouflage and information. Others have broken with their families of origin and formed new family arrangements in the forests, often polygamous. Men and women are subjected to political-religious doctrine, in which themes such as exclusion, social injustice, corruption and the enrichment of the authorities are explored in an attempt to provoke individual resentments.

Opposed by the state, which attacked mosques and arrested dozens of Al-Shabaab members, its leaders proposed a social order based on Sharia law, evolving from Islamist sectarianism to armed jihadism. As a result, they began to attack state institutions and civilian populations. Al-Shabaab's local leaders exploited the differences between Christians and Muslims, distinctions that exist not only because of religion, but also because they intersect with social, political and power distinctions between communities and ethno-linguistic groups. The *Makwas* and *Mwanis* are ethnic groups with a Muslim majority and are coastal communities with a pre-colonial Islamic and Swahili past linked to the slave trade. The *Mwanis* allied themselves with Renamo and the Mozambican opposition after the first multi-party elections in 1994. The *Makondes*, a minority group, are Christians from the interior and the Mueda plateau, who hold the *status quo*, political and economic power and are the backbone of Frelimo. They are historical allies of this party and the state, portrayed as warriors and heroes of the anti-colonial struggle against Portuguese domination in the country's textbooks and history books.

Al-Shabaab's forms of recruitment include persuasion through family and informal networks, promises of money and material goods and, in other cases, coercion and kidnapping, fomenting terror for those who don't cooperate. Morale is high among the insurgents, fostered by the sharing of the spoils of war. There is a messianic promise to change the social order, combined with the distribution of concrete benefits such as food, clothing and protection, which have attracted vulnerable young people in a context of social precariousness and food insecurity. The insurgents maintain close relations with the local population, have an excellent capacity for insertion and camouflage, knowledge of the localities, light weaponry, easy movement and hiding places, which gives the group advantages. Robbery and looting of

stores and food warehouses were the group's main sources of supply. Al-Shabaab has never shown any interest in food security or food production, which demonstrates the existence of external supplies, possibly from Tanzania (Feijó 2021). For a long time, Al-Shabaab was designated as an armed insurgency by the Mozambican state, due to the armed attacks in which they attacked villages, civilians, hospitals and schools, kidnapped women and children, beheaded and burned alive young and old men (Rogeiro 2020).

Religious conviction and excessive violence are characteristics of the group, against both men and women. As the group has grown, it has increased in diversity, religious conviction, morality, motivation and violence. Beheadings with knives and machetes, along with brutal rapes against women, are common weapons of terror, as is the promise of money to young men. In 2020, Al-Shabaab demonstrated great recruitment capacity, a military performance over the DSF, characterized by violent attacks on district headquarters, access to logistics and military equipment. There was an internationalization of the group through the presence of foreigners from East African, Middle Eastern and Persian Gulf states, identified as Muslim or white, who possessed huge quantities of war material, as well as the constant concern of these international subjects with filming documenting all the group's actions, indicating the existence of external support (Feijó 2021).

In terms of evolution, strength and behavior, the jihadist group is assumed to be a heterogeneous movement, whose base or lower echelon consists mainly of Mozambican insurgents, particularly young people from the *Mwani* and *Makwa* ethnic groups, former fishermen and farmers, smugglers, coastal traffickers and unemployed youth, but also a small number of *Makonde* fighters made up particularly of young people expelled from the ruby mines in 2017 (International Crisis Group 2021). Some operational leaders were Mozambican, but the majority were Tanzanian Islamists expelled by the police and military authorities of that state over the last fifteen years because of illegal activities and radicalism. The Tanzanians were the ideological leaders. Some of the young Mozambican insurgents were kidnapped and forced to join Al-Shabaab or joined the group out of frustration with their socio-economic situation, lured by recruiters who offer money or promise future wealth and remain loyal to the group as long as they are paid. In 2021, it was estimated that Al-Shabaab had between 1,500 and 4,000 members, including non-combatants, mechanics, nurses and local communications specialists (International Crisis Group 2021).

The offer of money or the promise of money, as well as kidnapping and abduction are the main recruitment methods used by Al-Shabaab. As

the conflict unfolded, Al-Shabaab improved its guerrilla tactics, becoming more efficient, acquiring weapons, increasing its arsenal essentially with weapons taken from the DSF and its barracks. Initially, they only had AK-47 rifles and the occasional PKM machine gun. Gradually they acquired RPG-7 rocket launchers, 60mm and 80mm mortars and government and military vehicles taken from the DSF (International Crisis Group 2021).

The conflict in Cabo Delgado has changed Mozambican military grammar, with the emergence of terminology such as terrorism, armed insurgency, insurgents, jihadists, terrorists, Northern Operational Theater (TON), state of war, violent extremism, terrorism, Islamic radicalism, terrorist cells, DSF, Islamic State Agency (Amaq), *Ansar Al-Sunnah*, *Al-Shabaab*, *Daesh*, ISIS, Islamic State of Mozambique, SAMIM, Rwandan troops, Rwanda Defense Force, military drones, armored vehicles, oil and gas, on-shore, offshore, ethnic disputes, *Mwanis*, etc. Terms that have been uttered by military officers, political authorities, researchers, reproduced by journalists, analysts and the people.

## Conflict typology

The situation in Cabo Delgado is an internationalized intrastate conflict, due to the presence of external actors within Mozambican territory. The main belligerents are Al-Shabaab and the DSF, which represent the Mozambican state. The main actors were joined by Rwandan troops and SAMIM forces as secondary actors, at the invitation of the Mozambican state. The Rwandan and SAMIM forces are intentional *spoilers*<sup>3</sup>. The conflict became international with the involvement of Rwandan troops and the multinational SAMIM force, which includes soldiers from South Africa, Botswana, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Angola, allies of the Mozambican state. Thus, it became an internationalized intrastate conflict.

Before the presence of foreign forces alongside the Mozambican state, reports pointed to the presence of Tanzanians, citizens from the Great Lakes region, such as Burundians, Ugandans, Congolese and Middle Easterners alongside the Mozambican jihadists, albeit in insignificant numbers. The foreign citizens who militate alongside the insurgents may be the financiers of the military actions or have economic interests. In 2021, Al-Shabaab pledged allegiance to Daesh. Proof of this were the threats made by Daesh to the

3 *Spoiler* refers to an actor who was not part of the original conflict, but who, with the unfolding and dynamics of the conflict, becomes an important actor.

state of Rwanda shortly after the launch of the Rwandan troops' operations in Cabo Delgado — at a time when Rwandan propaganda was at an all-time high — which quickly inflicted heavy casualties on the jihadists, destroying their main bases and forced them into retreat and in constant mobility. Daesh threatened to carry out bomb attacks on Rwandan territory.

The states of Rwanda, Tanzania and South Africa are international spoilers with direct or indirect interests in the conflict in Cabo Delgado, all of which have troops stationed in Mozambique. South Africa relies on Mozambican energy sources, which are geographically close and at low prices, and has an interest in stability in order to invest in a future gas pipeline linking Cabo Delgado to its territory. While Tanzania has an interest in the instability of the province, because it has huge oil and gas reserves in its territory and an exploration project similar to Mozambique's (Savana 2022b). It sees Mozambique as a competitor and seeks to attract international investors to its project. Rwanda also has a vested interest in Mozambique's stability, supplying troops and security to the Mozambican state from its own army and various private security companies. It provides military aid and security, and at the same time has access to Cabo Delgado's mineral resources, with an air bridge between Cabo Delgado and Kigali, through which precious stones and minerals are transported.

At first glance, this is a political-religious conflict, but there are socio-economic factors involved. There are ethnic-religious, moral and socio-economic motivations involving the majority *Makwa* and *Mwani* Islamic groups and the *Makonde* minority. Al-Shabaab members pointed to religious values, principles and ideals linked to the Islamic religion, such as the establishment of a religious state under Sharia rules, moral issues such as the wearing of beards, Islamic clothing, the ban on the sale and consumption of tobacco and alcohol, opposing the schooling of children in secular schools, the work of women, etc. They contested the local religious authorities, particularly those close to the Islamic Council, which is considered close to the Mozambican state, felt socio-economically excluded in the face of the exploitation of mineral and energy resources such as timber, precious stones, oil and gas, as well as resenting the influence of generals from the national liberation struggle with interests and businesses in the province, coming from the *Makonde* ethnic group, the same as the President of the Republic. As a result, unemployed young people who engaged in artisanal mining and gold panning (*garimpo*) were brutally expelled from their livelihoods, further exacerbating local discontent. It was within this boiling context that the armed attacks began (International Crisis Group 2021).

In terms of intensity, the conflict escalated rapidly and impetuously, as in just a few years, Al-Shabaab carried out dozens of massacres with extreme violence and cruelty, including beheadings with knives and machetes, cold-blooded murders with bullets to the back of the head, the burning of homes with the occupants inside, and the kidnapping of young women and teenagers to serve as sex slaves. Napoleoni (2015) pointed out that medieval methods, Sharia codes, violence, its display and spectacularization, as well as the kidnapping of teenagers and young women, are a characteristic of the Islamic State and groups loyal to it.

The massacres and cruelty of Al-Shabaab's actions over five years have surpassed those committed during the seventeen years of civil war between Frelimo and Renamo. The unilateral violence of the conflict perpetrated, first by Al-Shabaab on defenceless populations and then by the Mozambican government, has gone from an armed conflict to a war, in which civilian women, children and men are the main victims. It is an overt conflict with destructive consequences, even though for a long time Al-Shabaab never disclosed the reasons and motivations behind its actions. The conflict initially unfolded on a microscale, affecting only a few districts in the southern region of Cabo Delgado province. But it is gradually becoming a macro issue, having temporarily spread the attacks into the neighboring provinces such as Niassa and Nampula, and even into Tanzania near the border with Mozambique.

## **Terrorism and the state response**

In 2017, military attacks began in Cabo Delgado. Initially, Frelimo Party installations and state administration facilities were attacked, kidnapping and killing state leaders and Frelimo members. As well as attacking the state's administrative infrastructure, the insurgents began to viciously attack the population, destroying social infrastructure, schools, health centers and hospitals. The violence was enormous, with the beheading of civilians, men, women, children and the elderly. In response, the PRM destroyed radicalized mosques and the homes of the alleged ringleaders of the armed attacks. However, the actions were poorly coordinated and lacked strategic intelligence. The Mozambican government responded belatedly to the conflict, taking around five years. Between 2017 and 2021, the Mozambican state ignored and downplayed the armed attacks, displaying a lack of compassion for the suffering of the people of Cabo Delgado. The government dismissed the perpetrators as armed bandits, thieves and criminals and, finally, insurgents, and only later referred to them as insurgents, resisting acknowledg-

ment of the group's religious ideological component. The first victim of the Mozambican state was the truth.

Information and news of the terrorist attacks was treated with secrecy. Local independent journalists who reported on the armed attacks were accused of collaborating with jihadism, while state media journalists were prohibited from covering the issue. Local independent broadcasters and reporters who attempted to shed light on the events faced threats, arrests, harassment and assaults. Some were kidnapped by the SDF, disappeared and were later reported dead<sup>4</sup>.

Habibe, Forquilha and Pereira (2019) pointed out that, although national and foreign media outlets paid attention to terrorism, information on the subject remained scarce, journalists and researchers found it difficult to access the attacked sites, imposed by the Mozambican state. Between 2017 and 2019, six journalists, three foreign and three national, were arrested (Habibe, Forquilha and Pereira 2019). In this way, the government adopted the formula of silencing the messengers instead of solving the problem, launching a campaign against the independent media. In addition to the disappearance of journalists, there were reports of kidnappings, torture and murders of civilians who were relatives of young people who were radicalized and/or suspected of collaborating with jihadism by the SDF. The SDF were accused of human rights violations ranging from floggings, physical assaults, curtailment of the right to come and go, kidnappings, forced disappearances and murders. This situation led to distrust, fear and self-censorship among the population towards the FDS, while simultaneously increasing the prestige of the Rwandan troops (Nhantumbo 2023b).

The Mozambican government's first energetic response to terrorism only came in 2021, after jihadists carried out a spectacular attack — recorded and broadcast on social media — around 30 km from the oil and gas exploration platform, threatening the megaprojects and interests of multinational corporations. From an intrastate conflict involving jihadists and the state, the conflict became international with the involvement of foreign troops from Rwanda and the SADC to help the Mozambican army. For Rwanda, sending troops to Mozambique is part of its military diplomacy agenda around the world, particularly on the African continent (Donelli 2022; Le Monde 2022).

4 Palma Community Radio reporter Ibraimo Mbaruco disappeared after sending messages to colleagues informing them that he was surrounded by uniformed DSF soldiers on April 7, 2020. Since then, he has never been found and his family claims that he was executed by the DSF (NHANTUMBO 2023a). The reporter was seen as an enemy of the DSF because he reported on terrorist attacks. The radio presenter disappeared after being approached by the DSF and was reported dead by the independent media in Mozambique.



It seems that these troops have been deployed not to protect the Mozambican population, but only to ensure the protection of the multinationals' infrastructures and to enable the exploitation of oil and gas and other extractive resources.

For two years, the Mozambican state ignored or did not take seriously the armed insurgency in Cabo Delgado that was sowing terror. In vain, it sent in the DSF, but they suffered heavy defeats and were humiliated, as happened in 2017, when the insurgents attacked the Macomia police station, set it on fire, took PRM police vehicles and ADFM armored vehicles, and posed in front of the police station bearing the flag of the Islamic State, with vehicles, armored vehicles and various weapons taken from the DSF (Savana 2022a). This emblematic photograph went around Mozambique and the world, demoralizing the Mozambican government and its army. In this photo, as in several others, armed jihadists were seen with their faces covered by military shirts and caps, but the majority were wearing t-shirts, sneakers, sports pants, shorts, sandals and flip-flops. Some wore boots, but they were all ragged, without uniforms or full military equipment. Their weapons, uniforms, vehicles and other equipment had been taken over from the Mozambican army.

The Mozambican state ignored these attacks until March 2021, when the insurgents carried out their biggest attack, raiding the town of Palma and Afungi, which is 25 km from the oil and gas exploration infrastructures. In this raid, they attacked, destroyed and set fire to houses with people inside, hospitals, schools, businesses, banks and other social and tourist infrastructures, especially the Amarula Hotel, where foreign, South African and European workers were staying. Dozens of national and international citizens were killed, especially oil and gas workers who were ambushed with firearms as they fled the Amarula Hotel, as well as 12 beheaded foreign citizens (Savana 2022a).

Since 2017, terrorist attacks on civilian populations and state and private infrastructure have resulted in thousands of people being killed, beheaded, burned alive, women and children raped, and the destruction of economic and social infrastructure. The attack on the towns of Palma and Afungi in March 2021, targeting oil and gas exploration infrastructure, constituted the "event", a milestone in the periodization of the conflict between before and after this attack. By threatening the economic "interests" of the Mozambican government and Western multinationals, the world began to pay attention to terrorism in Cabo Delgado. This attack changed the perception of the government and the international community, which began to classify the

situation as “terrorism”. South Africa sent helicopters to rescue its citizens, as did France. French multinational Total Energies, the largest foreign investor, suspended its oil and gas exploration project in Cabo Delgado “for reasons of force majeure”. The attack on Afungi turned out to be a cold shower for the Frelimo party and the political and economic elite, who had long been making plans with the petro and gas-dollars coming out of Cabo Delgado.

## Conclusion

The article analyzed violent religious extremism and terrorism in Cabo Delgado. In their explanations, scholars pointed to three distinct explanatory perspectives for terrorism. The first asserts domestic reasons and causes — the hegemonic politics of the ruling party, bad governance, state structural violence, regional asymmetries, inequality, socio-economic exclusion of ethnolinguistic and religious groups, young people — behind the conflict. This perspective starts from internal factors, putting forward domestic socio-economic and cultural hypotheses to explain the conflict. The second current points to external causes such as the transnational jihadism of ISIS that has spread across Africa, a process in which Mozambique has become a target for religious extremist groups expelled from neighboring states and the region. This perspective highlights issues of regional and national security, weak border controls, illegal migration, smuggling and drug trafficking, etc. Neighboring states on the East African coast such as Ethiopia, Tanzania and Kenya would have done their “homework” by expelling extremist religious groups, who found refuge and an *eldorado* in Mozambique, a fragile state. The last perspective argues that Mozambique and the province of Cabo Delgado are victims of the curse of abundant natural, mineral and energy resources, which has aroused the greed of large Western multinational companies and international criminal groups.

In addition, a categorization and typology of terrorism in Mozambique were developed in the light of conflict analysis. The conflict was latent between 2010 and 2016, initially characterized by radical, extremist religious discourses and sectarianism opposing poor, unemployed young Muslims, with little schooling and professional training opportunities, who became radicalized outside the country and tried to impose new religious rules on the rest of the population regarding dress, commerce, use of alcohol, tobacco, etc. On the other side was the authoritarian, negligent and absent Mozambican state. The conflict had both religious and ideological motivations and causes, as well as differences over the exploitation of natural and mineral resources.

From 2017 onwards, the conflict became evident, characterized by armed attacks with extreme violence against civilian populations, executions and beheadings, kidnapping of women, young people and children, rape, sexual slavery, forced marriages with minors, burning of houses with occupants inside, use of children and adolescents in jihadism.

This intrastate micro-conflict developed rapidly, impetuously, violently and destructively, evolving into a fratricidal armed war, so far confined to the province of Cabo Delgado. Terrorism changed the course of Mozambican domestic and foreign policy, leading the state to resort to PMCs from the Wagner Group, *Paramount*, DAG, and troops from Rwanda and SAMIM, making the intrastate conflict international. Al-Shabaab's guerrilla war proved to be distinct from previous military phenomena and armed groups, constituting the worst military crisis Mozambique had experienced since the end of the civil war. The Mozambican government's response to the conflict was the militarization of Cabo Delgado, with a series of interventions that initially stabilized the war, but proved to be ineffective over the years. The conflict has gained further international involvement, with the partnership of the Western bloc — the US and the EU — which has offered military training and non-lethal material to Mozambican troops.

It is not clear who is financing the jihadists, although part of their income comes from criminal activities such as timber smuggling, wildlife trafficking, illegal mining, drug trafficking, robberies, and more. None of the warring parties are in a position to win the conflict militarily. As a result of the conflict, the Mozambican government has moved closer to regimes such as Rwanda, Uganda, the Central African Republic and Russia, signing secret agreements and Africanizing the conflict while regionalizing Mozambique's foreign policy, which was previously geared towards traditional Western states and partners such as the USA, EU and Japan. The conflict changed Mozambican military grammar, introducing new classifications and terminologies, while at the same time civil-military relations deteriorated, characterized by extortion, abuse, restriction of freedom, human rights violations and even deaths of citizens at the hands of the DSF.

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## ABSTRACT

The article analyzed terrorism in Cabo Delgado Province, in northern Mozambique. It aimed to understand the conflict, examine the processes of radicalization of young people and verify the causes using typologies and categories of analysis. It used qualitative methodology, combined with a literature review and documentary research. It mobilized conflict theories: Huntington's clash of civilizations, Ted Gurr's relative deprivation and Mary Kaldor's new wars. Why has Mozambique become the newest epicenter of violent religious extremism and terrorism in sub-Saharan Africa? Three types of perspectives — domestic, international and the resource curse — explain the causes of the conflict. Alongside religious issues, the dispute over natural and mineral resources are the reasons for the conflict, which has changed the country's domestic and foreign policy, bringing the government closer to authoritarian and dictatorial regimes in Africa and Europe. Faced with the ineffectiveness of the national

defence and security forces, the state internationalized the conflict by authorizing the entry of private military corporations and foreign armies, militarizing and creating a salad of interventions in the country.

## KEYWORDS

Mozambique. Extremist violence. Terrorism.

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