

The Jihadi Insurgency in Cabo Delgado:

Ideology, Protagonists and Causes*

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Abstract

Based on fieldwork interviews with the internally displaced Muslims from the regions affected by the insurgency, such as Palma, Mocímboa da Praia, Macomia, Quissanga and others, this article unpacks the context, ideology and protagonists that gave rise and afforded sustenance to the insurgency in Cabo Delgado. After providing an overview of the historical trajectory of Islam in Mozambique, the article presents the ideological and historical underpinnings of the contemporary global jihadi movements, expanding into Africa and Mozambique. The article argues that for jihadism to take roots in any place, there should exist militant protagonists and the grievances that serve as emotional entry points for recruitment. Thus, the article examines the processes by which jihadi protagonists emerged in various communities and the grievances they articulated in order to provoke the insurgency against the State.

Keywords

Mozambique, Cabo Delgado, Islam, jihadism, Salfis, Sufis, insurgency

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Introduction

The violent conflict in Cabo Delgado erupted in October 2017, when tens of young Muslims stormed prisons in the town of Mocímboa da Praia. An irregular insurgency, in a classical sense, became crystallised by 2018, embarking upon a prolonged political-military activity aimed at the control of a region through the use of guerrilla tactics and radical political ideology.¹ Its actions, including warfare, terrorism, propaganda, clandestine recruitment and international networking, were designed to weaken the state legitimacy and presence. The situation was compounded further by the allegiance of the insurgents to IS (the Islamic State) in 2019, suggesting strengthening ties to translocal jihadism.²

Despite the long-term historical presence of Islam, the Mozambican Muslims did not exhibit jihadi tendencies before 2017, neither during colonial or post-colonial periods, although some jihads appear to have taken place before the Portuguese colonisation.³ Northern Mozambicans have always been aware of the fact that the radicalisation is generally latent as the extremist politico-religious ideology is available to all Muslims. Especially so because in the neighbouring countries, with whom they have long-term historical and cultural ties, like the Comoros, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Somalia, jihadist movements have already been operating since the 1990s. Thus, the questions of why in 2017, why in Cabo Delgado and what prompted certain young Muslims to revolt and align with the global jihadism have been central to the attempts at understanding this new phenomenon.

The first academic study suggested that the insurgency was led by young people linked to Al-Shabaab of Somalia, Kenya and Tanzania, as well as criminal networks controlling the smuggling of precious stones, drugs and timber and engaged in animal poaching.⁴ Some journalists and security analysts traced its origins to endemic poverty and the socio-economic and political marginalisation of northern Mozambique, while others asserted that the neoliberal policies and the extractive industry led to revolt.⁵ Yet others tried to locate the insurgency's inspiration in jihadist movements such as Al-Qaeda, IS and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) operating in Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.⁶

This article argues that all these elements have contributed to the emergence and perseverance of the insurgency. The jihadi ideology and networks, the perceived

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- 1 See, Berman and Matanock's definition in E. Berman and A. M. Matanock, 'The Empiricists' Insurgency', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 18, 2015, 443–464, 444.
 - 2 See video – Fighters from Congo-Kivu province and Mozambique-Cabo Delgado province renewed their oath to the Islamic State leader. <https://monitoring.ifiadvisory.com/en/islamic-state-renewed-bayah-from-central-africa-province> (last accessed 27/10/2021).
 - 3 The most prominent jihad was by the sultan Musa Quanto of Angoche region in the 1870s. See, E. do Couto Lupi, *Angoche. Breve memória sobre uma das Capitánias-Môres do Distrito de Moçambique* (Lisboa: Typografia do Anuario Commercial, 1907), 174, 182–198; P. Massano de Amorim, *Relatório sobre a ocupação de Angoche: Operações de campanha e mais serviço realizados, Anno 1910* (Lourenço Marques: Imprensa Nacional, 1911), 4–5; J. de Azevedo Coutinho, *As duas conquistas de Angoche* (Lisboa: Pelo Imperio, No 11, 1935), 10–31; N. J. Hafkin, 'Trade, Society, and Politics in Northern Mozambique, c. 1753–1913' (PhD Dissertation, Boston University, 1973), 88–319.
 - 4 J. Pereira, S. Forquilha and S. Habibo, *Ataques em Mocímboa da Praia – Estudo* (Maputo: IESE; MASC, 2018).
 - 5 P. Fabricius, 'Is Another Boko Haram or Al-Shabaab Erupting in Mozambique?', *ISS Today*, Pretoria, 14 June 2018.
 - 6 G. Pirio, R. Pittelli and Y. Adam, 'The Emergence of Violent Extremism in Northern Mozambique', *African Center for Strategic Studies*, 25 March 2018; S. Habibo, S. Forquilha and J. Pereira, 'Radicalização islâmica no norte de Moçambique: o caso de Mocímboa da Praia', *Cadernos IESE*, 17, 2019, 11–13.

marginalisation, exclusion and poverty, the extractive industry and the youth protagonism, are all crucial. The Mozambican case is no different from other regions where groups claiming global translocal orientation remain deeply rooted in specific local socio-political and economic settings. In order for translocal movements like jihadism to expand in a given region, there must exist at least two elements, which are present in Mozambique: 1) an enabling and fertile environment for exploring emotional entry points, and 2) the presence of the ideologically-minded militants linked to global networks.⁷

The article starts by providing an overview of the historical trajectory of Islam in Mozambique and of the global transnational jihadism, and then proceeds to unpack the context, ideology and protagonists that gave rise and afforded sustenance to the insurgency in Cabo Delgado. This study is based on two fieldworks, in September-October and December of 2023, when Muslims from the districts affected by the insurgency, namely Palma, Mocímboa da Praia, Macomia, Quissanga, and others, living as the internally displaced people (IDP) in Pemba city, were interviewed. They exemplify different generations, starting from a 25 year old and up to someone who was 87, and were selected on the basis of their affiliation to two main currents of Islam in this region: Sufis, those who belong to Sufi Orders of the Qadiriyya and the Shadhuliyya; and Salafis, which include those who belong to the Islamic Council of Mozambique as well as those who received religious training through the institutions of an international Islamic NGO, Africa Muslims Agency. The latter generally upheld a more radical Islamic outlook than other Muslims. The interviews were conducted in Portuguese, as the interviewed people were well-versed in this language. The full names and other indicators of the interviewed people are not given in order to protect their identities in the current volatile environment. Unfortunately, due to the security restrictions, it was impossible to interview any insurgents. One of the objectives of this article is to let Muslims speak for themselves, to give them a voice and, in this way, provide the reader with access to a more intimate empirical data.

Islam in Mozambique

Archaeological evidence suggests that since at least the eighth century, coastal northern Mozambique was part of the Swahili World, which is comprised of the geographic regions of the East African coast, including the coasts of contemporary Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, the north-western coast of Madagascar, and the islands of the Comoros. The Swahili World is characterised by a culture resulting from the *longue durée* historical, economic, cultural and political interactions between the Indian Ocean rim, the African mainland and Islam. Thus, probably coastal Mozambique shared Islamic religious conceptions and practices with its neighbours.⁸ At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Duarte Barbosa mentioned that

7 See S. J. Hansen, “‘Forever Wars’? Patterns of Diffusion and Consolidation of Jihadism in Africa”, *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 33, 3, 2022.

8 L. J. K. Bonate, ‘Islam in Northern Mozambique: A Historical Overview’, *History Compass*, 8, 7, 2010, 573–593.

Angoche, Sofala, Cuama and Mozambique 'were all under the obedience to the King of Kilwa, who was a great king amongst them.'⁹ The pre-eminence of Kilwa was due to its control of the Sofala gold and ivory trade with the Great Zimbabwe and later Mwenemotapa kingdoms since the end of the thirteenth century.¹⁰ In the early sixteenth century, however, the Portuguese occupied Kilwa, Mozambique Island, Sofala, Cuama and Quelimane (Kilimani), and Inhambane and Bazaruto islands in southern Mozambique, all ruled up until then by Swahili Muslims. The Portuguese conquest led to a gradual elimination of Muslim enclaves in central and southern Mozambique, which however continued to thrive at the coast stretching from Pebane to Palma.¹¹

Between the seventeenth and the end of the nineteenth centuries, the relationship between the Portuguese administration at the Mozambique Island with Muslim rulers of northern Mozambique was that of negotiations, adaptations and sometimes confrontations, but the historical Swahili sultanates continued to exist independently. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the region became involved in the international slave trade,¹² which stimulated the expansion of Islam from the coast into the mainland up to Lake Nyassa (Malawi).¹³ Only in 1895–1913, the Portuguese undertook a concerted effort at conquering the region, owing to the demands of the 'Effective Occupation' clause of the 1884–1885 Berlin Conference.¹⁴ This coincided with the spread of the two new Sufi Orders, the Qadiriyya and Shadhuliyya, which came through the traditional Swahili networks from Zanzibar and the Comoros and introduced radical changes in local practices and conceptions of Islam.¹⁵ They built new mosques, *zawiyas* and *madradas* (local vernacular from Arabic, *Qur'anic* schools), attracted many women and expanded the Orders into the rest of Mozambique and even some parts of South Africa. They brought about significant transformations in religious conceptions and practices, which prompted resistance of the old Islamic leaders, and sometimes led to violence.¹⁶

After the start of the colonial rule, Muslims became subject to the *Indigenato* regime, but from 1930 to 1954, the Portuguese policies towards them turned hostile again as the nationalist government of the *Estado Novo* (1926–1974) promoted a type of forced 'Portugualisation' through Catholic mission schools.¹⁷ With the introduction of the 1961 Overseas Administrative Reform, which made the colonies a part of the Portuguese state and the colonial subjects its citizens, the challenge for the Portuguese

9 D. Barbosa, *A Description of the Coasts of East Africa and Malabar in the Beginning of the Sixteenth Century* (New Delhi, Madras: Asian Educational Services, 1995), 11.

10 R. L. Pouwels, 'Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean to 1800: Reviewing Relations in Historical Perspective', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 35, 2–3, 2002, 387–400.

11 Bonate, 'Islam in Northern Mozambique'.

12 E. A. Alpers, *Ivory and Slaves: Changing Patterns of International Trade in East Central Africa to the Later Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975).

13 L. J. K. Bonate, 'Traditions and Transitions: Islam and Chiefship in Northern Mozambique, ca. 1850 to 1974' (PhD Dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2007).

14 R. Pélissier, *História de Moçambique: Formação e Oposição, 1854–1928*, M. Raus (trans. from French to Portuguese) (Lisboa: Editorial Estampa Lda., 2 Volumes, 3rd Edition, 2000).

15 L. J. K. Bonate, 'The Advent and Schisms of Sufi Orders in Mozambique, 1896–1964', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 26, 4, 2015, 483–501.

16 Bonate, 'Traditions and Transitions'.

17 Bonate, 'Traditions and Transitions'.

was to recognise Islam, in particular in Africa, as a religion and Muslims as culturally Portuguese.¹⁸ While grappling with these issues, the regime was forced to realise that the growing independence movements in northern Mozambique involved, besides the Makonde of the Mueda plateau, significant portions of the predominantly Muslim regions. This understanding became a turning point in Portuguese policies of Islam between 1965 and 1974, when attempts were made to lure Muslim into supporting colonialism.¹⁹ For example, the regime promoted *haji*, and built, restored and pompously inaugurated mosques.²⁰

The Salafi trend made inroads into the country in the mid-1950s and early 1960s, brought by Mozambicans trained in Islamic schools of East Africa, as well as in Dar Ul-Ulum Deoband Seminary in India and the Medina University in Saudi Arabia, among others.²¹ Bent to 'purify' local Islam and implant a 'true' orthodoxy, they tried to eliminate Sufism and other conceptions and practices they deemed to be *bid'a* (Arabic, alleged abhorrent religious innovations). The conflicts between them and Sufis were often violent and bloody, and the Portuguese rule sometimes called military regiments and arrested hundreds of people.²² The ostracised Salafis were expelled from the existing, mostly Sufi, mosques, and built their own mosques. The colonial rule tried to take advantage of these conflicts, but from 1968 onwards, it opted for supporting Sufis after realising the scope of their power, and hoping that through them Muslims could be co-opted within the context of the liberation war (1964–1974). These efforts were short-lived as the Portuguese regime abruptly collapsed in 1974 overthrown by the army, and the colonial territories, including Mozambique, gained independence in 1975.

In 1977, the post-independence government, led by the Frelimo party, adopted Marxism and declared religion to be an obstacle to a secular modernisation of the country. Muslims were subjected to state persecutions along with other religious groups.²³ However, the government changed its approach in 1982 and, subsequently, two national umbrella organisations were officially registered. One was the Islamic Council, representing the Salafi trend, which became a top-down centralised hierarchical organisation. The other one was the Islamic Congress, agglomerating disparate quasi-autonomous associations and Sufi Orders. Before long, the two sides revived the old rivalry and embarked upon competition for the patronage of the ruling party and the international Islamic organisations, such as the World Muslim League and Africa Muslims Agency. The latter, besides the usual *dawa* (proselytising) and humanitarian aid, supported the Islamic Council by building its mosques, *madrasas*

18 A. Vakil, 'Questões Inacabadas: Colonialismo, Islão e Portugalidade' in M. C. Ribeiro and A. P. Ferreira (eds), *Fantasmias e Fantacias Imperiais no Imaginário Português Contemporâneo* (Porto: Campo das Letras, 2003), 272.

19 L. J. K. Bonate, 'Muslim Memories of the Liberation War in Cabo Delgado', *Kronos: Southern African Histories*, 39, November 2013, 230–256; M. A. Machaqueiro, *Portuguese Colonialism and Islam: Mozambique and Guinea, 1930–1974: From Repression to Religious Seduction* (Liverpool University Press, 2023).

20 F. A. Monteiro, *O Islão, o Poder, e a Guerra: Moçambique 1964–74* (Porto: Ed. Universidade Portucalense, 1993); Bonate, 'Traditions and Transitions'.

21 Bonate, 'Traditions and Transitions'.

22 Bonate, 'Traditions and Transitions'.

23 L. J. K. Bonate, 'Muslim Religious Leadership in Post-Colonial Mozambique', *South African Historical Journal*, 60, 4, 2008, 637–654.

and the Islamic Cultural Centres in many cities and towns of northern Mozambique where they taught Salafi ideology. The rivalry involved not only the leaderships of the two camps but also ordinary Muslims at grass-roots level, who got involved in verbal and physical violence. Funerals and related rituals were at the centre of these types of conflicts to the point that many families were split because of their differences. Many imams were expelled from their mosques due to specific rituals and sermons.²⁴ The Islamic Council leaders were taken to court, subjected to public ridicule in anonymous leaflets, and featured in various complaint letters to the Department of the Religious Affairs of the Ministry of Justice, to the Frelimo Party Central Committee and even to the President Samora Machel.²⁵ At some point in the late 1980s, the government concluded that conflicts between Muslims were inevitable, and that Muslims must settle their disputes by themselves.

In the mid-1990s, the first post-independence northern Mozambican graduates returned after completing their Islamic studies abroad. Although they shared Salafi views of the Islamic Council, they did not approve of its closeness to the ruling Frelimo party which, in their understanding, was ignoring the plight of the impoverished north.²⁶ Most coastal Muslims were in fact supporting the opposition party, Renamo.²⁷ As leaders of the Council were Afro-Indians at that time, they were accused of racism towards the majority black northerners, as well as being regionalist southerners, and enjoying the wealth from their businesses and syphoning the funds of the foreign Islamic NGOs. The young Salafis also thought that the older generation were slacking in theology and not being hard enough on the prevailing, from their standpoint, *bid'a*. In 1998, they founded a movement called Ahl al-Sunna (Arabic, people of tradition, the Sunna).²⁸ The term implies that they claim to uphold a 'true' 'orthodox' Sunnism, as opposed to the older generation of Salafis and Sufis. The young Salafis were expelled from the Council's mosques and began building their own mosques with the funds collected from local communities. Their *madrasas* provided some valuable community services, such as *Qur'anic* schools for children, adult literacy classes in Portuguese, sewing and other skill acquisition courses and religious classes for adults, especially women. With time, the less radical branch of Ahl al-Sunna has reconciled with the Islamic Council, while the more radical part was organised into AJID (*Associação da Juventude Islâmica e de Desenvolvimento*, the Association of Islamic Youth and Development) in Nampula Province, officially registered in the 2010s.

As it can be gathered from the history of Islam in Mozambique, each new wave of shifts in religious conceptions and practices challenged the existing *status quo* and especially the authority and legitimacy of the established religious leaderships. This

24 Bonate, 'Muslim Religious Leadership'.

25 Bonate, 'Muslim Religious Leadership'.

26 Bonate, 'Muslim Religious Leadership'.

27 J. Feijo, A. Souto and J. Maquenzi, 'Desenvolvimento socioeconomico de Cabo Delgado num contexto de conflicto' (Working Paper), *Observador Rural (OMR)*, 1001, 2020, 55; J. Feijó, 'Social Asymmetries: Clues to Understand the Spread of Islamist Jihadism in Cabo Delgado' (Dakar-Fann: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Peace and Security Competence Centre Sub-Saharan Africa, 2020), 2 and passim.

28 The term *Ahl al-Sunna wa'l-Jama'* refers to early Muslims who believed that the Prophet Muhammad's succession lay in a series of his companions recognised as caliphs. They assumed a communal identity of Sunni Muslims later.

led to violent conflicts among Muslims, and resulted in the expulsion of the neophytes from the existing mosques and congregations. The Mozambican Muslim history shows the cyclical repetition of these occurrences up to today. It also shows that northern Mozambique has never been isolated from the regional and global *umma* (Arabic, Muslim community), and, in particular, its ties to the east African coasts of Tanzania, Kenya, Somalia and the Comoros, or the Swahili World, has been lasting, continuous and uninterrupted. The cross-fertilisation and dialogue in terms of the religious interpretations and practices of these regions went on for many centuries, and continues today.

Transnational Jihadism and Cabo Delgado Insurgency

According to Habibo, Forquilha and Pereira, the insurgency in Cabo Delgado was initiated by Salafis radicalised in Saudi Arabia, who were also influenced by jihadist groups in neighbouring countries, particularly Tanzania, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo.²⁹ But, as stated above, Salafis have a long history in Mozambique, at least since the 1950s and 1960s, and they had not provoked jihad.³⁰ Rather, the current insurgents are linked to transnational jihadism, which is a relatively recent phenomenon, even if its basic principles are close to traditional Salafism. It is a type of violent activism which, in terms of its ideology, aims to mobilise Muslims around the world to restore an alleged rigorous conception of the political and religious order of the early days of Islam.³¹ It has an inherently 'glocal' (global-local) character of resistance; that is, although jihadists oppose specific States on the basis of local grievances, they simultaneously rebel against the international order of Western hegemony.³² Transnational jihadism has three facets: 1) it is an ideology based on a radical and innovative interpretation of fundamental sources of Islam, such as the *Qur'an*, *hadith* and the works of some classical thinkers; 2) it seizes upon local grievances, especially against the state, triggering insurgency or channeling the existing resistance to its own benefit; and 3) it also represents a resistance against the Western-dominated global order.

Transnational jihadism emerged from movements and ideologies that scholars group under a rubric of 'Islamism', which stands for attempts to articulate Islam into a political order.³³ Islamists argue that riches of their countries are controlled by corrupt and ineffective governments, who in turn, are controlled by the West, which through them controls their national resources, and this allegedly keeps the majority of the world's Muslim population poor, unemployed and without civil and human rights. Although Islamism is politically heterogeneous, in the sense that different

29 Habibo, Forquilha and Pereira, *Radicalização islâmica*, 11–12.

30 L. J. K. Bonate, 'Islam in Northern Mozambique: A Historical Overview', *History Compass*, 8, 7, 2010, 573–593.

31 M. Crenshaw, 'Transnational Jihadism & Civil Wars', *Dædalus: The Journal of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences*, 146, 4, 2017, 59–70.

32 Crenshaw, 'Transnational Jihadism', 60.

33 F. A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 30–31; S. J. Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005–2012* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 7, 31, 59–67, 74; P. Mandaville, *Translational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma* (London: Routledge, 2001), 68–69.

actors specialise in qualitatively different political activities, in the ideological field it has roots in Salafism³⁴ and a mixture of Wahhabi doctrine³⁵, pan-Islamism of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897), interpretations of Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) and his disciples, especially, Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966). Sayyid Qutb was particularly influential in setting the ideological basis of the current jihadism as, following Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), he declared that it is up to the believer to decide whether his government, even a Muslim one, is illegitimate, and if so, whether it should be resisted actively or not.³⁶ Qutb also charged Muslims with the responsibility to decide whether those around them were infidels (*kafirun*; sing. *kafir*) or true Muslims. This emphasis on *takfir* (‘excommunication’ or declaration of someone as a *kafir*) has had a profound effect on the current jihadism, which emphasises the fight against the ‘near enemy’, that is, Sufi, secular, or moderate Muslims.³⁷ Qutb tasked Muslims to take steps to establish a just and pure Islamic order which, in his opinion, equals to that of the times of *salaf* (the founders of Islam), with *shariah* (the straight path of Islam and Islamic law) and the Islamic state (*khilafah*, the caliphate). He believed that it was not possible to seek reform of the prevailing social order through dialogue and persuasion, and declared that a direct resistance and jihad were the only possible and even obligatory methods to achieve change.³⁸

The persecution of Islamist militants by Baathist governments (of secular social democratic parties) in Egypt, Syria and Iraq took many of them into exile to Saudi Arabia, where, in the 1970s and 1980s, they rendered the birth of jihadism as a populist globalist movement.³⁹ Thus, the current extremist jihadism was formed in exile by the strategic action of marginalised elites employed in the newly established international Islamic organisations and in new higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia.⁴⁰ The new jihadism emerged out of a competition within this elite, which due to a lack of government oversight in Saudi Arabia, oil money and new media technologies, became ideologically effective on a global scale.⁴¹ They joined the war in Afghanistan (1978–1992) which attracted such prominent ideologues of jihadism as Ayman al-Zawahiri and Osama bin Laden.⁴² Al-Zawahiri insisted that the ‘distant enemy’ was the same as the ‘near enemy’ in a global jihad, because, in his view, the United States (‘the distant enemy’) governed the Middle East through ‘local puppets’ (‘the near enemy’), constituting a system he called a ‘veiled colonialism’. Bin Laden declared that all US goods and citizens around the world were legitimate

34 On Salafism, see H. Lauzière, *The Making of Salafism: Islamic Reform in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

35 See A. al-Yassini, *Religion and State in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 29.

36 Mandaville, *Islam and Politics*, 102.

37 R. L. Euben, *Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism: A Work of Comparative Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 73.

38 J. Calvert, *Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 197–227.

39 Mandaville, *Islam and Politics*, 50–51, 99–101; T. Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 4, 60; T. Hegghammer, ‘The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad’, *International Security*, 35, 3, 2010–2011, 53–94.

40 Hegghammer, ‘The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters’, 80–81; Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia*, 40.

41 Hegghammer, ‘The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters’, 74.

42 Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, 295.

targets for attack and even encouraged assaults within the US.⁴³ The Afghan jihad produced transnational networks of militants that caused some grievous terrorist acts culminating in 9/11. The US responded by declaring a Global War on Terror against Islamic extremism, and invaded Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. The removal of the Iraqi Sunni elites from the political and military power which was transferred to the Shiite majority, has triggered serious persecution of the Sunni minority and exacerbated sectarian violence.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Iraq replaced Afghanistan as a training ground where a new generation of militants acquired military expertise and built personal relationships through common combat experience. The war against Assad's regime in Syria, along with the unstable situation in Iraq, brought to light a new jihadist group, the Islamic State (IS), with a much more violent stance than that of its predecessors.⁴⁵ IS prioritised action (violent jihad) over theory (theology), and the conquest of territories.⁴⁶

African militants have been participating in these global debates and transnational wars. In 1991, an attempt by Islamist political parties to seize power through democratic process in Algeria failed.⁴⁷ The Algerian military intervened to cancel the parliamentary elections that the Islamic Salvation Front was about to win. The Front was banned and its members were arrested by the thousands. As a result, several armed jihadi groups were formed, some linked to the Front, others independent and more extremist, which expanded into Mali, Niger and Chad.⁴⁸ Thereafter, *Boko Haram* emerged in 2002–2003 in Nigeria, and declared allegiance to IS in 2015.⁴⁹ The organisation later split into two, one part of which became the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) in 2016. On the east African side, the *al-Shabaab* was launched in 2006 in Somalia and declared allegiance to Al-Qaeda in 2012⁵⁰, the same year that the jihadist group *Al-Hijra* of Kenya did so.⁵¹ IS announced that it had a Central African Province in 2019, showing reports, videos and photos from the Democratic Republic of Congo and, later, Mozambique.⁵² The Ugandan ADF, created in 1995, is apparently affiliated with IS in 2019, as declared by Musa Baluku, the organisation's commander.⁵³

43 Gerges, *The Far Enemy*, 295.

44 T. Hegghammer, 'Global Jihadism After the Iraq War', *Middle East Journal*, 60, 1, 2006, 11–32; F. A. Gerges, *ISIS: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

45 Gerges, *ISIS*, 71–73; 81–84.

46 A. Arosoaie, 'Doctrinal Differences between ISIS and Al Qaeda: An Account of Ideologues', *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses*, 7, 7, 2015, 32.

47 Mandaville, *Islam and Politics*, 115–118.

48 L. Raineri, 'Explaining the Rise of Jihadism in Africa: The Crucial Case of the Islamic State of the Greater Sahara', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 34, 8, 2020.

49 A. Brigaglia, 'The Volatility of Salafi Political Theology, the War on Terror and the Genesis of Boko Haram', *Diritto e Questioni Pubbliche*, 15, 2, 2015, 174–201; A. Thurston, *Boko Haram: The History of an African Jihadist Movement* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

50 Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*; R. Marchal, 'A Tentative Assessment of the Somali Harakat Al-Shabaab', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 3, 3, 2009, 381–404.

51 N. Chome, 'From Islamic Reform to Muslim Activism: The Evolution of an Islamist Ideology in Kenya', *African Affairs*, 118, 472, 2019, 531–552; H. Ndzovu, 'Kenya's Jihadist Clerics: Formulation of a "Liberation Theology" and Challenges to Secular Power', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 38, 3, 2018, 360–371.

52 Hansen, 'Forever Wars'?

53 A. A. Nsobya, 'Uganda's Militant Islamic Movement ADF: A Historical Analysis', *The Annual Review of Islam in Africa*, 12/13, 2015–2016, 30–39; T. Candland, A. Finck, H. J. Ingram, et al., *The Islamic State in Congo* (Washington: George Washington University, 2021).

The Cabo Delgado insurgents raised the IS flag in 2019, adopted its symbols and even its brutal tactics. This points to IS's enormous ideological influence, as, according to Tara Candland et al., IS emphasises that certain criteria must be met for a group to be formally accepted.⁵⁴ This involves the public oath of allegiance (*bayat*) to the leadership of the IS, who must then officially accept the candidates. In the case of Cabo Delgado, IS propaganda organs indicate that the insurgents have been accepted and Cabo Delgado formally incorporated into *IS Central African Province*.⁵⁵ IS also plays a role in approving, if not directly appointing, the group's leader, attributing to him the comprehensive title of *wali* (governor) of a province.⁵⁶ Efforts to consolidate different groups and factions under one banner and one leadership constitute an important component of this process. Furthermore, the group must adopt and apply the IS *aqeeda* (creed) and *manhaj* (methodology) to guide its ideological, military, governance, and propaganda activities.⁵⁷ IS thus provides its followers with a comprehensive ideological system through *aqeeda* and a phased political-military strategy through its *manhaj*. An important feature of IS's *aqeeda* is its extreme stance on *takfir*, that is, identifying as non-believers (*kafir*) not only non-Muslims but also Muslims who do not share their vision.

However, before the start of the insurgency in 2017, the most influential jihadi ideologue in Cabo Delgado was Aboud Rogo Muhammed (1968–2012), whose recorded sermons were circulated widely in the province.⁵⁸ Aboud Rogo was one of the leaders of the Kenyan Al-Hijra with ties to al-Qaeda in East Africa and al-Shabaab of Somalia.⁵⁹ Al-Hijra was responsible for several terrorist attacks in Kenya. Initially, Aboud Rogo joined the Islamic Party of Kenya and ran unsuccessfully for a seat in Mombasa's municipal council.⁶⁰ Disenchanted with party politics, he depicted the local marginalisation of Muslims as part of a global assault on Islam and presented violent resistance as a legitimate response to this alleged oppression. He preached against the secular state as unjust and corrupt and extorted Muslims to wage a *jihad* in order to install an Islamic state in Muslim-majority regions of Kenya; he focused on defining and justifying violent jihadi activities in areas he considered as 'occupied' by non-Muslims, especially Christians; and he rationalised killing the so-called *kafirs*, Christians and non-radical Muslims, as necessary.⁶¹

Those who came into a direct contact with the radicalised youths of Cabo Delgado, reported to have witnessed their calls for violent jihad to overthrow the

54 Candland et al., *The Islamic State in Congo*, 7–8.

55 Candland et al., *The Islamic State in Congo*, 26.

56 Unfortunately, so far, the identity of the IS *wali* of Mozambique province has not been divulged, and it is unclear whether the *wali* is someone from another country or a Mozambican. However, some of the leaders of the military operations in Mozambique, such as Omar Machude, have been publicly known.

57 Candland et al., *The Islamic State in Congo*, 7–8

58 S. Habibe, S. Forquilha and J. Pereira, 'Radicalização Islâmica no Norte de Moçambique: O Caso de Mocimboa da Praia', *Cadernos IESE*, 17, 2019, 12, 15, 18, 30; G. L. Macalane and J. S. Jafar, 'Ataques Terroristas em Cabo Delgado (2017–2020): as causas do fenómeno pela boca da população de Mocimboa da Praia' (Unpublished report, Universidade Rovuma, Extensão de Cabo Delgado, Pemba, 2021), 39.

59 A. LeSage, 'The Rising Terrorist Threat in Tanzania: Domestic Islamist Militancy and Regional Threats', *Strategic Forum* (National Defense University), September 2014, 11–12.

60 Ndzovu, 'Kenya's Jihadi Clerics', 5–7.

61 Ndzovu, 'Kenya's Jihadi Clerics', 5–6.

allegedly corrupt and unjust secular state of Mozambique.⁶² For example, one of the interviewed asserted that ‘these insurgents took their *aqeeda* [creed] from Kenya, from Aboud Rogo, who started expanding that *aqeeda* to Tanzania and Mozambique.’⁶³ But Aboud Rogo sermons were, in fact, popular all across ages and religious affiliations, both among Sufis and Salafis, because many people felt that the sermons reflected their own reality and grievances.⁶⁴ One of the interviewed young men in his twenties, observed:

I used to listen to him on YouTube; as did many people. He was saying that the government does not help us. If a boss that works for the government commits a crime, nothing happens to him; but if an ordinary Muslim causes a slight trouble, the government kills him. The government is corrupt to the core.⁶⁵

Others commented:

We started listening to Aboud Rogo’s sermons in 2014... People used to put on his sermons very loudly. There was a time in Nanduadua [Mocímboa da Praia neighbourhood], when Ali Mabondo [one of the leaders of the insurgency] put three huge speakers at once with his sermons, and people would listen. Mabondo insisted that we should follow Rogo, who said “why do you go to government schools instead of religious ones?” And, “We will create Islamic tribunals here in Mombasa”. He said that the government does not do anything for the well-being of Muslims, that Muslims are poor, backward, discriminated, marginalised, and that Muslim peripheries are not benefiting from any government’s projects of development. Rogo spoke very ill of the government; he said that the government is unjust, it steals from people and it is corrupt. He said that we should change our life, take things into our own hands. Mabondo also used to say that we, at the coast, are marginalised, and government’s money does not reach us. Many people agreed. In fact, what Aboud Rogo said about Mombasa could be applicable to Mocímboa da Praia too.⁶⁶

When a more radical stance of the future insurgents became public in 2015, it caused quite a stir and triggered opposition from the Sufis and especially from the Salafis of the Islamic Council and Africa Muslims Agency. As remembered by the interviewed people:

62 Habibe, Forquilha and Pereira, ‘Radicalização Islâmica no Norte de Moçambique’; Macalane and Jafar, ‘Ataques Terroristas em Cabo Delgado’, 38–50; J.Feijó, ‘Caracterizacão e organização dos Machababos a partir de discursos de mulheres raptadas’, *Observador Rural (OMR)*, 109, Abril 2021.

63 Interview with SB. Pemba city, 13 December 2023.

64 As stated above, most people in this region understand and/or speak Kiswahili due to *longue durée* continuous interactions with the Swahili World. So, understanding Aboud Rogo’s sermons did not constitute a problem for the majority of the people of Cabo Delgado, especially at the coast and even among the Makonde of the interior.

65 Interview with AA. Pemba city, 11 December 2023.

66 Interview with MO, AW and TA. Pemba city, 12 December 2023.

[The future insurgents] listened to Aboud Rogo sermons about liberating Islam from *kafirs*, that *sharia* should rule the world, and that we should apply *huddud*, cut hands and stone people. They said we should replace the government with the Islamic state.⁶⁷

Then, they [future insurgents] told us not to go to government schools and only attend *madrasa*; and not to go to hospitals too.⁶⁸ But even to study [at an Islamic university] in Saudi Arabia, you have to complete the 12th grade of the school first. How can you not study at school? But the insurgents call Saudi Arabia a *kafir* country united with the USA.⁶⁹

When they started to teach in *madrasa*, they said that they won't accept the government ID, because there is a photo; they said that it is *shirk* [idolatry and polytheism, the act of associating God with images]. They did not accept the government documentation.⁷⁰

They said: 'Do not accept the government and do not accept the goods from the government, only from God.'⁷¹

They told us: 'The government is *kafir*, so we should leave the government. If we follow the government, we are *kafir* too.'⁷²

They also said that they wanted the Frelimo banner down, and their banner up.⁷³

However, the boiling point was reached when the future insurgents began entering mosques armed with knives and machetes, and wearing shoes and shortened trousers. One of the most authoritative *shaykhs* expressed his abhorrence to these acts:

We understood that they were dressed and acted as warriors of the time of the Prophet Muhammad in jihad. But why did they start a jihad? Who gave them permission and to what end? To overthrow the government? Mozambique is vast; there are many people who are not Muslims here. What will they achieve? Separate Cabo Delgado from the rest of Mozambique? We fought for our independence from the Portuguese colonialism, to have an independent country, our Mozambique. We will not allow anyone to divide our country or unsettle peace. The *Qur'an* makes it clear that the only time permissible for jihad is the Last Day of Judgement.⁷⁴

67 Interview with AA. Pemba city, 11 December 2023.

68 Interview with NB, MSM and MM. Pemba city, 8 December 2023.

69 Interview with MO, AW and TA. Pemba city, 12 December 2023.

70 Interview with SN. Pemba city, 11 December 2023.

71 Interview with MM. Pemba city, 28 September 2023.

72 Interview with MM. Pemba city, 28 September 2023.

73 Interview with NW. Pemba city, 12 December 2023.

74 Interview with SN. Pemba city, 11 December 2023.

This view was reiterated by another influential *shaykh*:

The jihad indicated by Allah is of the Last Judgement Day. When these people declared their jihad, we were surprised. The time has not arrived. These people fight for their own interests. And we are forbidden to kill by Allah. Their goal, even if they talk about Islam, is not of Allah. It is shocking to us that they want to kill. They are *munafique* [hypocrites].⁷⁵

Another prominent elderly *shaykh* expressed his feelings this way:

We fought the colonisers, got our independence, so we could govern our own country. But what do these insurgents want? Nothing. Just to destroy our brothers and our country. We will not allow our country to be overtaken by *nasuzuki* [vernacular Makua, bandits].⁷⁶

By 2016, the rejection by the old religious establishment of the future insurgents was total, and they were expelled even from the mosques of the Africa Muslims Agency, the organisation to which they were previously attached.⁷⁷

They were expelled from all the mosques and forbidden to enter mosques, because they had knives and wanted to overthrow the government. They were expelled from the Central Mosque of Mocímboa da Praia, from the Africa Muslim Agency's *bairro* [Portuguese, neighbourhood] Milamba mosque, and even *bairro* Nacala's Africa Muslims Agency's mosque expelled them, despite that they were active in that mosque before.⁷⁸

According to the interviewed people, the insurgency leaders, such as Omar Machude, Ali Mabondo and Ibn Qidal, among others, received their religious instruction in the madrasas and the Islamic Cultural Centres of the Africa Muslims Agency.⁷⁹ But even Ahmad Suleiman Mbone, the fiery militant leader of this organisation in Mocímboa da Praia, denounced the irreverent youths.⁸⁰ There were several violent disputes between him and the rebels, but threatened with death, he was forced into hiding.⁸¹

Confrontations led to that the religious establishment denounced them publicly and lodged complaints against them to the police and the local administrations.⁸² Unsurprisingly and in accordance with the historical precedent, the administrators

75 Interview with SB. Pemba city, 13 December 2023.

76 Interview with MM. Pemba city, 9 September 2023.

77 Interview with NW. Pemba city, 12 December 2023.

78 Interview with MM. Pemba city, 9 September 2023.

79 Interview with NW. Pemba city, 12 December 2023; Interview with MM. Pemba city, 9 September 2023.

80 Interview with TC. Pemba city, 29 September 2023; Interview with NW. Pemba city, 12 December 2023; Interview with MM. Pemba city, 9 September 2023.

81 The interviewed people noted that his sorrow was so great that he died of heartache in 2022. But he also seems to have suffered physical injuries at the hands of both insurgents and the state security forces.

82 Interview with SB. Pemba city, 13 December 2023; Interview with MM. Pemba city, 9 September 2023.

in Mocímboa da Praia and Macomia reacted calmly saying that these were internal Muslim disputes and the religious leaders must find solution to their ‘mosque-related problems’, as they put it.⁸³ But in other regions, the district governments embarked on persecutions and arrests, causing the remaining youths to flee to Mocímboa da Praia and Macomia. There, the idea of forcibly releasing the imprisoned comrades was hatched and attempted to be realised on the fateful day of 5 October 2017.

Meantime, the future insurgents began sending threatening SMS’s to the members of the Islamic Council⁸⁴ and Africa Muslims Agency, calling them *kafir*:

Even a young man, who just returned after completing his Islamic studies in Medina, had received SMS messages saying ‘you, from Africa Muslims Agency, you are *kafir*. We will kill you.’⁸⁵

This was an extraordinary occurrence because previously they would call *kafir* only Sufis, sparing the older Salafis:

Sufis are attacked by everyone, the Africa Muslims Agency, the Islamic Council, and the insurgents. They told us that we know nothing of Islam. [The future insurgents] used to tell us: ‘you are *kafir*, you should be thrown into a well. Your time has gone...’ It was surprising to hear them labelling Africa Muslims Agency and the Islamic Council *kafir* too.⁸⁶

The future insurgents began meeting in an unfinished building in the Nanduadua area of Mocímboa da Praia, which they turned into a mosque using their own monetary and labour contributions.⁸⁷ Then:

Some months later, they left Mocímboa da Praia along the road to Palma and went to the mangroves of Palma, in salt mines, far away from Mocímboa da Praia. They organised there their training camps, they hid there. But other members from Quiteraje, Pangane, Quissanga, and others joined them there.⁸⁸

They also trained in a wooded place near Palma, where people used to collect firewood.⁸⁹

They trained on the islands and in Pangane too.⁹⁰

When they decided that they had enough recruits, they started going around in cars with recruits to cut wood and sell, to make hunter rifles,

83 Habibe, Forquilha and Pereira, ‘Radicalização Islâmica no Norte de Moçambique’, 13.

84 Interview with SB. Pemba city, 13 December 2023.

85 Interview with MC. Pemba city, 28 September 2023.

86 Interview with MM. Pemba city, 28 September 2023; Interview with NB, MSM and MM. Pemba city, 8 December 2023.

87 Habibe, Forquilha and Pereira, ‘Radicalização Islâmica no Norte de Moçambique’, 12–14; Macalane and Jafar, ‘Ataques Terroristas em Cabo Delgado’, 37–39, 43, 50.

88 Interview with MM. Pemba city, 28 September 2023.

89 Interview with AA. Pemba city, 11 December 2023.

90 Interview with NW. Pemba city, 12 December 2023.

while they were training. Then they brought the wood and sold it, and the other group of recruits were taken to training. It was done in turns. No one was talking, everything was hidden, everything was done in secret. When they decided they had enough recruits they started doing evil things. But this is what we heard; we did not see ourselves.⁹¹

Protagonists of the Insurgency: The *Ahl al-Sunna* / *Ash-Shabab*

The new generation of the *Ahl al-Sunna* Salafis are the militant protagonists of the current insurgency, although the original members of this movement, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, were not as aggressive as those of today. The least can be said about the earlier generation is that it had opened the gates for confronting the older Salafis, whose main concern up until then was about the supposed *bid'a*, *shirk*, and *jahiliyya* (Arabic, ignorance), all blamed on Sufis. The name *Ahl al-Sunna* indicates that they claim to be followers of Sunna (the *Qur'an* and the *hadith*, i.e., Prophet Muhammad's traditions), and are certainly not a 'new sect' let alone Quranists.⁹² The name also implies that they viewed themselves as 'true' orthodox Sunnis as opposed to other Muslims of Mozambique.

The second name by which the insurgents are known is *ash-Shabab*, which comes from the Arabic word meaning the youth (*shababi* in classical Kiswahili and old Kimwani), implying that the youth revolt is at the base of this insurgency. The interviewed people indicated that *ash-Shabab* was the name that the insurgents gave to themselves: 'Ash-shabab are the youths, they themselves invented this name. They deliberately targeted for recruitment the youngsters who were poor, unemployed, and who did not study.'⁹³ They separated them from the older generations of the Islamic leadership, the government services, and even from their own families. According to the interviewed people:

They are called *ash-Shabab* because they are young. They started calling themselves *ash-Shabab*, because they were focused on the youngsters. Their leaders are not young, but they are younger than the leaders of the Islamic Council or Sufi Orders. They were taking advantage of the young people, especially teenagers. In every village, they focused on training and teaching the youngsters. They said they had hope only for the young people, and addressed only the youngsters, whom they separated from their parents. They said: 'the parents know nothing of Islam, and it's too late to teach them'. They would do everything among the youths, even weddings, without parents' consent and presence.⁹⁴

91 Interview with SN. Pemba city, 11 December 2023.

92 See, E. Morier-Genoud, 'The Jihadi Insurgency in Mozambique: Origins, Nature and Beginning', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 14, 3, 2020, 396–412.

93 Interview SB. Pemba city, 13 December 2023.

94 Interview with MM. Pemba city, 28 September 2023.

While doing *da'wa* (proselytising) in Milamba, Nanduadua, and in villages, the ash-Shabab approached mostly teenagers of around 16 years of age and older for recruitment.⁹⁵ In 2016, the ash-Shabab started meeting with youngsters at nights after 6pm. When they approached the youngsters for the first time, they asked 'where do you work?' As long as they were not with the government, they would give them money to start a business or pay debt. Many youths did not even know about killing and beheading; they were not prepared for that.⁹⁶

They used to give money to young men, saying 'let's work together'. The young people went to Nampula to sell fish, bought maize, and opened stalls in shops and markets. It was like a credit system, especially set up for the poor youths. These were asked to recruit other young people. Teams of youngsters were created this way. The ash-Shabab told them: 'this country is poor. My boss has *madrassa* and mosque, he gives *sadaqa* (charity), after Juma you will receive money.' Until now no one knows from where the money came. It has been impossible to know. No one knows who is the boss.⁹⁷

Youngsters were recruited because of money. Now they are dying because of money. We are poor, if someone comes and shows money, our children abandon parents and stay with them. The ash-Shabab gave instruction and won over the youngsters. These youngsters recruited others saying that they received money. With that money, the youngsters bought building material, textile, opened a market stalls, and so on. Those who had children, their children suddenly were dressed and well-fed. We do not know from where the money came. It was hidden from us. It was their secret.⁹⁸

Besides causing fissures with the older generation of religious leadership, the ash-Shabab induced rifts in the families between the parents and children, and between grandparents and grandchildren:

They gave advice to our children, who were taken away from us, their parents, without our knowing. They called us *kafir*, so our children left us. Our children called us *kafir* too and even said they would stab us. The ash-Shabab said we, parents, know nothing of the *Qur'an*. They performed *nikahi* (wedding), married girls without informing parents, without parent's consent, saying that parents were ignoramuses, who only did *haram* (illicit) things. The *nikahi* was performed by *walimu* among the youths themselves.⁹⁹

95 Interview with NB, MSM and MM. Pemba city, 8 December 2023.

96 Interview with NW. Pemba city, 12 December 2023.

97 Interview with MM. Pemba city, 28 September 2023.

98 Interview with NB, MSM and MM. Pemba city, 8 December 2023.

99 Interview with MM. Pemba city, 28 September 2023.

Then they started saying that if a mother did not cover herself, if she was not religious, or if she was a Christian, she was a *kafir*; and if a father had no beard, he was *kafir*. They said it is *haram* to be associated with them even if they were their parents. But the *Qur'an* says that the father has the right to marry his children. That we should respect our parents. That the door of the paradise is at the feet of our mothers. They even did not allow girls who married with them to see their parents after the wedding.¹⁰⁰

Thus, the Cabo Delgado insurgency is no different from similar radical jihadi movements in Africa, where an element of youth rebellion stands out. The generational tension was present in the founding of the ADF, Boko Haram and Al-Hijra, for example.¹⁰¹ This is not surprising as most Sub-Saharan countries are marked by high birth rates and young demographics but deteriorating economies and increasingly corrupt and autocratic regimes. The youths find it difficult to gain access to education, employment, social advancement and political representation. Many of them are said to be living in a state of 'waithood' due to the lack of social mobility and shrinking aspirations.¹⁰² Numerous studies point to that youth unemployment, social exclusion and frustrated expectations lead to a greater socio-political instability, and among Muslims to the adherence to the Islamic extremism.¹⁰³ As can be seen from the accounts of the interviewed people, the youths, many of whom were minors, were subjected to indoctrination and cult-like separation and alienation from their families and communities.

The youths were also offered money in order to be recruited into the ranks of ash-Shabab, but the source of that money remains obscure and needs further research. It is possible that the 'boss' was local businessman/businessmen, begrudged with the Frelimo elites. Also, the sympathisers of the rebels could have regularly collected money and donated, as well as the leaders of the insurgency themselves might have contributed from their own business dealings. However, there are many speculations among journalists and analysts about the involvement of the insurgents in criminal activities such as poaching, illegal timber selling and mining, as well as drug trafficking. But these type of crimes already have a long history in Mozambique and many studies link them to the country's political elite.¹⁰⁴ Hansen points out that the argument that there is a symbiosis of criminal networks with jihadism, neglects the fact that local regimes and networks have long been involved and often control these practices.¹⁰⁵ However, International Crisis Group cites 'sources working in the

100 Interview with MO, AW and TA. Pemba city, 12 December 2023.

101 Hansen, "Forever Wars?".

102 A. Honwana, *The Time of Youth: Work, Social Change, and Politics in Africa* (Sterling, Virginia: Kumarian Press, 2012), Chapter 2; A. Masquelier, *Fada: Boredom and Belonging in Niger* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), 13.

103 Honwana, *The Time of Youth*, 3–5; A. Bayat and L. Herrera, 'Introduction: Being Young and Muslim in Neoliberal Times' in L. Herrera and A. Bayat (eds) *Being Young and Muslim: New Cultural Politics in the Global South and North* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 4–5; J. L. Esposito and D. Mogahed, *Who Speaks for Islam? What a Billion Muslims Really Think* (Washington, D.C.: Gallup Press, 2007); M. Janson, *Islam, Youth, and Modernity in the Gambia: The Tablighi Jama'at* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

104 See for example, B. Augé, *Mozambique: Security, Political and Geopolitical Challenges of the Gas Boom* (Paris: IFRI, 2020); International Crisis Group, 'Stemming the Insurrection in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado', *Africa Report*, N°303, 11 June 2021, 3.

105 Hansen, "Forever Wars?".

town's banks [in 2017] report[ing] that substantial amounts of money flowed into Mocímboa da Praia from Somalia and elsewhere¹⁰⁶, presumably from other jihadi groups such as Al-Shabaab of Somalia.

Common traits of the young people such as righteous indignation, enjoyment of a challenge, a sense of persecution and a refusal to conform, can be seen in all radical groups.¹⁰⁷ Certainly, they played a role on the emergence and continuity of the ash-Shabab insurgency. Those who join these radical groups are seeking belonging, acceptance and a society that promotes itself as a unit with common social goals, which is especially visible in the case of IS as a pseudo-state in search of citizens. Also, the enlistment in extremist organisations provides the youths with the sense of new-found kinship and the concomitant increase in self-esteem.¹⁰⁸

An interesting feature of the ash-Shabab, which has not been addressed by a broader scholarship, except once by Joao Feijo¹⁰⁹, is the presence of women:

There were many young women in ash-Shabab, many with weapons, they knew how to use them. Most of these women were local, but there were some from Tanzania, and a few white women too [i.e., there were foreign fighters, including women].¹¹⁰

There were many women who were members of ash-Shabab, who voluntarily went to fight. They covered their faces, so no one knew who were they. Ash-Shabab used to say that showing women's face was a sin. There were women who taught the ash-Shabab ways to other women and girls before the insurgency started. The beautiful ones married the ash-Shabab's chiefs. Those are protected women. And, there was Rosa Salimo from Quiteraje in Macomia district, who is one of the commanders of ash-Shabab. She said she would assume the command; she had a military acumen. She had a political vision and trained other people.¹¹¹

The eyewitnesses stated that the youths who attacked prisons on October 2017, entered Mocímboa da Praia carrying mostly bladed weapons and other blunt instruments, and a few firearms.¹¹² Four attackers were gunned down and two police officers killed in the confrontation. Police declared to have detained 52 people in the wake of the assaults. Many local residents claimed that Muslim youths disappeared from the region in the aftermath of the attacks and suspected that they were extrajudicially executed by the Mozambican security.¹¹³

106 International Crisis Group, 'Stemming', 8.

107 Ö. Taspınar, 'The Problem with Radicalism: Relative Deprivation is a Key to Understanding the Roots of Extremism', *Cairo Review*, 19, 2015.

108 L. E. Asuelime and O. J. David, *Boko Haram: The Socio-Economic Drivers* (Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London: Springer, 2015).

109 J. Feijó, *The Role of Women in the Conflict in Cabo Delgado: Understanding Vicious Cycles of Violence* (Dakar: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Peace and Security Competence Centre Sub-Saharan Africa, 2021).

110 Interview with MO, and AW and TA. Pemba city, 12 December 2023.

111 Interview with NB, MSM and MM. Pemba city, 8 December 2023.

112 Macalane and Jafar, 'Ataques Terroristas em Cabo Delgado', 52–55.

113 G. Pirio, R. Pittelli and Y. Adam, 'The Emergence of Violent Extremism in Northern Mozambique', *Africa Centre for Strategic Studies*, 25 March 2018, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/the-emergence-of-violent-extremism-in-northern-mozambique/>.

The police started to arrest all the young people, even young women with babies. All of them disappeared in the hands of security. Until now we do not know about what happened to them.¹¹⁴

Some were innocent. They suffered without knowing anything. It was very complicated. Some did not realise how dangerous it was to join the ash-Shabab. They did so innocently because they were too young, and they were tortured and killed by the security.¹¹⁵

In late December 2017, the government forces carried out a helicopter raid and a bombardment from naval vessels on the village of Mitumbate, where allegedly the ash-Shabab were hiding, reportedly killing 50 people, including women and children, and detaining some 200 others. Local health authorities told a Mozambican newspaper that their hospital facilities were overwhelmed with wounded seeking treatment. The state security and defence forces destroyed several mosques built by ash-Shabab, and imprisoned, tortured and even killed a few *shaykhs* and imams, many of whom had nothing to do with ash-Shabab. As remembered by a prominent *shaykh* of the Islamic Council, who went through the concentration camp set up for the ash-Shabab and their sympathisers in Mueda:

I was arrested by the police and was to be executed. I was taken to Mocimboa da Praia first, and the next day to Mueda, where a concentration camp was set up for the ash-Shabab and those who were suspected to be their sympathisers. There they were tortured and killed by the security forces. I was saved by the leadership of the Islamic Council in the last minute.¹¹⁶

Undoubtedly these actions alienated many people from the state and contributed to the hardening of the insurgents' stance, and perhaps even drew them closer to the likes of IS.¹¹⁷ As Luca Raineri points out:

Surprisingly, in practice all studies focusing on the rise of jihadism in Africa – no matter their methodology or geographical basis – converge on the same explanation and corroborate the conclusion that the abuses perpetrated by the State authorities – including allegations of corruption, systematic discrimination, arbitrary arrests, extra-judicial executions, etc. – are the main drivers of jihadism.¹¹⁸

114 Interview with MM. Pemba city, 28 September 2023.

115 Interview with SN. Pemba city, 11 December 2023.

116 Interview with SB. Pemba city, 13 December 2023. But many other *shaykhs* had suffered both from the insurgents and the government security forces. One *shaykh* of the Islamic Council was killed by the security forces in Pemba and one from Africa Muslims Agency spent a time in prison. Sadly, many Sufis were targeted and killed by the ash-Shabab as well as by the government security forces.

117 It remains unclear whether the insurgents approached the Islamic State themselves when they felt that the war was inevitable or the Islamic State, learning about this insurgency, decided to approach them and extend its patronage. But the allegiance took place only in 2019.

118 L. Raineri, 'Explaining the Rise of Jihadism in Africa: The Crucial Case of the Islamic State of the Greater Sahara', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2020.1828078>.

Why Cabo Delgado?

If Mozambicans did not manifest jihadism before 2017, then the question is: why in 2017 and why in Cabo Delgado? The province of Nampula has almost twice as many Muslims as Cabo Delgado and 62% of the population of Niassa is Muslim, so why didn't the insurgency start in these regions?¹¹⁹ And here we come to the second question, that of the existence of a favourable and fertile environment for jihadism to penetrate and expand.¹²⁰ The exclusionary practices of political and economic governance of local or central State institutions, ethnic tensions, perceived or real marginalisation or exclusion, mismanagement, corruption, police violence, tensions between the centre and periphery, all fertilise the soil for the flourishing of jihadism.¹²¹

In Kenya, Uganda, Mali, Nigeria and other places, social identities, including ethnic and religious, are critical to individuals' desire to join violent extremist groups because of perception of political exclusion and relative deprivation due to these identities.¹²² This is also noticeable in Tanzania and Kenya, where there are high rates of unemployment and poverty in Muslim coastal areas.¹²³ Probably Muslim communities of these regions and the coastal northern Mozambique who, as stated above, have already been historically and culturally interconnected in a *longue durée*, influence each other's disposition towards the post-colonial state, extractive industry and translocal jihadism. The Muslim youths of coastal Cabo Delgado feel more marginalised and disadvantaged than those in other parts of the country because this province has been the most neglected by the State in terms of its economic and human development, until recently when natural resources such as rubies, graphite, coal, phosphate, sapphires and hardwood, began to be exploited by multinational companies. In 2010, large deposits of natural gas were also found off-shore and in the Rovuma River basin. The US companies Anadarko, Occidental and Exxon Mobil, the French Total Energies, Italian Eni and other transnational corporations together with the Mozambican state became the main holders of the emerging gas industry. Anadarko also purchased land in Mocímboa da Praia (later passed on to Total Energies) for onshore drilling, besides 7,000 hectares on the Afungi Peninsula in Palma for building a gas processing complex (LNG) and some land in areas surrounding Pemba city for the construction of the logistics hub.

119 According to the 2017 Population Census, Muslims represent about 18% of the total population of the country, 58% of Cabo Delgado and 98% of the coastal population of that province.

120 Hansen, "Forever Wars?".

121 Raineri, 'Explaining the Rise of Jihadism in Africa.'

122 H. J. Ndzovu, 'Kenya's Jihadi Clerics: Formulation of a "Liberation Theology" and the Challenge to Secular Power', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2018.1523359>; H. J. Ndzovu, *Muslims in Kenyan Politics: Political Involvement, Marginalization and Minority Status* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2014); T. A. Benjaminsen and B. Ba, 'Why do Pastoralists in Mali Join Jihadist Groups? A Political Ecological Explanation', *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 46, 1, 2019, 1–20; E. Baldaro & Y. S. Diall, 'The End of the Sahelian Exception: Al-Qaeda and Islamic State Clash in Central Mali', *The International Spectator*, 55, 4, 2020, 69–83,73.

123 R. H. Pedersen, and O. Kweka, 'The Political Economy of Petroleum Investments and Land Acquisition Standards in Africa: The Case of Tanzania', *Resources Policy*, 52, 2017, 222–223; A. LaSage, 'The Rising Terrorist Threat in Tanzania: Domestic Islamist Militancy and Regional Threats', *Strategic Forum*, 288, 8–12. J. Saalfeld, 'Before and Beyond Al-Shabaab: National Islamic Councils, Contentious Politics and the Rise of Jihadism in East Africa', *INEF Report 113* (Duisburg: Institute for Development and Peace, University of Duisburg-Essen, 2019).

In many oil and gas producing societies, violent extremism is generated by real or perceived grievances, such as discrimination, marginalisation, injustice, repression and other abuses by the state, which exacerbated pre-existing grievances with a strong historical component.¹²⁴ As Penelope Anthias argues, in similar cases:

The problem of state legitimacy is exacerbated by the spatiality of extractive activity, in which social and environmental impacts accumulate in territories rich in natural resources (often marginal to the national development project and populated by ethnic minorities), while the wealth derived from these resources is accumulated and managed by national elites, often on the basis of state claims to subsoil ownership.¹²⁵

Claims of sovereignty and citizenship based on indigeneity and territoriality are central to the insurgencies based on grievances mobilised against the state, and perceived as supporting international extractive enclaves at the expense of the local population [the 'true owner' of land], and without its consent or involvement.¹²⁶ In the case of Cabo Delgado, the *longue durée* Muslim communities along the coast, in particular Mwani (but also Makua and Makwe), claim the coastal strip and the nearby islands, where the gas industry and other businesses are being installed, as their ancestral lands.¹²⁷ Tania Li notes that land is not just a geography and a livelihood but it is imbued with social and cultural meanings.¹²⁸ For the Mwani and other coastal Muslims, the islands and the seashore encompass areas of fishing and cultivation, and the historic domain of their ancestors. The occupation of these lands by others can be construed as a physical and spiritual uprooting of their history and identity. Furthermore, the process of the implementation of the extractive industry, in particular the payment of compensation for land and relocation of the populations to other regions, has been surrounded by controversy because of alleged corruption and growing inequality.¹²⁹

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- 124 J-P. Filiu, *From Deep State to Islamic State: The Arab Counter-Revolution and its Jihadi Legacy* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 127–146; J. Sorens, 'Mineral Production, Territory, and Ethnic Rebellion: The Role of Rebel Constituencies', *Journal of Peace Research*, 48, 5, 2011, 571; A. Iocchi, 'The Dangers of Disconnection: Oscillations in Political Violence on Lake Chad', *The International Spectator*, 55, 4, 2020, 93, 95–96; M. Watts, 'Resource Curse? Governmentality, Oil and Power in the Niger Delta, Nigeria', *Geopolitics*, 9, 1, 2004, 53.
- 125 P. Anthias, 'Indigenous Peoples and the New Extraction: From Territorial Rights to Hydrocarbon Citizenship in the Bolivian Chaco', *Latin American Perspectives*, 45, 5, 2018, 440.
- 126 J. M. Weinstein, *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 98–99; J. Emel, M. T. Huber and M. H. Makene, 'Extracting Sovereignty: Capital, Territory, and Gold Mining in Tanzania', *Political Geography*, 30, 2011, 70–79; S. Lange, 'Gold and Governance: Legal Injustices and Lost Opportunities in Tanzania', *African Affairs*, 2011, 110, 439, 233–252; J. Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).
- 127 E. Medeiros, *História de Cabo Delgado e do Niassa (c. 1836–1929)* (Maputo: Central Imprensa, 1997), 57–71; A. R. de Conceição, *Entre o mar e a terra: situações identitárias do Norte de Moçambique (Cabo Delgado)* (Maputo: Promédia, 2006).
- 128 T. M. Li, 'What Is Land? Assembling a Resource for Global Investment', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 39, 2014, 589–602.
- 129 Augé, *Mozambique: Security*, 21–22; K. Symons, 'Transnational spaces, hybrid governance and civil society contestation in Mozambique's gas boom', *The Extractive Industries and Society*, 3, 1, 2016, 149–159; K. Symons, 'Land Rights and Justice in Neoliberal Mozambique: The case of Afungi community relocations' in E. Apostolopoulou and J. A. Cortes-Vazquez (eds), *The Right to Nature: Social Movements, Environmental Justice and Neoliberal Natures* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 70–83; B. Parkin, 'Pemba Logistics Base: Citizenship in Mozambique's Natural Gas Boom'. Presentations at the Webinar Politics in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique. University of Oxford, Oxford Department of International Development (ODID), Oxford Talks, 15 June 2020.

The pre-existing grievances of Cabo Delgado Muslims with a strong historical component include the historic memory immersed in political, inter-ethnic and religious violent conflicts, struggle for land and resources, in particular between Muslim Mwani and the mostly Christian Makonde. This is perceptible in Mocímboa da Praia, which has a small, long-standing Makonde population, but whose numbers have increased steadily since the 1980s, and notably since the peace agreements of 1992.¹³⁰ This led to a shift in political power and influence in this town. According to the interviewed people, the Makonde have continuously benefited economically and politically from their association with the ruling Frelimo party at the expense of the Mwani¹³¹:

Here in Mocímboa [da Praia], the Makonde and young people who come from Maputo are the ones who are given advantage [over Mwani]. We [Mwani] don't benefit in any way... Our parents, in order to live, have to work in the *machambas* of the Makonde chiefs... They are chiefs and we are employees... This started a long time ago and not today... We Mwani are suffering... But one day this is going to have to change, because we cannot go on like this...¹³²

... if you see a Mwani in *Águas* or *Electricidade de Moçambique* (Water and Electricity Utility Companies), he or she is usually a servant... The Mwani always has to be a servant and the Makonde a chief.¹³³

Besides the perceived Makonde encroachment on their lands and alleged favouritism that they enjoy due to their allegiance to Frelimo, the Mwani, who mostly support Renamo, have also suffered violent reprisals during the electoral periods. In the early 2000s, the Makonde expelled the Mwani population from their historic settlements in lower areas of the district of Muidumbe in Mueda Plateau.¹³⁴ In September 2005, the Mwani neighbourhoods of Mocímboa da Praia, in particular Nanduadua, suffered violent Makonde riots resulting in at least 12 deaths, 30 arrests, and 45 wounded.¹³⁵ The rioters burned down many Mwani houses.

The enmity between the Mwani and the Makonde has aggravated with the election of a Makonde president, who is said to have paved the way for himself and other Makonde Frelimists to take control of Cabo Delgado's natural resources, most of which are not located in the historical Makonde areas.¹³⁶ In particular, the gas deposits are in the coastal regions inhabited by the Mwani. The local population contested

130 A. M. Sousa Santos, "It's not my story to tell": ownership and the politics of history in Mocímboa da Praia, Mozambique, *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute*, 27, 3, 2021, 672–690.

131 Macalane and Jafar, 'Ataques Terroristas em Cabo Delgado', 42.

132 Habibe, Forquilha and Pereira, 'Radicalização Islâmica no Norte de Moçambique', 26.

133 Feijó, 'Social Asymmetries', 17.

134 P. Israel, 'Kummwanglela Guebuza – the Mozambican General Elections of 2004 in Muidumbe and the Roots of the Loyalty of Makonde People to Frelimo', *Lusotopie*, 13, 2, 2006, 108–110.

135 Sousa Santos, "It's not my story to tell"; A. M. Sousa Santos, 'Violence, Rumor, and Elusive Trust in Mocímboa da Praia, Mozambique', *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Anthropology*, 65, 3, 2021, 44–66; A. M. Sousa Santos, 'Memory and Violence: Changing patterns of group relationship in Mocímboa da Praia, Mozambique' (PhD Dissertation, University of Oxford, 2010)

136 Macalane and Jafar, 'Ataques Terroristas em Cabo Delgado', 89–90.

the loss of land and livelihood in these areas but their protests were repressed by the state. Here is how the interviewed Muslims view the land-related grievances in Cabo Delgado which contributed to the general sense of revolt from the population, and were articulated by the insurgents to gain trust and new recruits:

Drilling was carried out in the Milamba and Zimileta areas of Mocímboa da Praia by Anadarko. Now the area belongs to Total Energies. There were no big problems with the islands close to the drilling because no one lived there and people were compensated. Although, many people complained that they did not receive any money, which, according to them, was stolen by the provincial government. The companies perforated the land in Cheta, but the pipes went though up to Milamba, and that angered many residents.

Many islands were interdicted by the administrator of Palma. People were chased away from there by the military forces, more or less in 2014. They ordered us to leave; it was the administrator of Palma who did this. They just did pure beating and chasing, no explanation. People say: 'Nyusi [the president of Mozambique, who is a Makonde] sold our islands', 'Chipande [senior Frelimo general, a Makonde] took our islands', but the population was not compensated. We were told that land belongs to God, but those islands and the coast belonged to our ancestors, even if nobody was actually living on those islands. That is why ash-Shabab had support in Mocímboa da Praia.

On some islands, people have coconut trees. Our family's coconut trees are still there. When fishing, the fishermen hide there [i.e., these islands were traditionally respite spots for the fishermen in high seas, but now they are forced to take respite while hiding from the security forces]. There are many islands, Muchanga, Quifuque, and others, all are occupied now. We do not know by whom. But the person who appropriated them is the administrator of Palma. To whom he gave them, we do not know.

The whole of the coastal area is also occupied. We, the population, we do not have access to our ancestral lands and we do not know why. If we try, we are met with violence from the government. We do not know who took the coast and the islands, but no one was paid compensation. We heard that there is a connection between the government and Anadarko and Total Energies, and that Total wants the whole of the coast for itself. But no one consulted us.¹³⁷

In Macomia, Chipande took a huge tract of land on the coast of Mucojo and Pangane. He did not talk to anyone, just expelled everyone, chased the people away with his armed men. Chipande wants the whole of the Pangani coast.

137 Interview with MO, AW and TA. Pemba city, 12 December 2023.

In Mocímboa da Praia, half of the island of Quifique belongs to a South African, while the other half belonged to local population, but Chipande chased the population away. Now it belongs to Chipande. Nyusi took a huge tract of land in Chimileta area of Mocímboa da Praia. He also took the island nearby. He did not give any explanations to the population.¹³⁸

So, in fact, the grievances of the coastal Muslim population are directed against the land-grabbing, weapon-wielding Christian Makonde political elites, who ran the government of the country and belong to the ruling Frelimo party, rather than against the ordinary Makonde as such. And the areas where ash-Shabab had some popular support and had some military victories are exactly those where the occupation of the land by these Frelimo Makonde elites as well as the transnational extractive companies, in particular TotalEnergies, was the most acute; that is in Palma, Mocímboa da Praia and Macomia.

However, when it comes to the relationship between various northern Mozambican ethnicities at a grass-roots level, especially among those who have no political or economic power, the situation is quite different. As described by the interviewed people:

It is not true that the ash-Shabab consists of only coastal Mwani people. There are many Makonde and Makua among them. A lot of them are from Nampula province, especially Nacala region. The initial bulk of ash-Shabab had many Nampulenses too, especially from Nacala, even in Mocímboa da Praia. They would go and come back from Nampula. They were part of the original core of ash-Shabab.¹³⁹

This makes sense if we look into the time-line of radicalisation as indicated by the interviewed people: the initial hardening occurred in 2014–2015, which was a period when most of the land-grabbing at the coast took place not only in Cabo Delgado but also in Nampula, specifically in Nacala and Angoche, among other places, linked to the setting up of the transnational extractive industries. Also, the Mocímboa da Praia fishing grounds are known to be particularly rich and after independence they have attracted many fishermen from other regions, especially Nacala. As a result, a sizeable Nacala community was formed in the town, which continued to maintain strong ties with Nacala. Nacala has been a stronghold of the Ahl al-Sunna movement where an overwhelming influence of the teachings promoted by the madrasas and centres of the Africa Muslims Agency has been palpable.

2014 is also the year when rubies from Montepuez in Cabo Delgado were first auctioned, netting a total 584.1 million USD.¹⁴⁰ Raimundo Pachinuapa, another senior Frelimo Makonde general, appropriated the ruby mines and the land, with no

138 Interview with NW. Pemba city, 12 December 2023.

139 Interview with SB. Pemba city, 13 December 2023; Interview with MM. Pemba city, 28 September 2023.

140 E. Valoi, 'Betrayed friendship and the Death rubies', *Centro de Jornalismo Investigativo*, 2 June 2020.

compensation to local communities. As Estacio Valoi points out, in the mainland of Cabo Delgado, mostly inhabited by the Makua ethnic group, there was a race of ‘multinationals such as Fura, Montepuez Ruby Mining, New Energy, Gems Rock, Mwiriti, and Balama Graphite in Montepuez, Balama, and other districts controlling the red rubies, soils, and other minerals.’¹⁴¹ Local communities were left with no land for mining or farming, which stirred resentment and protests, suppressed violently. At the same time, thousands of miners from Tanzania and other parts of Africa, and various ethnicities and regions of Mozambique, including the Makonde¹⁴², digging for the rubies next to transnational companies, were subjected to extortions and violence by the security guards of the companies. From 2015 onwards, the process of repression and expulsion of these informal operators intensified, with torture and extrajudicial killings also taking place. At the same time, the mining industry did not offer jobs for local youths, while the subsistence agriculture suffered a huge setback with its expansion.¹⁴³ The sources of the International Crisis Group indicate that many discontented informal miners joined the ash-Shabab insurgency.¹⁴⁴

At the coast, popular perception of victimhood was further complicated by the belief that most jobs in the new extractive industry went to the people from the south of the country, rather than to local youths, whose hopes for employment and a better future were hence dashed.¹⁴⁵ This was also reflected in the field interviews:

The population was very disappointed because the *vientes* (Portuguese, those who came from outside), especially from the southern Mozambique, were employed by Anadarko and TotalEnergies instead of the local youths. This is because there are no jobs in Mocímboa da Praia, like on the rest of the coast, no infrastructures, even houses that are not traditional are very rare. That is why the first people to be killed by ash-Shabab, when they attacked settlements, were *vientes*.¹⁴⁶

As early as in 2012 or 2014, Anadarko employed mostly people from the southern Mozambique rather than us, local people, even for the most basic jobs. Maybe eighty percent of Anadarko workers were from the southern Mozambique. A person who came from the south received double of the wages of the person from here. The southerners know a lot of theory, but they have little knowledge of our land and our ways. They have no practical knowledge. TotalEnergies continues hiring mostly the *vientes*. This has infuriated local people.¹⁴⁷

141 Valoi, ‘Betrayed friendship’.

142 S. Chichava, ‘Jorginho: Brief History of a Young Makonde Muslim from al-Shabab’, *Ideias*, 19 April 2023.

143 J. B. Maquenzi, ‘Poreza e Desigualdade em Zonas de Penetração de Grandes Projectos: Estudo de Caso em Namanhumbir – Cabo Delgado’, *Observador Rural*, 77, August 2019.

144 International Crisis Group, ‘Stemming’.

145 Symons, ‘Transnational spaces, hybrid governance’; Symons, ‘Land Rights and Justice’; Parkin, ‘Pemba Logistics base’; Macalane and Jafar, ‘Ataques Terroristas em Cabo Delgado’; Habibe, Forquilha and Pereira, ‘Radicalização Islâmica no Norte de Moçambique’.

146 Interview with NW. Pemba city, 12 December 2023.

147 Interview with TC. Pemba city, 29 September 2023.

Conclusion

In the case of Cabo Delgado, socio-economic grievances, the presence and proliferation of viable political narratives and new technologies like the internet, help like-minded people to communicate and get their messages to the target audience. Appreciating the historical and cultural context is particularly important for understanding the dynamics of insurgencies. The history and culture of a nation-state and/or region, and issues related to group identities are important sources of underlying tensions. The collective memories of the actors, kept alive through storytelling, often dating back hundreds or thousands of years, remain relevant because they guide or restrict future actions. The causes of the insurgents are not exactly material with immediate effects, although there are material bases for the revolt. Instead, the insurgents' causes provide justification for violent action. An insurgency responds not only to political needs, but also to economic and psychological needs of those involved. Furthermore, contemporary insurgency is often translocal in nature.

The insurgency in Cabo Delgado must also be addressed as a historical phenomenon that has a beginning, but also a process and evolution, as the insurgency represents a multitude of voices, actors and interests in flux and transformation over time, from before 2017 to the present. The insurgency unleashes extreme violence not only against supposed enemies, but also within its own ranks and among the innocent population victimised by brutality. This is particularly clear if we consider the insurgency as an integral part and local mainstay of IS's transnational jihadist ideologies and tactics. In short, the insurgency in Cabo Delgado exhibits the right conditions for the implementation and action of the three main facets of transnational jihadism that we alluded to at the beginning of this article: 1) understanding in a radical way the sacred texts of Islam and their interpreters; 2) taking advantage of the demands and struggles of the inhabitants of the triggered areas; and 3) incorporating resistance to the global order. Even weakened, due to the dismantling of its state in Iraq and Syria between 2017 and 2019, IS continues to work underground with propaganda, recruitment and geographic expansion of its influence, especially in Africa. However, it is necessary to remember that the Islamist ideology Islamism, from Wahhabism to today, remains attractive to some circles of global resistance, who transform and reinterpret it according to particular local contexts. Thus, even if IS disappeared, the jihadist ideology would continue to live on and would be carried forward by other Islamists. We could say it is like opening Pandora's box or releasing the genie from the bottle. It should not have been allowed to happen, but if it did happen, there is no way back, except through detailed, slow and very long work to rectify the consequences. This must be done with great patience, involving the affected communities, providing support not only to victims, but also to young people who have engaged in jihad, offering ways for them to abandon violence, creating de-radicalisation programmes, pathways to amnesty, psychological support and re-education for a peaceful life. The other, less attractive solution would be to do as Russia did in the Chechen Republic, that is, keep the entire population under surveillance and control by State security forces; arrest, torture and make disappear suspects; and install absolute

authoritarianism.¹⁴⁸ Finally, the third way is military, with a view to defeating and eliminating transnational jihadism. But as Martha Crenshaw and Hansen argue, ‘jihadist resilience is also linked to a over-valuation of what military kinetics can achieve by winning battles.’¹⁴⁹ Hansen highlights that many of the previous expansive phases of Sub-Saharan jihadists, when they came to control vast territories, resulted in foreign interventions, such as that of French forces in Chad (since 1960, but specifically against jihadists in 2006, 2008, 2012–2014, 2019), and in Mali in 2013; the interference of countries of the region in Nigeria, in 2015, and the actions of Ethiopia (2006, 2012) and Kenya (2011) in regard to Somalia. However, even though these interventions created a retreat, they never completely defeated the jihadists. Therefore, the fight against transnational jihadism runs the risk of turning into ‘forever wars’. For Hansen, the key to understanding such resilience is recognising that these interventions were unable to guarantee security in the territories reconquered from the jihadists, that is, the interventions failed to provide protection to local populations, especially rural ones and those living in remote places, allowing people to remain vulnerable to threats from the extremists. As a result, local communities ended up accommodating to the jihadists. Hansen suggests that the lack of security of the rural population becomes an essential element in understanding the failure of international interventions. In the case of Cabo Delgado, only the future will reveal the true impact of the ongoing military intervention.

148 M. Iliysov, ‘Security and Religion: The Discursive Self-legitimation of the Chechen Authorities’, *Journal of Muslims in Europe*, 10, 3, 2021, 247–275; E. Souleimanov, ‘An Ethnography of Counterinsurgency: Kadyrovtsy and Russia’s Policy of Chechenization’, *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 31, 2, 2015, 91–114.

149 Hansen, “‘Forever Wars’?”.