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**Youth Radicalization in Cabo Delgado: Root Causes, Triggers and Drivers of Mozambique's Jihadist Insurgency**

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*Master* in International Studies

Supervisor:

PhD. Pedro Nuno Alves Vidal de Seabra, Integrated Researcher  
CEI - Iscte-University Institute of Lisbon

October, 2022



SOCIOLOGIA  
E POLÍTICAS PÚBLICAS

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Department of History

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Finally, as Nelson Mandela stated: “No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.” I firmly believe in the possibility of resolving this conflict as its core through the investment in the youth of Cabo Delgado.

I would like to dedicate my thesis to *them*, to the the young people of Cabo Delgado.

## RESUMO

Desde Outubro de 2017, Cabo Delgado, a província mais a norte de Moçambique, foi desestabilizada pela emergência de um grupo jihadista chamado *Ahlu-Sunnah Wa-Jama (ASWJ)*. A emergência do grupo teve profundas implicações para a região da África Austral, pondo fim a uma era de paz e estabilidade, na única região africana até agora não afetada pelo terrorismo. Esta dissertação analisa minuciosamente o início e desenvolvimento do *ASWJ*, respondendo à seguinte questão de investigação: Que fatores levaram a juventude a radicalizar-se em Cabo Delgado e que fatores permitiram que a insurreição prosperasse até agora? Fundamentalmente, esta dissertação analisa as causas que desencadearam e impulsionaram a insurreição, adotando uma abordagem cronológica que permite a desconstrução de cada camada individual, explicando o atual *status quo*. O objetivo desta dissertação é providenciar uma compreensão sólida e abrangente das razões por de trás do conflito, constituindo um marco essencial para investigação futura sobre potenciais soluções de construção da paz. Tal abordagem é necessária, uma vez que a literatura existente sobre o assunto se tem concentrado até este ponto na análise das causas profundas do conflito ou dos elementos que o desencadearam separadamente, não permitindo uma imagem completa do conflito. Esta dissertação procura eliminar esta lacuna, desconstruindo e ligando todas as camadas existentes. Para o conseguir, este projeto de investigação adota uma filosofia de investigação interpretivista e utiliza métodos qualitativos.

**Palavras-chave:** Cabo Delgado, Moçambique, jihadismo, radicalização da juventude, insurgência

## **ABSTRACT**

Since October 2017, Cabo Delgado, Mozambique's most northern province, has been destabilized by the emergence of a jihadist group named *Ahlu-Sunnah Wa-Jama (ASWJ)*. The group's emergence had profound implications for the Southern African region, bringing an end to an era of peace and stability, in the only African region so far unaffected by terrorism. This dissertation thoroughly analyzes *ASWJ's* inception and development by answering the following research question: Which factors brought the youth to radicalize in Cabo Delgado and what drivers have allowed the insurgency to prosper until now? Fundamentally, this dissertation analyzes the root causes, triggers and drivers of the insurgency by taking a chronological approach, which allows for the deconstruction of each individual layer accounting for the current status quo. The purpose of this dissertation is to create a solid and all-encompassing understanding of the reasons behind the conflict, an essential milestone to future research on potential peacebuilding solutions. Such an approach is needed as the existing literature on the subject has until this point focused on analyzing the root causes of the conflict or the triggers separately, not allowing for a more complete picture of the conflict. This dissertation seeks to close this gap by deconstructing and linking all existing layers. In order to achieve this goal, this research project adopts an interpretivist research philosophy and resorts to qualitative methods.

**Key words:** Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, jihadism, youth radicalization, insurgency

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ACCORD: African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes

ACLED: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project

ADIN: Agência de Desenvolvimento Integrado do Norte

ADF: Allied Democratic Forces

AMISOM: African Union Mission in Somalia

ASWJ: Ahlu-Sunnah Wa-Jama

AQIM: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb

AU: African Union

CISLAMO: Conselho Islâmico de Moçambique

CSOs: Civil society organisations

DAG: Dyck Advisory Group

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

FADM: Forças Armadas de Defesa de Moçambique

FRELIMO: Frente de Libertação de Moçambique

GTI: Global Terrorism Index

HDI: Human Development Index

ISIS: the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria

JNIM: Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin

MNJTF: Multinational Joint Task Force

NGOs: Non-profit organizations

NMLA: National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad

MDAF: Mozambique Defence Armed Forces

OAU: Organisation of the African Unity

REC: Regional Economic Community

RENAMO: Resistência Nacional Mozambicana

SADC: Southern African Development Community

SAMIM: SADC Mission in Mozambique

UN: United Nations

PMCs: Private military companies

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The 5th of October 2017, first day of the Cabo Delgado insurgency, marked a turning point for Mozambique and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), a region that had until this point been spared from the emergence of a jihadist conflict (Faria, 2021). The attacks perpetrated on that day took place in the city of Mocímboa da Praia. Insurgents armed with machetes and machine guns launched a two-day attack on police stations and other government facilities. Seventeen individuals were killed in the incident, including two police officers, fourteen members of the insurgent group, and one civilian (Matsinhe & Valoi, 2019).

In the face of these attacks, the Mozambican government rushed to restore security after ignoring worrying signals from local authorities and religious preachers in the months preceding. In addition, desiring to keep the situation under control, the government made the choice to portray the event as an isolated case. Nevertheless, in the following weeks clashes continued between the insurgent group and government security forces, resulting in the detention of more than 150 suspected insurgents by the end of November 2017. Furthermore, the government ordered the immediate closure of three mosques in the town of Pemba, the province's capital, which were suspected to be used as radicalization centres by the insurgent group (Matsinhe & Valoi, 2019).

Five years after the Mocímboa da Praia attacks, the conflict is still ongoing and the overall picture remains of concern. The conflict has had a negative impact on the economy threatening to delay the development of several natural gas projects, among which French-led Total \$20 billion offshore gas extraction project (Bartlett, 2022). Activities were officially suspended after the attacks on the town of Palma, in April 2021, leading the multinational firm to declare a case of *force majeure*. Above all the conflict has had significant consequences for civilians. Until this point, it has claimed around 4,000 lives and displaced half of the province's population - around 800,000 individuals, creating an important humanitarian strain on the state (Savatier, 2021).

The international community's attention vehemently turned toward the conflict in Cabo Delgado, after the April 2021 Palma attacks and the consequent suspension of several foreign-led extraction projects. The concern among international actors had been growing since 2018, the year in which the insurgent group claimed ties to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), suggesting the possibility of an additional ISIS-linked insurgency in Africa. As it



later turned out, the ties to ISIS are real but rather opportunistic and of a loose nature. Nonetheless, until this day, it has not been possible to assert the exact details and extent of the cooperation, given the lack of transparency on the matter (Alden, 2020).

Quite early in the conflict, the group was identified as being called *Ahlu-Sunnah Wa-Jama (ASWJ)* - meaning “adepts of the prophetic tradition and the consensus” - or *Al-Shabbab* by the local population - meaning “the youth” in Arabic. Furthermore, civilians of Cabo Delgado were fast in recognizing members of the insurgent group. More specifically, they recognized young men having grown up in their community or a surrounding one. These young men were often identified as coming from Muslim Mwani families (BBC, 2021). However, as the conflict developed, experts were fast in underlying the variety in geographical origins - even if the large majority of members are still identified as coming from Cabo Delgado - ethnicity and religious background - that is the religious affiliation given at birth (Feijó, 2021). Indeed, the diversity of the recruits does not appear surprising when considering that the main criteria for enrolling new members are the latter’s adherence to *ASWJ*’s beliefs and *modus operandi* (Matsinhe & Valoi, 2019).

When considering the origins of the members of the insurgent group, it is important to consider the geographical, religious and ethnic context within which the conflict inserts itself: Cabo Delgado has a population of 2,320,000 people, of which 58% are of Muslim affiliation, making it the predominant religion in the province. Conversely, in Mozambique, Christians account for the majority representing 56% of the country’s 31.26 million inhabitants, while Muslims only account for 17.9% (Da Silva, 2017).

In the face of the insurgency, the Mozambican government adopted a swift and rapid military approach as security forces were sent to the province. Individuals identified as assailants were captured or murdered and mosques considered to be utilized as radicalization centres were closed (Matsinhe, 2021). Nevertheless, despite this attempt to stop the insurgency in its infancy, the Mozambican government’s efforts generated mitigated results, part of the reason being the weakness and dysfunction of the police and the Mozambique Defence Armed Forces (MDAF).

Once national efforts showed their limits in stopping the insurgency, Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi turned to private military companies (PMCs), which similarly to the MDAF delivered mixed results, consequently leading to the prolongation of the conflict in

time. In the face of this lack of satisfying results, President Nyusi turned to his Rwandan counterpart. With Paul Kagamé, he negotiated a deal for military assistance by the Rwandan army, the latter being more experienced and better equipped than the MDAF. As a result, from July 2021 onwards, 1000 Rwandan soldiers were deployed in the province.

This intervention by the Rwandan army was preferred by the Mozambican President over a possible SADC military intervention. In fact, in the initial phase of the conflict, the Mozambican government avoided taking the matter to SADC. Once the subject could no longer be put off the table at SADC summits, the government resisted the hypothesis of a SADC military deployment as long as possible, advancing that it could jeopardize the country's sovereignty. However, it later appeared that more than a sovereignty issue, the Mozambican government most likely did not want an independent entity to assess the conflict in Cabo Delgado as well as the factors that had led to it (Demuynck & Weijenberg, 2021).

In June 2021, given the amounting pressure created by SADC's member states, President Nyusi could no longer put the hypothesis of military deployment off the table. Consequently, that same month, SADC agreed on the deployment of the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM). The mission has an estimated 2 000 troops on the ground, including 300 from the South African National Defence Force. The mission's mandate was prolonged several times before it was finally extended indefinitely in January 2022 (Patel, 2021).

From a military perspective, SADC and Rwandan military efforts have considerably weakened the insurgent. However, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) monthly report, dating from August 2022, despite the success of the troops in weakening the insurgent group and forcing it to become more mobile, the conflict is yet ongoing. More precisely, according to ACLED, there were 28 organized political violent events - implying either (1) battles or (2) violence against civilians - in Cabo Delgado, with 90 recorded deaths. In addition, the March 2022 report highlighted the continued displacement of Cabo Delgado's inhabitants due to terrorist attacks or the fear of terrorist attacks.

Internationally, despite the military efforts brought by SAMIM and the Rwandan troops, the conflict is not yet perceived as nearing its end. For example, Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs, João Gomes Cravinho, affirmed on the 11th of May 2022 that ISIS is still a global threat. Furthermore, he added that the current situation in Cabo Delgado is "not yet

completely under control" and that the war in Ukraine should not draw attention away from Africa (Agência Lusa, 2022).

The reasons for the conflict appear to be complex and linked to deeply rooted socio-economic inequalities. Indeed, in the last decades, Cabo Delgado has been a marginalized and a systematically neglected province of Mozambique. However, the province has not always been in this disadvantageous position: in the 1960s, Cabo Delgado gained an iconic role in the anti-colonial struggles against Portugal when the Makonde people of the province's Mueda plateau formed the backbone of the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO)* guerrilla. However, disappointingly for the population of Cabo Delgado, independence did not allow for the same level of development as the southern provinces of Mozambique, leading to a growing feeling of state neglect and isolation in Cabo Delgado's inhabitants.

This feeling of state neglect has only been reinforced by the last decade's simultaneous discoveries of \$50 billion of natural gas and hundreds of millions of dollars in rubies in the province (Guardian News and Media, 2020). As businesses compete to extract an abundance of untapped natural resources, Cabo Delgado has become the epicentre for foreign direct investment. However, the natural resources discoveries that should have been a blessing for the province's development have, until now, only sharpened inequalities for the local population and exacerbated already existing social tensions; one of the main reasons being the corruption and mismanagement - a matter which will be discussed more extensively later in this dissertation.

In such dire socio-economic conditions and with the consequent lack of prospects for the future, the youth's desire to change the established status quo does not come as a surprise. However, it is fundamental to note that the link between socio-economic inequalities and youth radicalization is not as direct as one could expect. Indeed, Cabo Delgado's insurgent group has never explicitly expressed socio-economic grievances as being one of their core motivations. As an example, in the BBC short documentary, *Africa Eye* showing two of the rare propaganda videos of the group, insurgent members are claiming: "My brothers, make no mistakes. We are not fighting like it may seem for the wealth of the world. This is not about gas. We are not supported by the President Nysui or Guebeza. We are supported by Allah (BBC Africa, 2021)." Undoubtedly, this short video is a piece of propaganda produced by the insurgent and is thus part of a broader communication strategy. Nevertheless, these two

videos, among other elements, raise questions about what - if not natural gas and more generally socio-economic grievances - motivates these young individuals from Cabo Delgado to lead this insurgency resulting in the destruction of their own province. In other words, what brings these individuals to radicalize if not the desire for socio-economic justice? Furthermore, how does the radicalization process allow them to justify killing extended family members, neighbors, fellow Muslims and other inhabitants of their province?

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1. Rationale, research goals & research question**

This dissertation counters the prevailing narrative that socio-economic grievances directly caused radicalization and the consequent jihadist insurgency. Instead, these root causes enabled the creation of the necessary conditions for the development of an insurgency. In other words, the link between root causes and radicalization is not as direct as one could assume. For this reason, it seems fundamental to adopt a chronological approach allowing for the deconstruction of each individual layer, which has allowed the creation of the current status quo.

Therefore, this dissertation aims to gain a broad understanding of the (1) root causes that have enabled the creation of the conditions favoring the likelihood of youth radicalization in Cabo Delgado. Furthermore, it will seek to shed light on the (2) triggers that have allowed Cabo Delgado to move from a fertile ground for youth radicalization to a conflict zone with an active jihadist insurgency. In addition, it is essential to analyze which (3) drivers have allowed the insurgency to prosper since its start in 2017. In other words, it is important to understand which factors have made youth radicalization, and consequently the conflict, last in time.

Such an approach is timely as the existing literature on the subject is still narrowly focused on analyzing the root causes of the conflict or the triggers separately, not allowing for the creation of a holistic and all-encompassing understanding, linking each layer of the conflict to one another. This dissertation aims to fill this gap in the literature by deconstructing and connecting all existing layers.

This chronological and multi-layered understanding of the conflict, is relevant for two reasons: First, as previously mentioned, the links between socio-economic grievances and youth radicalization are not as direct as one could imagine. Consequently, this underlines the necessity to (a) deconstruct each layer of the conflict; and (b) to analyze how these layers are interconnected. Second, such a chronological and multi-layered approach is needed because a military approach on its own will not be sufficient to resolve the conflict in Cabo Delgado. Indeed, if both the deployment of the Rwandan troops active since July 2021 and the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) have considerably weakened *ASWJ*, it has not been sufficient to make the group disappear. In addition, a military approach will most likely not end the deeply rooted drivers that led young people in Cabo Delgado to turn towards radical Islam and violent extremism in the first place. For these reasons, seeking a chronological, all-encompassing, and multi-layered understanding of what has brought the youth to radicalize in Cabo Delgado is an essential step for future research on the creation of sustainable peacebuilding approaches aiming to resolve the conflict at its core and avoid its resurgence in the future.

To achieve these research goals, the following explanatory, empirical non-comparative question will be adopted:

- Which factors brought the youth to radicalize in Cabo Delgado and what drivers have allowed the insurgency to prosper until now?

## **2.2 Methodology**

### *Framework of analysis: arguments and operationalization*

This dissertation will answer the research question through the insights of two different fields: terrorism studies and international relations. In addition, it will draw from concepts of the field of psychology and the field of international development. These different strands will allow to explore the different dimensions of the research question and provide a comprehensive response.

Furthermore, this research project will seek to defend and prove the following three arguments:

- *Argument 1:* Depicting the insurgent leaders as “faceless” and as coming from outside Mozambique was a strategy adopted by the Mozambican government in a first phase of the conflict in order to divert both the media and the international community’s attention from the government’s implication in the deeply-rooted socio-economic grievances that led to the conflict.
- *Argument 2:* An important trigger explaining the emergence of sectarianism was the religious adherence of young individuals from Cabo Delgado having studied Wahhabism abroad, which ultimately collided with the very little socio-economic development they found upon their return in their province. Driven by the belief that the creation of their own practice of Islam would create progress and thus indirectly socio-economic development in their province, several sects emerged between 1960s and 2017.
- *Argument 3:* *ASWJ’s* shift from sectarianism to violent extremism was triggered by three factors: (1) the repression of the Mozambican state towards the various emerging sects, (2) the closing of illegal ruby mines in Montepuez, (3) and *ASWJ’s* sufficient level of financial stability and support by the population in Mocímboa da Praia.

### *Research design*

This dissertation will adopt an interpretivist research philosophy. As opposed to a positivist philosophy, which supports that reality is stable, observable and describable from an objective standpoint, an interpretivist philosophy acknowledges that there may be several interpretations of reality. Furthermore, interpretivism supports the idea that the varying interpretations are in themselves part of this scientific knowledge. In other words, reality can only be completely comprehended by an intervention in the reality and the subjective interpretation of this reality (Goldkuhl, 2012). This research philosophy seems most adaptable to this research project as the conflict in Cabo Delgado is complex and multi-layered. No single and objective explanation can fully account for the root causes, triggers and drivers of the conflict. Consequently, adopting an interpretivist research philosophy will allow for the most comprehensive answers to the research questions.

This dissertation will adopt both an inductive and deductive research approach. Indeed, a deductive approach will be used to analyze, on the one hand, already existing

theories on jihadist insurgencies and on the other hand, most commonly assumed causes of the conflict in Cabo Delgado. However, in addition to considering existing theories and consequently using a deductive approach, this research project will also seek to produce its own set of conclusions, thus justifying the use of an inductive approach.

Regarding methodology, this research will resort to qualitative methods only. Furthermore, in respect of the data gathering, this dissertation will use only qualitative secondary sources. These secondary sources will be mostly constituted by academic books and articles of the field of terrorism studies, international relations and international development.

### **2.3 Limitations**

This dissertation presents two important limitations. Both have to do with the methodology. As mentioned earlier, this dissertation aims to identify the root causes, triggers and drivers having led to the conflict. In order to most accurately capture the reasons pushing the youth in Cabo Delgado towards radicalization, field interviews could significantly deepen the quality and the viability of future research on peacebuilding approaches. However, due to time constraints, the logistics of organizing such interviews virtually or on the field were out of the scope of what this research could reasonably achieve. Furthermore, security concerns are also an important factor to consider, Cabo Delgado being still relatively unsafe to travel to. In turn, this research is limited to using secondary sources, from authors that have conducted interviews with members of the youth affected by the conflict and were previously part of the insurgent group (e.g. Lucey & Patel, 2021).

In addition, due to both time and skill constraints, this dissertation will be restricted to the use of qualitative data only. The use of quantitative data could have been useful to better understand the motivations behind radicalization. More precisely, quantitative surveys conducted in large numbers, could have significantly increased the verifiability and generalizability of the principal push and pull factors leading the youth of Cabo Delgado towards radicalization. In addition, the creation of resources such as the Cabo Ligado or “Connected Cap”- a conflict observatory created by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Project (ACLED), Zitamar news and Media Fax, presents significant potential for conducting

a thorough quantitative analysis. However, due to skills and time constraints, the option was taken to not rely on mixed methods.

## **2.4 Structure of the dissertation**

This dissertation is organized into eight chapters. Each chapter serves a specific and distinct purpose. The (1) introduction aimed to contextualize the conflict and elucidate what thought process led to the research question. The (2) research methodology chapter aims to explain the research problem and define the research methodology most adequate to carry out the research project. The (3) literature review aims to summarize existing scholarly knowledge on jihadist insurgencies. Furthermore, it will seek to situate the Cabo Delgado insurgency within the existing history of insurgency in the world and in Africa. The (4) fourth chapter will be focused on the insurgent's identity and why the group has been portrayed as faceless for a very long time. The (5) fifth chapter will analyze the root causes of the conflict, including the factors that transformed Cabo Delgado into a fertile ground for an insurgency.

The (6) sixth chapter will depict, in a first section, the triggers that led to sectarianism in Cabo Delgado and, in a second section, the tipping points that transformed the province from a fertile ground for a jihadist insurgency to a conflict zone with an active jihadist group. The (7) seventh chapter will identify the drivers which have allowed the insurgency to prosper and grow since 2017 onwards. Finally, the last (8) chapter will be dedicated to conclusion aiming to reflect upon and critically discuss both the findings of this research and their implications. Last but not least, it will consider how this research could be continued in the future.



### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 3.1 Short historical overview of global jihadism

Even though, the creation and early developments of political Islam in the late 1920's are beyond the scope of this work, there are two important ideas to retain in order to better understand the phenomenon of jihadism. First, in 1928, Hasan al-Banna founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. It represented the first form of political Islam also known as Islamism. Second, the Muslim Brotherhood and the following developments of political Islam did not have violence as a political goal, in the same way that jihadist groups have today, but rather, it was used as an occasional strategy to gain power. Third, the formation of political Islam by the Muslim Brotherhood lay the necessary foundation for the creation and development of jihadism that unfolded in the following decades (Robinson, 2017).

The scholarly community recognized four distinct waves of jihadism. The first jihadist wave was primarily rooted in an anti-colonial struggle. It emerged in reaction to Afghanistan's occupation by the USSR in the 1980's. As the resistance against the soviets unfolded, ideologues such as Dr. Abdullah Azzam and colleagues were reflecting on how they should continue their struggle for political Islam once Afghanistan, considered to be the "*Al-qa'ida al-sulba*", meaning the "base" or the "solid foundation" would be liberated from soviet occupation. Azzam - nowadays considered to be the godfather of global jihadism - theorized that the case of Afghanistan was in fact not unique. For him, it was rather representative of a larger issue of occupation of Muslim lands by infidels around the world. Consequently, in the last two years of his life, Azzam wrote an important piece in which he proposed that Muslims not only needed to have a land from which to operate from, but also a faithful Muslim community which would travel around the world and take actions, to liberate what he considered to be occupied Muslim land. Thus the worldwide jihad was to start in Afghanistan to then spread to Muslim-majority countries or countries that had been historically dominated by Muslims and that were now held by "unbelievers". These countries included Palestine, Kashmir, Mindanao, and, finally, Spain and Portugal also known as *Al-Andalus*. The first wave essentially died when Azzam was assassinated in 1989 (Robinson, 2020).

The second wave started in 1996 and is the most well-known one as it culminated in the attacks of September 11, 2001. Its main ideologue was Osama Bin Laden. The ideology behind this wave emerged out of losses by jihadi movements in the supposed “apostate” Egyptian and Algerian regimes. These jihadi movements had strongly destabilized their respective governments in the early 1990’s. However, by the mid-1990’s it was clear that their respective governments were defeating the uprisings. For Bin Laden, these losses had an important significance as he considered Egypt and Algeria to be “puppet” governments of the West. Simultaneously, after the first Gulf War, the USA was for the first time expanding and strengthening its military presence in the Arab world. In the face of these losses and of this increasing American military presence, Bin Laden revisited a theory which gave rise to the second wave of global jihadism. This theory was first formulated by Muhammad Abd-al-Salam Faraj. It essentially relied on a near enemy / far enemy dichotomy (Robinson, 2017). Bin Laden revisited and theorized that the near enemy - for him being the western-friendly regimes in Egypt and Algeria - would flourish and grow as long as the far enemy - for him the USA - would not be driven out of the Muslim world. The rationale was that these supposed apostate regimes would not be able to sustain themselves if the American influence in the Muslim world was weakened and the chain of solidarity between these regimes and the USA was broken. This second wave thrived for five years, from 1998 to 2003. Thereafter, it was considerably weakened when the USA invaded Iraq, which led the former to capture many key leaders essential to the functioning and coordination of the movement. Finally, the wave came to an end with Bin Laden’s assassination conducted by US special forces in Pakistan on the 2nd of May 2011 (Robinson, 2020).

The third wave - ISIS wave - according to Robinson (2017) was the largest and most dangerous one. Its main ideologues were Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Its triggers can be identified as (1) the overthrowing of the Saddam Hussein regime by US forces in 2003 and (2) the start of the Syrian civil war in March 2011. The most important feature distinguishing this wave from previous ones, is that it had the intend to build a puritan and Shari’a based state which would allow followers to be true to their faith by removing all temptation of sinning (Robinson, 2017). Contrary to previous waves, which were triggered by the occupation of Muslim land - for the first wave - and the defeats of jihadi movements in western-aligned Muslim countries - for the second wave - the third wave was triggered by the

search for apostasy in itself, that is the abandonment of previously practiced forms of Islam for the practice a “purer” and stricter version of Islam. This search for apostasy led to two major changes: First, there was a growing desire, as mentioned above, to establish a Shari’a based state; the idea being that this state would be the only one where truly faithful Muslims should live as no temptations leading to the malpractice of Islam would exist. Second, for the first time, a jihadi wave was not searching the approval and recognition of higher clerics. Instead, ISIS was promoting a “propaganda of the deeds”, meaning that it promoted a discourse which encouraged every “faithful Muslim” to take actions by any means. ISIS invested a lot of time and resources in attracting young Muslims from all around the world to join the fight and be martyrs. The third wave ended in 2017, when a joint coalition brought the existence of the “caliphate” to an end. However, ISIS continued to survive as an organization. (Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2021).

The fourth and last wave of global jihad erupted almost concurrently with the third wave. Indeed, it arose as a result of the Taliban’s fall in 2001. It was later reinforced by the fall of the “caliphate” in 2017. This first defeat led the ideologue Abu Musab al-Suri to theorize on how the movement could survive another day given the difficulties it was facing and the loss of Muslim territories. According to Robinson (2017), while the fourth wave was triggered by the loss of Afghanistan and later loss of the “caliphate”, this wave was built in reaction to the defeat of jihad itself. The reflection that brought this wave to exist was about finding new strategies for jihad to survive given the harsh counter-terrorism efforts the movement was facing. The most important ideologue of the fourth wave is Abu Musab al-Suri. Reflecting on the weakness of the jihadi paradigm of the time, Al-Suri theorized and aimed to make the movement sustainable and successful in the long-run. Consequently, he proposed that the movement should function as a network instead of an organization, the latter being much easier to dismantle for intelligence forces of western countries. He thus argued for what he called “personal jihad”, meaning that every pious Muslim had the duty to take actions to free the occupied Muslim land. This last wave was thus characterized by stochastic terror also known as lone wolf attacks, such as the Boston attacks in 2013 and the Paris attacks in 2015. The fourth wave is the only one still active today (Robinson, 2020).

### 3.2 Emergence of jihadism in Africa and link to global jihadist movements

The exact history and origins of jihadism in Africa are complex (Vines & Wallace, 2022) However, there are three essential elements which can be addressed in order to shed light on the emergence of jihadism in Africa.

First, jihadism is not a new phenomenon in Africa. Jihad has deep historical roots and has unfolded over several centuries. In Stig Jarle Hansen's (2019) view, the spread of militant jihadist organizations has a longstanding history in Africa. Indeed, the term jihadism was first used in English in respect to Usman Dan Fodio's (1754-1817) Sokoto Caliphate in West Africa and the threat of "Mahdist jihadism" in the 19th century. In addition, Hansen (2019) highlights the importance of the Maitatsine uprisings by Islamist militants in northern Nigeria between 1980 and 1985 and the conflict waged by al-Ittihad al-Islamiya in Somalia in the early and mid-1990s, which he considers significant elements for understanding nowadays jihadist insurgencies in Africa (Hansen, 2019). For Hansen (2019), these former African jihadist movements are important, however, they do not fully explain the current status quo and the new waves of jihadist insurrections that emerged after 2001. Indeed, in the author's view, it is the mixture of both pre-existing local jihadist dynamics and influences coming from outside Africa, that allowed for the current developments. In the same line of thought, Pérouse de Montclos (2018) argues that over the last centuries, jihad has allowed times and times again for the mobilization of masses under a charismatic leader with the aim of defending a given community. The author argues that the novelty for Africa is not jihad in itself, but rather the nature of jihadist insurgencies: for the first time, jihadist insurgencies are bearing allegiances to the global jihadist movement by linking themselves with *Al-Qaeda* or ISIS. In addition, these new type of jihadist insurgencies have been, since 2001, developing at a very fast pace, making their emergence even more worrisome to the international community.

The second element which needs to be highlighted is that the post-2001 new wave of jihadist insurgencies was able to emerge and flourish due to a vacuum created by the state. To come to this understanding, it is first important to point out that the reasons explaining the emergence of jihadist insurgencies on the African continent vary significantly and are specific to each country. Indeed, the African continent is immense and has enormous cultural and

linguistic disparities. However, one common experience shared by all African countries is a history of European colonization (Vines & Wallace, 2022).

Nevertheless, despite the differing root causes, the vacuum created by the state, is frequently highlighted as a common factor having allowed all post-2001 jihadist insurgencies to appear in Africa. This so-called vacuum was created by non-consolidated democracies, which systematically fail to deliver security and basic services to their citizens. Consequently, they are creating the perfect ground for these jihadist emergencies to emerge and flourish. Indeed, jihadist insurgencies in Africa have formed themselves in the poorest and most neglected provinces. Furthermore, insurgencies are always characterized by a rebellion of young people dissatisfied with the current status quo of society, which fails to offer them an education and a future (Pérouse de Montclos, 2018).

In the same line of thought and taking the example of the Sahel (Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger), Vines & Wallace (2022) argue that in that region, the lack of resources and opportunities for local populations and most importantly the abuses of the state's military troops have led to a growing distrust of the state's military forces. Like Pérouse de Montclos (2018) they argue that this lack of security, good governance and delivery of basic services, has given space to a vacuum, facilitating the emergence of jihadist groups in those areas (Vines & Wallace, 2022).

The third element which needs to be addressed in order to shed light on the gradual emergence of jihadism in Africa is that jihadist conflicts on the continent emerged due to long-standing local socio-economic grievances and are thus primarily local conflicts. However, it is important to note that at a later stage a majority of jihadist conflicts in Africa took on an international dimension through the creation of alliances between local jihadist group and ISIS or *Al-Qaeda*, ultimately turning them into “glocal” conflicts.

The allegiance given to ISIS and *Al-Qaeda* by local jihadist group in Africa has for a long time led to a debate between the media and scholars on whether these conflicts are of a local or global nature. To summarize, this debate revolves around the question of whether it is ISIS and *Al-Qaeda* that have moved and expanded into Africa - an explanation often portrayed by international media and certain scholars - or whether they are simply taking advantage of existing jihadist insurgencies to form partnerships and give the impression that they are expanding into other parts of the world - an explanation most often defended by

scholars. Because of the lack of communication and transparency of all jihadist elements, it is very hard to comprehend the exact nature of the relationship between local jihadist insurgencies in Africa and groups like ISIS and *Al-Qaeda*. Furthermore, because local jihadist insurgencies giving allegiance to global jihadist groups have multiplied in the last two decades, the impression that ISIS and *Al-Qaeda* have spread across the region - and maybe even attempted to move their leadership to Africa in the case of ISIS considering the fall of the caliphate in 2017 - have been subject of discussion. However, authors like Wassim Nassr (2021) and Pérouse de Montclos (2018) argue that it is essential to understand these new phenomena in their complexity or in other words not to take shortcuts. Indeed, according to these authors, rather than ISIS deciding to move its leadership to Africa after the fall of the caliphate - as it is often portrayed in international media - the vacuum created by non-consolidated and corrupt African democracies is being exploited by local jihadist insurgencies who seize the opportunity to develop their insurgencies with the goal of changing the status quo in their region.

According to Nassr (2021) and Pérouse de Montclos (2018), ISIS and *Al-Qaeda* decided to exploit already existing jihadist insurgencies to their advantage, rather than building them from the ground. For local jihadist insurgencies associating themselves with the global jihadist movement only represent a win. Indeed, when a group associate themselves with *Al-Qaeda* or ISIS, the later takes charge of the communication, as they have already elaborated far-reaching channels of communication. More importantly, ISIS and *Al-Qaeda* are able to transmit a lot of expertise on a variety of strategic and organizational matters due to their years of experience. Finally, according to Nassr (2021), bearing allegiance to *Al-Qaeda* or ISIS allows local insurgencies to make themselves more important and more threatening. For *Al-Qaeda* and ISIS, lending their brand to local jihadist insurgencies, transmits the idea that they are spreading across various continents. Consequently, these alliances represent a win-win situation for all parties. For Pérouse de Montclos (2018), it is very clear that these alliance between *Al-Qaeda* or ISIS and local jihadist insurgencies are rather loose alliances, that do not involve any exchange of arms or leadership (ARTE, 2021).

Even if this debate is still ongoing, a majority of scholars have now moved towards the understanding that the jihadist conflict in Africa were primarily rooted in local grievances

and gained a glocal dimension through allegiance to ISIS or *Al-Qaeda* at a later more advanced stage of the conflict; making them “glocal” conflicts.

### **3.3 Jihadist insurgencies currently active in Africa**

The last ten years have led to a significant rise in jihadist activities in Africa. Ten years ago, there were mostly two active jihadist groups throughout Africa: *Al-Shabbab* in Somalia and *Boko Haram* operating mainly from Nigeria. Contrastingly, in 2022, according to a new study published by HORN International Institute for Strategic Studies, more than ten active jihadist groups were identified in Africa (Salacanian, 2021). In addition, according to the Global Terrorism Index (GTI), while terrorism-related casualties were decreasing worldwide in 2021, several nations in Sub-Saharan Africa were witnessing the opposite trend.

While most well-known groups like *Boko Haram* in Nigeria and *Al-Shabbab* in Somalia have demonstrated resilience throughout the years, the landscape of jihadist groups has rapidly changed in the last ten years, giving rise to or the appearance of new offshoot groups, the merger of other groups or even the appearance of entirely new groups. Consequently, conflicts dynamics have drastically changed, becoming more complex and horizontal - with groups fighting between themselves. Mapping the various insurgencies and their affiliation has become an increasingly challenging task (Faleg & Mustasilta, 2021).

Despite this complexity, geographically it is possible to identify five regions currently affected by jihadist organizations: the Maghreb, the Sahel, the Lake Chad region, Somalia, Kenya, Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Furthermore, to facilitate the understanding of jihadist groups currently active in Africa, they can be divided in two main categories: (1) affiliates of *Al-Qaeda* and (2) affiliates of ISIS.

There are two main groups currently affiliated with *Al-Qaeda*: These include *Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM)*, active in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. This group, active since 2017, is itself a fusion of four jihadist groups (*Ansar Dine*, *Katibat Macina*, *Al-Mourabitoun*, and the Sahara branch of *Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb* also known as *AQIM*). This group is currently attempting to increase its influence, notably in the Sahel, to resist the takeover aspirations of ISIS affiliates. In addition, looking at the Horn of Africa, another *Al-Qaeda* affiliate has established itself: *Al-Shabbab*. This group which began as a local jihadist insurgency founded in 2004 in Somalia, has affiliated itself with *Al-Qaeda* in

2013 (Baron, 2021). Furthermore, *Al-Hijra*, formed in 2008 is a group associated with *Al-Shabbab*, which has been implicated in the attacks on the Westgate shopping mall in 2013, as well as the attacks on the Garissa University College in 2015.

Affiliates of ISIS, on the other hand, are more numerous. Indeed, looking at North and West Africa, there are eight jihadist groups: the Soldiers of the Caliphate active in both Tunisia and Algeria, the Islamic State in Libya, the Islamic State in the Sinai, the Islamic State in Egypt, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) and the Islamic State in the Sahel. In addition, in Somalia, the Islamic State of Somalia, is an offshoot group of *Al-Shabbab*, which split from the former and pledge alliance to ISIS in 2015 (Felter, et al., 2021); it is currently the main enemy of *Al-Shabbab*. In addition, Boko Haram is another group associated with ISIS: The group was formed in 2002 and pledged alliance to ISIS in 2015, with the aim of expanding its influence and gaining power. However, it is worth pointing out that the group is following its own dynamic and that the alliance to ISIS is particularly loose. Furthermore, the Allied Democratic Forces, (ADF) a jihadist group originally from Uganda, which has spread its presence to the DRC, has also given allegiance to ISIS. Last, but not least, the jihadist group that is the subject of this dissertation, *Ahlu-Sunnah Wa-Jama*, also known locally as *Al-Shabbab*, has been associated with ISIS since at least 2019, if not 2017. The date of this last group allegiance is still subject to debate in the literature (Iremos, 2022; Warner, 2022).

Even if this typology accounts for the most important jihadist players currently active in Africa, it remains non-exhaustive. Indeed, creating an exhaustive picture of all existing groups currently active is a complex task which is beyond the scope of this work.

### **3.4 Common features between jihadist insurgencies in Africa:**

There are three common features between jihadist insurgencies in Africa. First, jihadist insurgencies in Africa are “glocal”. Second, the essence of jihadist movements in Africa is rooted in youth radicalization. Third, jihadist insurgencies in Africa have demonstrated acute resilience in the face of national, regional or even international counter-insurgencies and counter-terrorism efforts.

As mentioned above, in Africa all jihadist insurgencies have demonstrated to be “glocal”. Almost all jihadist groups in Africa have either (1) pledged allegiance to a group



associated with either ISIS or *Al-Qaeda* - such as *Al-Hijra*, which is associated with *Al-Shabbab* in Somalia, which has itself pledged allegiance to *Al-Qaeda* in 2010 - or (2) in most cases directly associated themselves with *Al-Qaeda* or ISIS. Nevertheless, according to scholars such as Stig Jarle Hansen and Hilary Maftess, even though the link between local jihadist affiliates and global jihadi movements can not be ignored, looking at jihadist groups solely through this lens, meaning as primarily local affiliates of *Al-Qaeda* and ISIS, is overlooking their essence and origins, which is fundamentally rooted in local tensions and long-standing local socio-economic grievances (Maftess, 2019). Similarly, Katariina & Mustasilta (2021) argue that as long as the structural vulnerabilities that give rise to jihadist insurgencies in Africa are not addressed, the combination of localized grievances, as well as the dividends from linking local insurgencies to the global jihadi movement, will continue to provide fertile ground for geographically expanding violent extremism in Africa. In sum, even if the local/global dichotomy is still ground for debate, an increasing number of scholars are concluding that jihadist insurgencies in Africa are indeed rooted in local grievances but linked to a broader global jihadist movement. In other words, scholars are increasingly coming to an agreement that the concepts of local jihad and global jihad do not need to be perceived as a dichotomy but rather can be seen as a two-way process.

The second common feature between jihadist insurgencies in Africa is that they rely on youth radicalization. In simple terms, youth radicalization can be defined as the gradual social process by which young people are drawn into extremism. The concept distinguishes between the cognitive and behavioural elements, with the latter involving participation in a jihadist movement (Ahmed & Obaidi, 2020). Youth radicalization and the subsequent engagement in violent extremism networks has become widespread worldwide. Furthermore, in all jihadist insurgencies in the world, the youth - meaning individuals aged from 15 to 35 according to the definition of the African Union (AU) - represent an overwhelming majority of the constituting members (Lucey & Patel, 2022). This phenomenon of youth radicalization is all the truer in Africa. Currently, Africa is recognized as the youngest continent in the world. Furthermore, the youth bulge - defined as a relatively high increase in the number and proportion of individuals under the age of 35 - is still significantly growing. Indeed, the continent's population is forecasted to double by 2050. In addition, the proportion of people in working age is likely to rise dramatically, implying that the already existing youth bulge, is

swiftly building amid structural vulnerabilities (Ouassif, 2021). This growing youth bulge can be understood as two sides of the same coin: On the one hand, due to a younger and more dynamic workforce, the continent's high population presents significant chances for prosperous economic development in the coming years and a relative advantage when comparing with other continents. On the other hand, because African countries have yet to adequately transform the potential of this rapidly growing population into national benefits - economically, politically and socially. A very significant proportion of the youth is still structurally excluded from economic development and finding themselves frustrated with the prospects for their future. Consequently, the current political, economic and social realities in many African countries leads the youth to radicalize or at least put them at risk of radicalization.

Economically, the most significant problem pushing the youth towards radicalization in Africa is the impossibility of getting a job that allows for more than mere survival. Many young people do not have the opportunity to be educated even though they are interested in upgrading their skills and building a more prosperous future. Others have achieved an education, but do not have proper opportunities matching their skills and qualifications. In other terms, it is not only mere poverty - even though it is also an important decisive factor - but rather the frustration, the disillusion and the lack of prospects for a prosperous future, which leads the youth towards radicalization. This frustration is amplified by political factors, such as rampant corruption which is still a predominant problem in many African countries. In addition to corruption, like in most other parts of the world, the youth is politically underrepresented. However, since Africa is at the time the continent with the youngest population worldwide, this political underrepresentation of the youth carries higher risks.

Furthermore, a lot of young Africans believe that their government does not concerns itself with their needs (Lucey & Patel, 2022). Even if numerous African countries and the African Union (AU) are taking numerous initiatives to get the youth involved politically, for the time being, African leaders remain the oldest in the world. Indeed, in 2021 the average age of the African president was 62. Contrastingly, the average age of the African population was 19,5 years old, leading to a significant age gap between the leaders and the general population (Runako, 2021). Furthermore, this alienation of politics felt by the youth is often reinforced by inadequate counter-terrorism efforts, which take the form of human rights abuses

committed by military forces on individuals wrongly incriminated as part of the insurgent group in countries facing a jihadist insurgency. In other terms, the failure to protect the general population from violent extremism combined with injustices committed by the military forces builds resentment amongst younger individuals, pushing them towards radicalization with the hope of changing the established status quo in their countries.

Last but not least, there are also social factors contributing to youth radicalization in Africa. More specifically, young individuals having experienced weak family structures are more likely to be drawn towards radicalization. For example, according to Cachalia & et al. (2016), in 2015 many of the young individuals active in *AQIM* in Mauritania came from divorced families. Furthermore, in Nigeria a similar situation was observed: The lack of parental supervision and care for orphaned or abandoned children has been increasingly related to radicalization in the countries' northern communities. In addition, parents in northern Nigeria are exposing their children to the risk of radicalization - without knowing - by sending them to Quaranic schools. Often these schools present the advantage of alleviating the parent from the financial burden of feeding the child during the day, while simultaneously allowing the child to gain an education. However, what the parents are often not aware of, is that these Quaranic schools are used as an oasis for recruitment by groups like *Boko Haram* (Cachalia et al., 2016). In sum, harsh economic conditions and the lack of opportunities offered to young individuals - in terms of education and fulfilling employment - creates a significant frustration amongst the African youth.

Furthermore, this frustration is very often reinforced by political factors such as underrepresentation of young individuals and rampant corruption. The overall dissatisfaction felt by the African youth creates a desire to change the established status quo and the "us versus them" mentality (Cachalia et al., 2016). In certain cases, this draws young individuals towards jihadist networks and subsequent radicalization. Indeed, in such a context, jihadist groups are perceived as appealing. They are able to reestablish hope in young disillusioned individuals, by promising them better prospects for the future and giving them faith in the possibility of changing the established order. In addition, jihadist groups are able to offer a sense of belonging to a group, which is appealing for young individuals that are very often left to their own devices.

In such political and economic conditions, social cohesion and strong family structures are the only factors remaining, which can prevent young individuals from falling into radicalization. However, in many African countries, these strong social structures which are essential to supporting young individuals are being significantly challenged by the harsh economic realities.

Finally, an important factor favouring youth radicalization and making it a phenomenon lasting throughout time, is that when taking a cost-benefit analysis, young individuals have the most to gain from challenging the established status quo in their country. Conversely, they are the age group that has the least to lose in terms of family, social assets, and already established professional path. In other words, when deciding to join a jihadist group, younger individuals have less to lose and more to gain than any other age group (Lucey & Patel, 2022).

The third common feature between jihadist insurgencies in Africa is that they have until now shown extreme resilience. Counter-insurgency operations throughout Africa have been widespread: from the Sahel with French-directed operation Barkhane to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Even if these military operations have often considerably weakened jihadist groups, the last two decades have demonstrated that opting for a military approach only allows for a “quick fix”. In most cases, such operations have displaced jihadist groups and forced them to morph into another form of organization in order to survive. In other words, military counter-insurgency operations have demonstrated the potential to considerably weaken jihadist groups in Africa, but not to cross them out of the map. Indeed, the military approach does allow to address the root causes which led the insurgency to appear in the first place.

For Hansen (2019), the resilience that jihadist insurgencies have demonstrated in Africa is significantly related to the capacity to endure military setbacks and change, transitioning from one type of military presence to another. He identifies four distinct forms of military presence adopted by jihadist groups: The first, (a) the clandestine network, is mainly found in countries with strong state structures, such as Tanzania and Ethiopia. The second form, (b) the accepted presence, entails an overt or covert agreement between a state and a jihadist organization. In this scenario, the state is willingly agreeing to delegate a specific geographic area to a jihadist organization. According to Hansen (2019), *Al-Qaeda* in

Sudan (1991 to 1996) and *Boko Haram* in Nigeria are two prominent examples of this type of territorial presence. The third form, (c) semi-territorial presence, is perceived as the most “typical” form of jihadist presence in Africa. This scenario often unfolds when the state’s military forces leave remote rural areas ungoverned and unpatrolled. Examples of such territorial presence are portrayed by *AQIM*, through its dominance of the Western Sahara, and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), which ruled over territories on the border between Congo and Uganda. In this scenario - and by contrast to the second type reviewed (b) the accepted presence - the state endures the jihadist presence. However, the costs of intervening and retaking control of the areas controlled by jihadist groups are often perceived as too high by the concerned state, leaving these territories to the mercy of the insurgent group. Finally, the last form of jihadist presence, (d) territorial control, is the most challenging to achieve for a jihadist group. In this scenario, the jihadist group is not just controlling remote rural areas that were left ungoverned and unpatrolled by the state’s military forces. Instead, this form of territorial control entails that the jihadist group has established itself as the dominant actor in a country or even taken complete control of the state apparatus – even though this type of territorial control is non-consensual. The possibility for such territorial presence was so far rendered possible by the appearance of a civil war within a country, which consequently weakened the state’s counter-terrorism efforts. In Africa, territorial control has only occurred on three short-lived occasions: in Somalia, Nigeria and Mali (Hansen, 2019).

#### **4. A FACELESS ENNEMY: WHO ARE THE INSURGENTS OF CABO DELGADO?**

As of the writing of this dissertation, there is no certainty around the exact moment the Cabo Delgado insurgency emerged, where it emerged, and who were the driving members. Indeed, the collected information thus far, has not allowed establishing a definitive picture of the insurgent's identity and origins. Instead, different pieces of a puzzle were brought together, allowing for a loose common understanding of the insurgents' identity and origins.

One reason for the lack of transparency surrounding the group's origins and genesis is that *ASWJ* has not been forthright about who they are and what they desire. Indeed, since the insurgency's start in 2017, *ASJW's* communication strategy has been very discreet. The organization mainly depends on short lectures, training sessions with captured individuals, and short films uploaded on social media to recruit more members and grow the insurgency. In short, the group has not made it a priority to communicate with the outside world. Indeed, many attacks were not even claimed by the insurgent group but by *Amaq*, the Islamic State's news agency. For example, on 29 March 2021, *Amaq* released a statement saying that they had taken control of Palma, a town of 75,000 inhabitants and that 55 people had been killed in the battle (Savatier, 2022).

Until 2020, the Mozambican government utilized the insurgent's discreet communication strategy and unclear goals to its advantage by presenting the group as faceless and being led by foreign individuals. This communication strategy adopted by the government had two functions. First, it allowed to divert both Mozambicans citizens' and the international media's attention from the government's possible implication in creating the conditions for the conflict to emerge. Second, it allowed the government to portray the insurgent group as unapproachable and thus uninterested in the possibility of dialogue and negotiations. Ultimately, it became easier to justify a military-only approach nationally, regionally, and internationally (Feijó, 2021). However, this strategy was only pursued for three years. Indeed, in 2020, it became clear that such a military-only strategy on its own would not be sufficient to end the conflict. Furthermore, the regional and international pressure to adopt a more all-encompassing approach increased significantly. In addition, as the years passed and the conflict prolonged in time, research on the conflict became more comprehensive. After numerous interviews with inhabitants of Cabo Delgado, journalists and researchers became an increasing number to point out that most leaders and insurgent

members are Mozambicans. More specifically, the members originate mainly from various places within Cabo Delgado, such as Mocímboa da Praia, Palma, Macomia, and Quissanga. However, some members were identified as coming from outside Cabo Delgado, notably from the Mueda plateau, the Nampula coast, and Niassa province. In addition, a few foreigners have been identified as part of the group (Feijó, 2021). Nevertheless, despite not all members being from Cabo Delgado and the presence of a few foreigners, it has now become common understanding that Mozambicans from Cabo Delgado make up the majority of the group's members. As one protagonist of the BBC Africa Eye documentary explained: "They are our sons!" (BBC, 2021).

The most contentious point remains the genesis of the insurgents. This chapter will aim at presenting the general historical context which allowed for the insurgency to form itself. In that sense, the work conducted by Eric Mornier-Genoud (2020) and Liazzat Bonate (2018) present the most complete work on the subject. Despite providing different stories, three common themes emerge allowing to draw a general understanding of key elements that led to the formation of the present-day insurgent group.

Morier-Genoud (2020) argues that there were at least two waves - and most likely three waves - in Cabo Delgado. The first occurred in 1989 and originated in the Nangade district, north of Cabo Delgado. That year, a sect having deviant radical practices and a different dress code - similar to the present-day insurgents - emerged. However, this sect was quite fast contained and dissipated, mainly due to the efforts of the already established Muslim representatives in the region. Because of this sect's similarities with present-day *Al-Shabbab*, the sheik in Nangade hypothesized that the current group could be a resurgence of this sect that had first emerged in 1989 in Nangade. Nevertheless, no formal elements proving such a relation have yet been found.

According to Mornier-Genoud (2020), the second wave of radicalization emerged in 2007, this time in a different district of Cabo Delgado, namely the Balama district situated in the southwest of the province. This second sect was created by Sualehe Rafayel, a young man from the village of Nhacole - also known as Muapé - who had recently returned after living several years in Tanzania. Rafayel rapidly managed to form a community of believers around him. He was known to spread the more radical precepts of Wahabbism - also known as Salafism, which consequently ended up clashing with most of the Sufi beliefs, dominating for

centuries in Cabo Delgado. Disputes started arising between Rafayel and representatives of Muslim organizations; even more so with the *Conselho Islâmico de Moçambique (CISLAMO)*, a newly arrived Muslim organization in Cabo Delgado. *CISLAMO* is, until this day, the most important Muslim civil society organization in Mozambique. Cabo Delgado had for decades its own organization known as the *Congresso Islâmico de Mozambique*. When the conflict between *CISLAMO* and Rafayel emerged, the former had only recently established itself in the province. In a nutshell, Rafayel was criticizing *CISLAMO* for its close relationship with the Mozambican state, which in his opinion, was not serving the broader interest of the Muslim community in Cabo Delgado. After an attempt to resolve the differences peacefully, Rafayel eventually faced imprisonment. After that, the administrator of the district of Balama met with him on March 21, 2011, while in prison. During this meeting, he explained that the Mozambican authorities could not tolerate anybody prohibiting their children from attending school and, more generally, advocating against the secular state. After that, it is suspected that he would have returned to Tanzania to re-establish his community in another district in Cabo Delgado. Finally, Morier-Genoud (2020) argues that there was probably a third wave of radicalization around 2013. However, this last wave seemed unrelated to Sualehe's movement.

Bonate's (2018) contribution echoes Morier-Genoud's (2020) work, even if certain details differ. Bonate identifies two phases of radicalization or rather two generations. The first generation was constituted by members that started following the Wahhabi school of thought - as argued by Morier-Genoud (2020) - which was introduced in the 1960s in Mozambique. A few years after Mozambique's independence, these new Wahhabi adepts created their civil society organization, namely *CISLAMO*, mentioned above. Most of these new Mozambican Wahhabis came from the southern provinces of the country. However, a minority of Muslims from Cabo Delgado had joined the new movement. Furthermore, Bonate (2018) points out that these Wahhabi followers, through *CISLAMO* had managed to attain significant economic and political power, particularly in the southern provinces of Mozambique. This growing power of the Wahhabi community in the country was combined with an important disregard for the poor rural north's Sufi community, who was accused of not knowing Islam's core teachings. However, this condescending vision of the Sufis of Cabo Delgado eventually started changing, as individuals from Cabo Delgado had joined the



Wahabbi movement and started to come home in the late 1990s. In this phase, according to Bonate (2018), the point of contention was reached. The new Wahhabi followers that had decided to return to Cabo Delgado after studying abroad - Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt, and Sudan - were disappointed with the stagnant socio-economic progress of their region. Instead of being angry at the Sufis followers in Cabo Delgado - which were mostly their families and friends - they directed their discontent to *CISLAMU*, which according to them, was undermining socio-economic development and the wider interests of the Muslims of the region by being too conciliatory to the ruling party, *FRELIMO*. Consequently, these disillusioned individuals started creating their own mosques and a separate community of believers.

To sum up, there are three core themes described by both authors in the genesis of the insurgent group. First, the most important element that emerges is that even though the insurgent group's resort to violent extremism in Cabo Delgado appeared abruptly in the years preceding the first attacks in Mocímboa da Praia, in 2017, the phenomenon of sectarianism and radicalization had its origins in the 1960's with the introduction of a new stream of Islam in Cabo Delgado, Wahabbism. Consequently, the formation of the insurgent group unfolded gradually. It was a process over several generations, that involved several attempts of forming a sect and subsequently several waves of radicalization. As demonstrated by Mornier-Genoud (2020), some of the waves of radicalization have most likely overlapped, suggesting the hypothesis of various sects developing simultaneously. In addition, it is essential to note that the exact details (place of birth of the sect, founders, leaders) of present-day insurgent, *ASWJ* also known locally as *Al-Shabbab* is unknown. Instead, various hypothesis coexist on the matter. Third, both authors demonstrate that the insurgent group's genesis is inseparable from a certain level of foreign influence - most likely trips by founding members of the sects to Tanzania, Somalia, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan with both an educational purpose and the aim to learn about a different stream of Islam.

## 5. ROOT CAUSES OF THE INSURGENCY

The search for the root causes behind the insurgency has been the question that has attracted the most attention among scholars. Consequently, it is currently the most covered and well-studied sub-theme in the literature on the Cabo Delgado conflict.

For a start, it is important to point out that there is no single cause responsible for the emergence of the conflict, nor that there is a single way to explain the conflict. As Assif Osman, stated: "Nobody can honestly say that they know the causes of the conflict. What exist at the moment are various studies, various theories that could be the causes of the conflict. But none of them are, let's say, definitive. I personally believe that the real cause could be a mixture of all these theories" (ACCORD, 2021). In other words, the root causes are complex, diverse and strongly inter-connected to one another, thus making it important to analyze and consider them as a whole in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the conflict.

Due to the above-mentioned multifactoriality of the conflict, the following section will analyze the root causes adopting a multi-dimensional approach. This approach will allow to assess all facets of the conflict by adopting different lenses; ultimately allowing to draw a comprehensive picture of the conflict's root causes. Six root causes will be identified that can be classified in the following four categories: (1) economic, (2) political, (3) socio-religious and finally (4) psychological root causes of the insurgency.

In addition to this multi-dimensional approach this section will be characterized by a top-down approach, resulting in three levels of analyses: national, regional and individual. This choice is based on the premise that the conditions which have led to the formation of several breakaway groups in Cabo Delgado since the 1960s - which ultimately led to the formation of *ASWJ* and the current insurgency - were created on the initiatives of different individuals and not regional or national actors. Consequently, it appears essential to understand which root causes at the individual level have motivated several persons to form these sects, which ultimately resulted in the start of the present-day insurgency.

However, looking solely at the root causes at the individual level would not be sufficient to explain the start of the insurgency, as these root causes are inseparable from a broader regional and national context. In fact, this section argues that the root causes at the individual level were created through the conjunction of root causes at the national and

regional level throughout time. In addition, it is essential to point out that the root causes which are originating at the national level also have a direct effect at the regional and individual level. In the same manner, root causes ingrained at the regional level also directly have an impact at the level of the individual.

This section will follow the following structure. First, it will analyze four root causes - (1) underdevelopment, poverty and unemployment, (2) the resource curse, (3) limited statehood and bad governance and (4) the closed channels of engagement and communication - which are bound to a broader national context. Thereafter, it will analyze the root cause - (5) marginalization - deeply ingrained at the regional level and which results from the all the previously mentioned root causes. Finally, this section will examine the root cause emerging at the individual level and which expectedly is a conjunction of all root causes originating at the national and regional level: (6) the desire to survive, personal fantasies and the aspiration to change the status quo.

The first root cause ingrained in a broader national context affecting the whole country groups three inter-related problems linked to the economy: underdevelopment, poverty and unemployment. Indeed, Mozambique has until this point experienced poor human development. The Human Development Index (HDI), is a comprehensive toolkit which aims to enable the measurement of the expansion of quality of human life resulting from economic growth and not solely the expansion of the economy in a given country. The HDI takes into account the economic and social levels of development in a country by measuring people's level of education, their level of health and access to health facilities and their standard of living. According to this measure, Mozambique scores very poorly: it is classified 181 out of 189 countries.

Underdevelopment, poverty and unemployment is affecting all of Mozambique, however these phenomena are particularly strong in Cabo Delgado. As shown by the research led with youth of Cabo Delgado by Lucey & Patel (2021), participants were dissatisfied with the prospects for education in their region and perceived it as a motive for joining *ASWJ*. Furthermore, youths pointed out that even the fairly qualified among them, were facing very important challenges to find a job matching their qualifications. As one participant puts it: "I say I want to be a journalist, but this is demotivating because there are no opportunities, as far

as journalists are being followed, so I can desist, or I could change something. Dreams end up collapsing (Lucey & Patel, 2021, 13).”

The second root cause, the resource curse is bound by a broader national economic and political context. Furthermore, it involves international actors, namely multinationals companies. In the general sense, the concept of the resource curse refers to a situation in which multinational mining and gas companies make a deal with local elites in a given country and consequently split the revenues from resource extraction only with the latter. Most importantly, in such a scenario, very little wealth reaches the rest of the population and even more problematically citizens whose livelihood are directly affected by the extractive projects (Hanlon, 2021).

In Cabo Delgado, the simultaneous discovery of offshore liquified gas and rubies strengthened the already pre-existing dynamics of corruption anchored along ethnic lines shaping politics and the economy since decades. Indeed, *FRELIMO* - the ruling party - has built an elite that works as a patronage network. This elite is mandated to make deals - of varying levels of transparency - with the multinationals companies and consequently catches the revenues first hand. Currently, this elite is mostly composed by members of the Makonde ethnic group, which is leading to growing frustration and feelings of exclusion among the Mwani and Mueda community, who are finding themselves excluded from the benefits of the extractive industry.

In sum, the discovery of natural gas and rubies in the last decade has not allowed for progress and development to local population in Cabo Delgado, and has thus only sharpened already existing social tensions (Faleg, 2019). As Dino Mahtani explained, the political economy in the province is currently predominantly dominated by the third largest ethnic group: the Makonde, which is President Nyusi ethnic group. However, Mahtani vigorously clarifies: “Let me not present this as an ethnic issue. It’s not! There are even Makonde boys who are now part of the rebellion or the insurrection as we call it” (International Crisis Group, 2021). In other words, the conflict is not rooted in ethnic grievances, however elites take advantage of the pre-existing ethnic divisions for their own personal gains. Political elites in Mozambique, like those in other African countries, are often corrupted by a struggle for access to and control of resources, and thus see the state as a source of personal profit. This rivalry for the control of resources frequently drives them to manipulate ethnic identities to

their advantage. In Mocimboa da Praia, this phenomenon resulted in the allocation of public offices and resources to the favored and therefore loyal ethnic group. Consequently, the Mwani minority, primarily Muslim fisherman, felt left out of political and economic opportunities. As one youths belonging to the Mwani explains it: “Here in Mocimboa [da Praia], the Makonde and young people who come from Maputo are trendy. We [Mwani] do not see anything... in order for our parents to live they have to work in the fields of the Makonde bosses... They are bosses and we are employees... This started a long time ago and it is not just today... We the Mwani are suffering... But one day this is going to have to change, we can’t go on like this” (Habibe et al., 2019).

In addition, when an abundance of natural resources was discovered in the province, a significant part of this wealth went to the Makonde through dubious business deals. In Cabo Delgado, a very small but tight elite was able to position itself to seize whatever national income makes its way north, including earnings from the fast-developing liquid natural gas business and the illegal trade. This unequal political economy has been an important cause leading to a growing feeling of injustice among individuals of Cabo Delgado (Lucey & Patel, 2021).

When analyzing the resources curse in the province, it is important to mention that the current circumstances could not have been created without the participation of multinational companies such as Total and Exxon Mobil, which are willing to close their eyes on the implication of unbalanced and non-inclusive business deals - made with the ruling elite - which are not taking the local population and the wider general interest of Mozambicans citizens into account. In addition, the influence and profit of certain of these multinationals companies such as Total has even motivated its national government to get involved in corruption scandals to secure interests. Indeed, even before the gas agreements were formalized, France was at the centre of an important corruption scandal that sent Mozambique into an economic and financial crisis in 2016. In 2013, the Mozambican government signed a dubious contract with *Constructions Mécaniques de Normandie (CMN)*, in order to - according to the official version - assemble a tuna fishing fleet. However, it turned out later that this deal was a cover-up attempt. In reality, the Mozambican ruling elite was seeking to ensure sovereignty over its exclusive economic zone and the fossil fuel resources within it, by unlawfully acquiring loans to finance a defence budget. What became clear when the scandal

erupted it that the French government appears to have turned a blind eye to the shady parts of this naval deal as early as 2013. Consequently, it encouraged the practice of corruption and increased Mozambique's debt. By ignoring this malpractice, France wanted to ensure that the Mozambican navy would be able to protect and defend the future extraction sites (Marchand et al., 2020).

The third root cause - limited statehood and the lack of good governance - is engrained in a broader national context and is furthermore intimately bound to the political landscape of Mozambique. Limited statehood can be understood as a situation in which the state's ability to carry out or enforce political decisions and/or maintain a monopoly on the use of force is deemed insufficient. In other words, countries and regions of countries with limited statehood are those where the central authority (or government) lacks the ability to implement rules and decisions. Typically, in the regions affected, the state actors are not visible and most importantly dysfunctional. In the northern provinces of the country and especially Cabo Delgado, limited statehood has been a central problem building up for decades and has consequently importantly contributed to yielding space for the emergence of *ASWJ*.

More than just yielding space, limited statehood helps the insurgent group grow for three distinct reasons: First, the lack of monopoly on the means of violence in Cabo Delgado has played an important role given that the *Forças Armadas de Defesa de Moçambique (FADM)* have been neglected and underfunded for years, leaving them completely unprepared and weak to combat the growing insurgency (Neethling, 2021). In addition to leading the *FADM* to be drawn into an asymmetrical and highly dangerous counter-insurgency operation, the lack of appropriate training has led the former to commit important human rights violations. Indeed, journalists and activists have proven that the *FADM* has been torturing and killing individuals mistakenly associated as being part of the insurgent group. Finally, as explained in the dissertation's introduction, given the *FADM*'s general unpreparedness to combat the insurgency, President Nyusi turned towards PMCs, which did not prove successful in stopping the growing insurgency and added to the list of human rights violations. In sum, the overall lack of security in Cabo Delgado resulting from the state's failure to keep the monopoly over the means of violence has given space to the insurgent group to grow and develop.

Second, the lack of good governance resulting from the limited statehood in Cabo Delgado has also significantly contributed to *ASWJ's* growth. Indeed, limited statehood inevitably results in a lack of good governance: Institutions are typically weak. Inhabitants lack basic services such as health services, schools, a functioning justice system and reliable police stations, etc. In addition, the rule of law - essential to a society's functioning and order - is importantly lacking. In Cabo Delgado, the lack of good governance has helped the insurgent group establish itself as an alternative entity to the state, the standards being so low, that it sometimes is able to better provide basic necessities and a sense of security to certain inhabitants feeling marginalized and abandoned by the state.

Third, organized crime and criminal networks in the Cabo Delgado region have importantly contributed to the issue of limited statehood and associated loss of control over areas of Mozambique. Indeed, the province of Cabo Delgado and the surrounding areas have become a major crossroads for the smuggling of drugs and other illegal goods. But most problematically, the involvement of police members in Cabo Delgado and even more problematically the involvement of high-ranking members of *FRELIMO* members with drug gangs has importantly hindered to the implementation of good governance and its related practices. In other words, as state elements are contributing to the bad governance issue, changing the established status quo has become a challenging and complex task (Neethling, 2021). In sum, such a context of widespread corruption has significantly contributed to the insurgent's growth by offering various financial opportunities to the group.

The fourth and last root cause ingrained in a broader national context, namely the closed channels of engagement and communications with the Mozambican government is - like the previous root cause - intimately linked to the political landscape of the country. It has not received much academic attention as of yet and is therefore more difficult to analyze. This root cause goes hand in hand with the bad governance issue affecting several northern provinces of Mozambique but even more strongly Cabo Delgado.

According to youths in Cabo Delgado, the problem lies in the fact that channels of engagement and communications with the Mozambican government do not exist, apart from one exception: around election time. However, even in the election periods, the promises that were made were not upheld in the long-run, ultimately leading the youth to feel utilized by political candidates. For this reason, the closed channels of engagement and communications

with the Mozambican government has pushed many young individuals of Cabo Delgado towards radicalization, which perceived their engagement in *ASWJ* as a last resource to take matters into their own hand and changed the established status quo (Lucey & Patel, 2021).

The conjunction of (1) underdevelopment, poverty and unemployment, (2) the resource curse, (3) limited statehood and bad governance and (4) the closed channels of engagement and communication with the Mozambican state results in a phenomenon of marginalization of the province and its people. Indeed, the particularly low levels of development, the lack of educational and professional opportunities experienced by the youth paired with a lack of political will to invest in the development of the province and its people and the still dominant culture of corruption leaves Cabo Delgado to be isolated and marginalized from the rest of the country. Cabo Delgado is often described as the “forgotten province” of Mozambique (Neethling, 2021).

However, the phenomenon of marginalization of the province is not only a conjunction of all previously mentioned root causes, but also of deeply rooted historical reasons. According to International Crisis Group, “there is a sense of exclusion in that region that has been building up for decades” (International Crisis Group, 2021).

Part of the explanation lies in the fact that in 1975, when Mozambique became independent, its government decided to suppress religions because of its strong Marxist-Leninist leanings. This suppression continued until the government feared a possible alliance between the main opposition movement, *RENAMO* and a religious group. Following these events, a religious liberalization occurred. The Muslim elite mostly based in the urban areas formed the *CISLAMO*. The Muslims of Cabo Delgado soon found themselves excluded from this religious organization, as Cabo Delgado’s inhabitants were considered too traditional, poor and not educated enough. Not surprisingly, Cabo Delgado's Muslims formed their own version known as the *Congresso Islâmico de Moçambique* - as mentioned in chapter 4.

Some members of the organization became a sect and radicalized around the year 2000 when two groups of young men from both the *CISLAMO* and the *Congresso Islâmico de Moçambique* competed to establish a new interpretation and practice of Islam (Mutasa & Muchemw, 2021). This social exclusion of Cabo Delgado’s Muslim population was only reinforced with a chronic state neglect of the region, a situation hard to accept for a population which had been at the heart of the struggle for the country’s independence (Alden



& Chichava, 2020). Indeed, Cabo Delgado gained an iconic role in the 1960s in the anti-colonial struggles against Portugal when the Makonde people of the province's Mueda plateau formed the backbone of the *FRELIMO* guerrilla. Unfortunately, independence did not allow for development. The province's predominantly rural population was engulfed in a civil war between the *FRELIMO* government and the *RENAMO* separatists until a peace agreement was reached in 1992. Despite voting for *FRELIMO* in national elections from 1994 onwards, the province did not experience the same level of economic growth and investment boom as Maputo and the southern provinces. Growing frustration and feeling of being the "forgotten province" grew among Cabo Delgado's population (Alden & Chichava, 2020).

This feeling of state neglect has only been reinforced by the last decade's simultaneous discoveries of \$50 billion of natural gas and hundreds of millions of dollars in rubies in the province, which has - as previously mentioned - created a resource curse for the province. As multinational corporations compete to extract an abundance of untapped natural resources, Cabo Delgado has become the epicentre for foreign direct investment. Consequently, the natural resources discoveries that should have been a blessing for the province's development have, until now, only sharpened inequalities for the local population and exacerbated already existing social tensions (Faleg, 2019).

The final root cause to the conflict, (6) the desire to survive, personal fantasies and an aspiration to change the status quo, is a conjunction of all above mentioned root causes. Indeed, the first motive for joining the insurgency is quite clear: the need to survive. Young individuals in Cabo Delgado are very dissatisfied with their professional situation as an important number of individuals are chronically without jobs. In addition, youths are also importantly dissatisfied with the delivery of basic services by local regional authorities. In such a context, the informal sector remains the only means to survival for young individuals, who in the majority of cases do not have the chance to receive an education or gain any sort of professional qualifications. Consequently, *ASWJ* presents an attractive economic opportunity, a chance to dream bigger and the chance to maybe have a sense of community and some guidance, which young individuals very strongly lack in the province (Habibe, Forquilha et al., 2019).

In other words, in a context of chronic neglect of the region and especially of its population, for some youths joining *ASWJ* presents an escape from the situation of poverty in

which they find themselves imprisoned. Even more importantly, considering that many youths felt very much abandoned to their fate, *ASWJ's* attractive propaganda gives many of them hope and a prospect for change. Indeed, the insurgent group promises these young people a new home and a new way of life based on a strong religious ideology. Most importantly, *ASWJ* provided support, a community to rely on and a sense of security thus satisfying the youth's emotional demands. For this reason, jihad became “the proper” way of living one’s life for young people, who saw Islam as a quintessential tool to fight local authorities and establishing a new social and political order (Habibe, et al., 2019)

To conclude, it is worth reiterating that the root causes of the conflict are diverse, complex and involve a diversity of actors from all levels: local, regional, national and international. In addition, as this section has demonstrated, the root causes of the conflict are complex, varied and strongly inter-connected. For this reason, the root causes needed to be considered through both a multi-dimensional and top-down approach, thus permitting to create a comprehensive picture of the conditions having motivated several individuals to create breakaway groups from the 1960s to 2017, ultimately leading to the formation of *ASWJ* and the present-day insurgency.

Altogether, the six above-mentioned root causes created fertile ground for an insurgency to unfold. Despite the central role that these root causes played in initiating the conflict, this dissertation argues that they were not sufficient on their own to trigger the start of the insurgency. Indeed, other regions of Mozambique and Africa gather many or even more of the above-mentioned root causes, nevertheless a jihadist insurgency did not erupt in those regions. This leads to the next question and section, namely: What factors triggered the start of the insurgency?

## 6. TRIGGERS OF THE INSURGENCY

In chapter 4, the general historical context in which the group formed itself was explained and four tentative conclusions were brought up. First, the group formed gradually over several generations. Second, several waves of radicalization overlapped, suggesting the possibility of various sects developing simultaneously. Third, the chapter highlighted that the specific details amounting to the formation of present-day *ASWJ* are not yet fully known. Fourth, a certain level of foreign influence contributed to the formation of the insurgency.

This chapter aims to complement these insights in a two-fold manner by answering the two following questions: What exact triggers led to sectarianism in Cabo Delgado? What triggers are responsible for the shift from sectarianism to violent extremism?

In contrast to chapter 4, that laid the general context surrounding the emergence of breakaway groups in Cabo Delgado, this chapter attempts to identify the specific tipping points that led to the latter's formation and shift towards violent extremism. These triggers are analyzed through the two above-mentioned questions based on the premise that they correspond to the two fundamental and distinct milestones that led to the present-day insurgency.

To respond to the first question relating to the emergence of sectarianism, this chapter will adopt a chronological approach retracing the socio-religious history of the province and the country since the 1960s. Indeed, such an approach seems adequate given that the general socio-religious context has been explained in chapter 4 and that the dire socio-economic conditions and the history of marginalization have been accounted for in the previous chapter on the root causes. As such, by taking a chronological approach, the first part of the next section will seek to zoom-in and understand what exactly created the shift towards sectarianism in Cabo Delgado.

To answer the first question two triggers are identified: (1) the introduction of Wahhabism in Mozambique and (2) the adherence of Cabo Delgadians to Wahhabism. These two triggers were selected based on the fact that they are the two common elements emerging multiple times throughout the literature despite the varying accounts of the socio-religious history presented by authors.

To answer the second question, three triggers are identified: (1) the repression and mismanagement of the government when the sect first emerged; (2) the closing of illegal ruby

mines in Montepuez, which created an afflux of potential recruits for the insurgent group; and finally, in 2017, *ASWJ* reached (3) a level of financial stability and simultaneously a sufficient level of support from segments of the population from Mocímboa da Praia. This second question will also be answered by the adoption of a chronological approach, however the timeframe studied will be from 2017 to the present-day.

Regarding the triggers having led to sectarianism in the province, the first identifiable tipping point is the introduction of a new radical religious school in Mozambique, namely Wahhabism. As briefly explained in the introduction, Mozambique is predominantly Christian, representing 56% of the 31.26 million inhabitants. Muslims account for 17.9% of the overall population (Da Silva, 2017). However, it is important to note that the Muslim population is predominant in Cabo Delgado, where they represent 58% of the 2,320,000 million inhabitants.

Taking a closer look at the practice of Islam in Mozambique, Sufism has been for centuries, the dominant stream of Islam practiced in the country. Sufism is a very ancient and mystical form of Islam practiced for more than ten centuries. Sufism is frequently referred to as Islam's "mysticism," which designates a collection of methods used by Muslims to seek for direct, one-on-one encounters with the divine (Green, 2012). It first appeared after prophet Mohammed's passing in 632, but it was institutionalized only in the 12th century. This stream of Islam places a focus on the internal quest for God and condemns materialism. Spiritual closeness with God and introspection are at the centre of its practice. In addition, it is known for its emphasis on tolerance and pluralism, thus often perceived as a stream of Islam opposing violent extremism (Winter, 2022).

Wahhabism is a different stream of Islam introduced in Mozambique only in the 20th century. It was founded in the 18th century by Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and chosen by the Saudi dynasty as its official practice that same century. The distinctive features brought by Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's contribution are the importance he gave to a direct return to the original teachings of both the Sunna (examples of the Prophet) and the Qu'ran - literal interpretations of the texts - his opposition to the principle of *shirk* (association of anyone or anything with God) and his emphasis on *tawhid* - absolute monotheism - (Britannica, 2022).

Starting from the 1960s, Saudi Arabia invested in a worldwide promulgation of Wahhabi Islam, which led to its arrival in Mozambique during that same decade. Students

returning to Mozambique after having studied Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia or other countries, brought the new teachings to their home country. They became keen on developing the teachings further and teach them throughout Mozambique. After 1964, the independence year of Mozambique, these new Wahhabi adepts became close to the ruling party *FRELIMO* and were able to found *CISLAMO* – as previously mentioned - a Muslim civil society organization defending the interest of the Muslim Wahhabi community. *CISLAMO* built mosques throughout Mozambique with the aid of foreign Islamic charities. Furthermore, many of its members were able to acquire some economic and political power, particularly in the southern region (Bonate, 2018). This new Wahhabi tradition built itself in opposition to the century-standing Sufi tradition dominant in the country. Consequently, it created a feeling of disdain and superiority from its adepts towards the Sufi which they thought of as illiterate people mispracticing Islam. Consequently, the introduction of Wahhabism triggered the appearance of a gap between the individuals deciding to convert to the Wahhabi practice - mostly in the southern regions of the country - and the ones remaining Sufi practitioners - mostly in the province of Cabo Delgado.

The second tipping point was reached when individuals from Cabo Delgado - originally believers of the Sufi tradition - chose to adhere to the newly introduced Wahhabi tradition and went abroad to study. When they came back to Cabo Delgado, they found almost no socio-economic progress. The disgruntled youth turned their resentment not only towards the Sufi community —mostly their families and neighbours— but also towards the Wahhabi organization, *CISLAMO*, which they perceived as being overly accommodative to the ruling party, *FRELIMO* and generally more concerned with accumulating wealth than with the welfare of the Muslim community in Mozambique. Since *CISLAMO* was the only entity with access to the funds of international Islamic charities, these young people began constructing their own mosques and madrasas which over several decades led to the creation of several Wahhabi sects. Along with preaching and teaching their version of Wahhabi Islam, they also offered basic literacy classes to the general public, worked to convert non-Muslims, and emphasized women's education (Bonate, 2018). At the time, the founders of the various sects that emerged were driven by the idea that Wahhabism was a force for socio-economic development for the province. The founders believed that their form of Islam could propel their province into development. In fact, viewing Islam and more specifically Wahhabism as a

tool for progress and socio-economic empowerment was part of a larger global trend following the Soviet-Afghan War (Heyen-Dubé & Rands, 2022).

Regarding the shift from sectarianism to violent extremism, as a reminder, three important elements can be identified: (1) First, when the sects initially emerged, they faced severe repression and mismanagement by the Mozambican government. Second (2), the closing of illegal ruby mines in Montepuez created an afflux of potential recruits for the insurgent group. Third, in 2017, *ASWJ* reached (3) a level of financial stability and simultaneously a sufficient level of support from segments of the population from Mocímboa da Praia.

As it stands, a majority of authors highlight that when the sect(s) leading to the formation of *ASWJ* emerged, the Mozambican government's reaction displayed two elements: a (a) brief non-violent attempt to put the deviant group back in their place through discussion followed by (b) violent repression, once it became clear that dialogue would not be sufficient. What is known is that *ASWJ* started as a non-violent sect, first gaining popularity in Mocímboa da Praia and Macomia in 2014. At the time, the group was satisfied with developing their practices and mosques isolating themselves from the Sufi believers that formed a majority in Cabo Delgado (Heyen-Dubé & Rands, 2022).

The group only militarized and became violent in 2017, after intense repression by the Mozambican government. Indeed, the breakway group's leadership made it clear that they wanted to get back to practicing a "purer" and more idealized form of Islam. However, they rapidly felt that this desire was not being respected by local authorities who rapidly pointed out their different practices as a problem to the Mozambican government. Thereafter, followers were rapidly excluded from regular mosques. In sum, militarization and violent extremism was not part of *ASWJ*'s modus operandi initially. Instead, the sect would have turned to these means in reaction to the conflict with local religious authorities and the repression of the Mozambican government (Heyen-Dubé & Rands, 2022).

Nevertheless, it is important to point out that even if the governmental repression against *ASWJ* contributed to the shift towards violent extremism, the sect engaged in aggressive behaviours towards local religious authorities before its militarization (Heyen-Dubé & Rands, 2022). Indeed, the sect perceived that local religious authorities were practicing and teaching Islam for their own financial benefit, for example, by charging the

members to perform religious rites. In addition, *ASWJ* perceived the close relationship between local religious authorities and the *FRELIMO* as being self-interested and not serving the wider good of the Muslim community (Heyen-Dubé & Rands, 2022).

The second trigger - more often overlooked - is the closing of the illegal ruby extraction site in Montepuez. Indeed, the closing of the site left many workers without a source of income and created a wave of potential recruits for *ASWJ*. These individuals which had been working informally in Montepuez and did not receive any governmental compensation for the closing of the site, had very little to lose when joining *ASWJ* (Morier-Genoud, 2020).

Finally, the third trigger is the conjunction of two factors achieved in 2017: On the one hand, *ASWJ* achieved (a) a sufficient level of financial stability, mostly through benefitting from illicit trade networks and organized crimes. On the other hand, that same year the group reached a sufficient level of support from segments of the population from Mocímboa da Praia, which greatly facilitated the deployment of violent extremist activities (Heyen-Dubé & Rands, 2022).

Now that the triggers accounting on the one hand for the formation of the sect in Cabo Delgado and on the other hand, the shift towards violent extremism have been accounted for, it is essential to analyze which drivers explain the conflict's duration in time. In other words, which drivers have allowed the insurgent group to grow and the conflict to prosper amidst the Mozambican state's and regional counter-insurgency efforts?

## 7. DRIVERS OF THE INSURGENCY

In the context of this dissertation, the drivers can be defined as the factors that are causing the conflict to last in time. The drivers are essential factors to analyze in order to create a comprehensive and all-encompassing picture of the conflict. Furthermore, they are the first elements that need to be taken into consideration and comprehended in order to find short-term solutions stopping the conflict.

The following section will analyze three essential drivers. The two first drivers - behavioural drivers - take a closer look at the behaviours of the two main actors and how that impacts the other side. These two drivers are (1) the Mozambican government's ineffective counter-terrorism strategy, and (2) *ASWJ*'s successful recruitment strategy.

The analysis of these two drivers emerged from the observation that both main actors' behaviours are in fact closely related to the root causes. Indeed, the Mozambican government's counter-terrorism strategy reflects the initial desire to find a "quick fix" to the conflict and consequently the desire to not address the root causes. Conversely, *ASWJ*'s successful recruitment strategy addresses the sixth root cause of the conflict, namely the desire of Cabo Delgado's youth to survive, personal fantasies and the aspiration to change the status quo. Furthermore, the recruitment strategy and the associated ideology indirectly addresses all the frustrations related to all other five root causes.

In addition to these two drivers relating to the main actors' behaviour and strategy, this section argues that the third driver of the conflict - financial resources obtained by the insurgent group through the illicit economy - is strongly related to geographical and circumstantial components in which the Cabo Delgado conflict inserts itself. Consequently, the third driver of the conflict is contextual.

The first driver - the Mozambican government's ineffective counter-insurgency strategy - has several dimensions. Primarily, and as explained earlier in this dissertation, in the early days of the insurgency, the Mozambican government made the choice to portray the insurgency as "faceless" in an attempt to justify a military-only approach and cover up its potential implication in the creation of the conditions for the conflict. This strategy of delay was pursued by President Nyusi until 2020 and contributed to driving the conflict. By picturing the insurgent as "faceless" in the early stages of the conflict and favoring a military response over a people-centred approach, the Mozambican government wanted to divert



international attention from the conflict's root causes and its implication, while simultaneously quickly eliminating the insurgent. However, this strategy proved unsuccessful and resulted in having the opposite effect. The Mozambican army's intervention failed in stopping the insurgency, which resulted in driving the conflict in time, as it delayed addressing its root causes. In sum, it gave the insurgent group both more time and recruits (Cilliers, 2021).

In addition to portraying the insurgency as faceless, an important factor which contributed to the Mozambican government's ineffective strategy was the lack of functioning intelligence services. Indeed, to be able to stop the various emerging break-away groups, the Mozambican state would have needed to be able to create a comprehensive intelligence picture on finance, armament sources, local allies and collaborators, and exterior ties. However, due to underdevelopment of intelligence services in the country and the general lack of available resources, monitoring and stopping the early development of *ASWJ*'s and all previously existing break-away groups was a particularly tenuous task for which the state did not have means (Cilliers, 2021).

Adding the two above-mentioned dimensions of the Mozambican ineffective counter-insurgency strategy, it is important to mention the government's failure to both provide and restore security before and after the birth of the insurgency. Indeed, the failure to stabilize the province after the first attack in Mocímboa da Praia in 2017 constituted a push factor towards radicalization, as many youngsters felt threatened for their life. Thus, some young individuals felt that joining *ASWJ* was the best viable strategy to survive. As explained by a participant of the focus group discussions led by Lucey & Patel (2022): "Most of the young people that join extremist groups do so because they are threatened and because of insufficient security, they end up joining as a way to safeguard their physical integrity and (that) of their families, since the national security forces, to some extent fail (to protect), showing a deficit in protecting citizens (Lucey & Patel, 2022, 15)". Furthermore, this desire to join *ASWJ* is not only explained by the fear of being killed but also by the lack of trust in the Mozambican military, due to human rights violations. The already weak vertical trust between the state and society has been severely impacted by these abuses, leading to a growing trust deficit that further pushed young people to turn towards *ASWJ* (Lucey & Patel, 2022). As Lucey's & Patel's (2022) participant pointed out: "Many times, there have been cases of extortion and threats by

the military, which in a way, makes some young people, in response, join the extremists (Lucey & Patel, 2022, 16).”

The fourth dimension of the Mozambican ineffective counter-insurgency strategy was enacted due to President Nyusi’s choice to, on the one hand, hire PMCs and, on the other hand, delay the SADC military intervention as long as possible. Two years into the conflict, the Mozambican President turned to the South African Dick Advisory Group (DAG) and the Russian Wagner Group to support the Mozambican army, which did not have the capacity nor the means to lead an efficient counter-insurgency operation against *ASWJ* on its own. The main factors accounting for the PMCs poor performance on the ground are the complexity of the enemy, the lack of familiarity with the terrain and the failure to cooperate with the Mozambican military. In sum, the overall counter-insurgency operation delivered by the PMCs did not live up to President Nyusi’s expectations and failed to bring an end to the insurgency. In addition, as explained in the introduction of this dissertation, the PMCs’ implication in the conflict added to the list of human rights violations already committed by the Mozambican army. Not to mention that the resort to these companies implied the loss of trust in the Mozambican state’s capacity to ensure security for its citizens due to the delegation of the state’s military power to private actors and the lack of accountability regarding the counter-terrorism actions delegated to the PMCs (Nhamirre, 2020). Similarly, Lucey & Patel (2022) explain that the failure of the Mozambican military to reestablish security in Cabo Delgado once the conflict started, importantly eroded the overall trust in the State. As one focus group participant pictured it in their research: “If the government itself hires private military, that means that the government itself does not believe in its own military, so who am I to believe in it? (Lucey & Patel, 2022, 16)”. In addition to resorting to PMCs, the delay of the SADC military intervention to August 2021 questions whether or not an earlier intervention combined with a people-centred peacebuilding approach would have allowed to stop *ASWJ* in its early stages of development.

The second driver can be pinpointed as *ASWJ*’s efficient recruitment strategy. There are two main elements accounting for the success of the group’s recruitment strategy. First, the insurgent group has skillfully exploited the pre-existing socio-economic grievances - such as widespread corruption, unemployment, marginalization, rampant inequalities, disproportionate use of force by the military and police and unstable land rights - to their

advantage in order to recruit alienated individuals caught in a poverty trap (Mangena & Pherudi, 2019). As such, joining *ASWJ* has very often presented an educational and financial opportunity for youth in Cabo Delgado. The group offered many youth an opportunity of growth by offering new members with capital to use in the licit or illicit economy. In addition, many youth were offered scholarships to study in Quranic schools abroad (Mangena & Pherudi, 2019). In sum, the dire socio-economic conditions and the poverty trap have made the promise of wealth enough to persuade many individuals to join the insurgency. Gradually, *ASWJ* was able to attract more and more youth in Cabo Delgado, demonstrating to which extent these financial and educational opportunities offered as part of the recruitment strategy have worked as drivers.

The second element making *ASWJ*'s recruitment strategy successful is ideology, which proved successful for two reasons: On the one hand, (a) it promoted the idea that “jihad” provides a meaning to one’s life, as an individual part-taking is fighting for a higher purpose and helping the world to become liberated from ‘evil’ western civilization and on the other hand, and (b) it offers a sense of community and belonging, which is particularly powerful, as it comes in a vacuum and youth often feel a lack of purpose and general feeling of being “abandoned” by the government and local authorities (Mangena, & Pherudi, 2019). As Habibe’s & Forquilha's 2019 study focusing on Mocímboa da Praia illustrated, through ideology, *ASWJ* gives new recruits a new family and a new way of living. In other words, the insurgent group and its ideology meet the emotional needs of the young recruits by providing a sense of security, support, and community. Finally, the ideology and “jihad” allow the youth to find hope again and feel empowered by giving them the ability to change the established status quo by opposing local religious authorities (Habibe & Forquilha, 2019).

The third driver can be identified as the financial resources obtained by the group through the illicit economy. Cabo Delgado has been the heart of illicit trade routes since decades. Most notably, the province has been known to be a crossroad of human trafficking, illicit wildlife poaching, and timber, heroin and gemstone trafficking. *ASWJ*'s anchoring in a region dominated by the illicit economy constitutes an important driver of the conflict, as it provides the insurgent group with a variety of financial possibilities to grow their movement. As explained by Haysom (2022) the history of insurgencies shows how the ability to acquire funds through the illicit economy may drive a conflict that would otherwise come to an end.

Consequently, an efficient way for the Mozambican government to significantly weaken the insurgent group would be to trace down illicit flows of money that the group is benefiting from and intercept them before they are utilized (Mangena & Pherudi, 2019).

However, there are two factors which prevent such actions and which make these financial flows acquired in the illicit economy a potent driver of the conflict. First, simply put, the complexity of tracing down these financial flows combined with the underdevelopment of the Mozambican intelligence services make the dismantling of the former a challenging task. Indeed, according to Mangena, & Pherudi (2019), in order to intercept these illicit flows, the Mozambican state ought to step up the specialized training of those involved in counterterrorism financing and anti-money laundering, more particularly in the area of financial intelligence gathering, analysis, and investigation. In addition, the cooperation of agencies involved in counterterrorism and anti-money laundering actions need to be significantly developed (Mangena & Pherudi, 2019).

Second and most importantly, politicians are part of the corruption networks from which *ASWJ* is benefitting, which consequently creates a very low incentive for politicians to gather the necessary means to dismantle these criminal networks. Indeed, politicians, the ruling party, and their top-tier criminal allies have covertly benefited from illegal resource extraction and shady business deals since decades. The most important of these corruption cases, is known as the tuna bond scandal revealed in 2016. This corruption scandal disrupted the economy as a result of the sudden withdrawal of support in international aid by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. This case of corruption emerged shortly after the discovery of offshore liquified gas in the Rovuma Bassin in Cabo Delgado in February 2010. Indeed, in perspective of the profit that was going to be made from the extraction of natural resources, high-level Mozambican politicians made a deal with a Swiss Bank known as *Crédit Suisse* and the Russian Bank VTB. Both the *Crédit Suisse* and the VTB handed out significant loans designed to support contracts between the newly created Mozambican state-sponsored fishing companies (Ematum, Proindicus and Mozambique Asset Management) and Privinvest, a French-Lebanese ship building company, for three maritime projects taking place between 2013 and 2016, aimed at developing the Mozambican fishing industry. As it was later discovered through 2017, the three above-mentioned Mozambican fishing companies were in fact created to cover fraudulent activity by high-level Mozambican

politicians. Indeed, as the report pointed out, the money of the bond had never been used for the development of the Mozambican fishing industry, but was spent in acquiring military equipment and important bribes to high-level politicians. Mozambican politicians involved in the scandal had the idea that the soon-to-come revenues from the liquified gas industry would pay for the missing money and that the shady business deal would therefore never be uncovered (Connelly, 2021).

These major corruption cases helped *ASWJ* by creating socio-economic grievances and resentment among the Mozambican population and consequently pushing an increasing number of youth towards radicalization. However, these mediatized cases of corruption are just the “tip of the iceberg” and are hiding an economy dominated by corruption and the culture of bribes.

In sum, it can be said that the widespread culture of corruption at all levels of Mozambican society has been fundamental to *ASWJ*'s development through the numerous financial opportunities that such a context has offered to the group (Casaca, 2021).

## 8. CONCLUSION

The research question leading this dissertation - Which factors brought the youth to radicalize in Cabo Delgado and what drivers have allowed the insurgency to prosper in time? - emerged from the observation that the dire living conditions created by the lack of development of the Cabo Delgado province, the lack of prospect for the future and the strong socio-economic injustices were not sufficient to explain the insurgency.

As explained in the introduction, the link between socio-economic grievances and youth radicalization is not as clear as one would expect: *ASWJ* has never formalized socio-economic justice as a core motivation leading their insurgency. Furthermore, the attacks perpetrated by the insurgent group were first directed at government facilities (police stations, townhalls, etc...) but rapidly, the targets also began to include the general population. Given that the stronghold of the group is formed by Mozambicans from Cabo Delgado, the people killed were people relatively close to the insurgent group members.

Considering this fact, this research project aimed to understand how the radicalization process drives youths to kill extended family members, neighbors, fellow Muslims, and other inhabitants of their province. Furthermore, it sought to understand what pushes Cabo Delgado youths towards radicalization if not the desire for socio-economic justice.

Several key findings need to be highlighted.

Regarding the root causes: It is fundamental to establish that because of their multi-dimensionality, complexity and inter-connectedness, there is no single reading of the conflict's root causes and more generally, no single way to understand the conflict. This dissertation proposed a reading of the root causes guided by both a top-down approach - leading to a national, regional and individual level of analysis - and a multi-dimensional approach, allowing the analysis of economic, political, socio-religious and finally psychological root causes of the insurgency.

The first important key finding relating to the root causes is that the desire to survive, personal fantasies and the aspiration to change the status quo was created through the conjunction of all other root causes unfolding over several decades at both the regional and national level. Indeed, an accumulation of frustrations developed in the youth of Cabo

Delgado since the 1960s. These frustrations were created by a general lack of political and economic investment in the province and a growing sense of marginalization that has emerged with the Wahhabi / Sufi division and the subsequent creation of the *CISLAMO* and the *Congresso Islâmico de Mozambique*. Furthermore, the frustrations surrounding the lack of socio-economic development only became stronger with the discovery of oil and rubies during the last decade, which should have expectedly created some wealth and development for the province, but which because of the corruption only benefited a tight elite. In sum, the desire to survive, personal fantasies and the aspiration to change the status quo did not appear suddenly, but was instead created by the gradual accumulation of all other economic, political and socio-religious root causes.

The second key finding can be summarized in the following manner: The growing and accumulating frustrations, which ultimately led to the above-mentioned root cause in the youth of Cabo Delgado - namely the desire to survive, personal fantasies and the aspiration to change the status quo - was the most decisive root cause to the start of the insurgency. This can be explained by the fact that once this root cause met the two triggers of the insurgency, that is the introduction of Wahhabism in the province and the adherence to this new branch of Islam, the necessary conditions for the creation of several breakaway groups were met.

In other words, the conditions for insurgency were created by the encounter between, on one hand, the growing frustrations of Cabo Delgadians embodied in the desire to survive, personal fantasies and an aspiration to change the status quo and, on the other hand, (a) the sense of exclusion created by the introduction of Wahhabism in Mozambique, and later on, the education gained abroad by certain Cabo Delgadians, which led them (b) to adhere to Wahhabism and perceive it as a potential force of socio-economic development for their province.

Regarding the triggers, the first important point to take away is that without the root causes having previously laid the fertile ground for insurgency in Cabo Delgado, the triggers would have not met the threshold to be effective. In other words, they would have not led to the emergence of break-away groups which subsequently led to the present-day insurgency. In the same manner, the root causes would have not been sufficient to start an insurgency on their own. Indeed, several other regions of the world reunite the same - or even more - root causes

than in Cabo Delgado, however a jihadist insurgency has not unfolded in those parts of the world. It is really the introduction of Wahhabism to Mozambique and later on, the adherence of certain Cabo Delgadians to this new stream of Islam paired with their return to the province, where they found themselves disappointed with the very little socio-economic development, the socio-religious and economic marginalization of the province, and later on, the oil curse, which ultimately led to the start of several break-away groups in the province.

The second essential point to highlight is that triggers add an important religious dimension to the conflict, which cannot be overlooked. Indeed, even though the Cabo Delgado conflict is not a religious conflict *per se*, in the sense that the conflict's origins are not rooted in religious disagreements, it is the introduction of a new religious stream of Islam that created a desire in Cabo Delgadians to use religion as a means to change the status quo in which they saw themselves imprisoned. As such, the introduction of Wahhabism in the country and its perception as a means of potential socio-economic development for the province is not a root cause explaining the conflict, but it played a quintessential role in the start of the insurgency. This specific point highlights the importance of not oversimplifying the Cabo Delgado jihadist insurgency into a religious conflict - as it is commonly the case with jihadist conflicts through synthesized media coverage - but also simultaneously not overlooking the religious side of the conflict and ultimately acknowledging its central role in triggering the start of the insurgency.

Regarding the drivers there are two important key points that this research project outlined. First, the drivers are not directly related to the triggers. However, they are importantly related to the root causes of the insurgency. Indeed, the Mozambican government's counter-terrorism approach has demonstrated the attempt to control the insurgency through a "quick fix" approach, thus not addressing the root causes of the conflict.

Conversely, *ASWJ's* recruitment strategy is successful because it addresses the frustrations - and thus the conflict's root causes - of the youth of Cabo Delgado by giving them a salary and prospects for the future. Indeed, the recruitment strategy and the ideology promoted addresses the desire to survive, personal fantasies and the aspiration to change the status quo, but also indirectly all other root causes. In this manner, joining *ASWJ* has been a



strategy allowing to alleviate the accumulating frustrations felt by the youth in Cabo Delgado.

The second important key point to highlight is that the first two drivers - the Mozambican government's counter-terrorism strategy and *ASWJ's* successful recruitment strategy - are mutually reinforcing. Indeed, because the Mozambican government's counter-terrorism strategy is mainly relying on military operations - which ultimately has led to human rights abuses - and does, in addition, not address the underlying causes of the conflict, it consequently reinforces the already existing root causes of the conflict and the general feeling of alienation of the youth of Cabo Delgado. Ultimately, the government choices constitute a push factor towards radicalization.

In the same manner, the increasing number of youth joining the insurgent group in Cabo Delgado has reinforced the government sense of urgency and need for military response. Finally, it is important to highlight that all three drivers - (1) the Mozambican government's ineffective counter-terrorism strategy and (2) *ASWJ's* successful recruitment strategy and finally the (3) financial resources obtained by the insurgent group through the illicit economy, could potentially create new root causes to the conflict, thus accentuating the necessity to address them the earliest possible.

To give a straightforward answer to the first part of the research question - Which factors brought the youth to radicalize? - the following can be said:

It is socio-economic grievances accumulating through decades that have created a strong sense of frustration and marginalization in the youth of Cabo Delgado. Consequently, wanting to remedy to the dire socio-economic conditions of their province, youth decided to take matters into their own hands. However, it is essential to highlight that the tipping point, which ultimately resulted in the youth taking actions, was only reached when the root causes met the triggers of the conflict. In other words, it is only once the decades of frustrations regarding socio-economic development and the deep feelings of marginalization collided with the introduction of Wahhabism in the country and its later adoption by certain members of the province, that the sufficient conditions were met for the formation of several sects in Cabo Delgado; ultimately leading to the present-day insurgency.

Regarding the second part of the original research question - what drivers have allowed the insurgency to prosper until now? - the answer is more direct.

Indeed, the drivers that have allowed the insurgency to prosper until now are linked to the behaviour and strategy adopted by the two main actors: On the one hand, the Mozambican state's unsuccessful counter-terrorism strategy rooted principally in military deployment and on the other hand, *ASWJ's* successful recruitment strategy and ideology presenting a source of hope for the disillusioned youth of Cabo Delgado.

Finally, one last factor driving the conflict is rooted in the circumstances in which the conflict inserts itself. Indeed, due to the prosperous illicit economy and the widespread corruption the insurgent group has been presented with numerous financial opportunities, which ultimately make the insurgency more sustainable in the long-run.

This research aimed to create a comprehensive and all-encompassing understanding of the conflict by unpacking its different layers. However, it can still further developed through additional research. There are two important avenues for the future. First, this research could be deepened and complemented through quantitative research, more specifically quantitative surveys. Indeed, quantitative surveys conducted in large numbers would allow to interview the youth of Cabo Delgado on the field; which could importantly higher the verifiability and generalizability of the principal push and pull factors leading the youth of the province towards radicalization. Furthermore, it would allow to uncover if some of the motivations leading the youth to join the insurgency were not accounted for in this research project. Second, this research project could serve as a basis for the development of potential peacebuilding measures aiming to stop the conflict on the short-term and resolve it, as its core, on the long-run. Indeed, the conflict has lasted for five years and the counter-terrorism strategy centred around military deployment have shown their limitations. Therefore, developing a more comprehensive peacebuilding approach addressing the conflict's root causes, triggers and drivers appear as an essential next step.

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