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Original Research

PATHWAYS OF ENGAGEMENT WITH A TERRORIST GROUP IN MOZAMBIQUE

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ABSTRACT
The rapid expansion of terrorism has threatened the security and stability of Mozambique. The terrorist group locally called "al-Shabaab" has attracted many people, established terrorist camps in the bush, and created military bases in occupied villages. This research aims to understand who these people are, what strategies the terrorist group use to engage local people, and what form the actual engagement takes. Applying a qualitative approach, interviews with 54 informants were conducted and thematically analysed, including 35 prisoners confined on charges of terrorism in Cabo Delgado and several key stakeholders in government institutions. We identified five types of engagement in terrorist groups: voluntary, through enticement and deception, forced, by birth, and ambiguous (people who were not aware of their involvement in the terrorist groups). Based on our analysis, we drew two major conclusions. First, engagement in terrorism and engagement with a terrorist group should be distinguished as separate actions. Second, the massive engagement involves three factors: the terrorist groups' strategies, local vulnerabilities, and a weak state's response.

Keywords: Terrorism, triangle of engagement factors, al-Shabaab, natural resources, Mozambique

INTRODUCTION
On October 5, 2017, a group of youth attacked a police station in the Mocimboa da Praia District in Cabo Delgado Province, Mozambique (Hanlon, 2020). This shattered security and stability in the area, leading to the outbreak of violence across the area (Barkindo, 2023; Morier-Genoud, 2020; Pirio, Pittelli, and Adam, 2018). By 2021, 3100 civilians were killed, 817,000 were displaced, and demand for humanitarian assistance increased. On the terrorists' side, 23 were killed and others were arrested in combat, including female and child soldiers (TVM Evening News, December 21, 2021).

In 2021, the Government of Mozambique stepped up its military interventions, supported by the international community (Pirio et al., 2018). By July 2023, the Minister of National Defence and the President of Rwanda assured the public that security and stability had been successfully established. President Kagame affirmed, "I should say that the problem has been largely solved. Maybe 80%… displaced people and multinational companies are showing signals of return" (STV Evening News, June 26, 2023). Confirming this statement, the Mozambican Minister of Defence added, "The remaining 20% of achievements concern the

security on the main road to Mocimboa da Praia and a few remote villages. Eventually, we will assure 100%... with the restarting of public services" (STV Evening News, June 26, 2023). About two months later, the Mozambican Defence Force announced the killing of three top terrorist leaders, including the vice-commander-in-chief, Abu Kital (STV Evening News, August 28, 2023).

More than six years on, however, the conflict has not been resolved. In fact, during the COVID-19 pandemic, terrorists expanded their area of control and attracted more people, including government employees from strategic institutions. To understand the reasons for this protracted conflict, many studies have been conducted, focusing on the causes, modus operandi, internal displacement, human rights, and countering terrorism (Hanlon, 2020; Morier-Genoud, 2020; Pirio et al., 2018). According to the National Penitentiary Service (SERNAP) of Mozambique, terrorists attract people and create communities with well-defined military bases (SERNAP, 2022). Both local and foreign people, mostly youths, participate in recruitment, sentry duty, military attacks, kidnapping, murders, robbery, and supplying the group with information, food, and weapons (SERNAP, 2022; Pirio et al., 2018).

However, there are relatively few empirical studies exploring the actual experiences of people who engage with terrorist groups and eventually become so-called terrorists. The aim of this study is therefore to deepen our understanding of this engagement by answering the following research questions: How do people first engage in terrorist groups in Mozambique? Who are they? And what attracts them to this engagement? To investigate these questions, we conducted interviews with 54 informants (35 people accused of terrorism and confined in Cabo Delgado Prison, ten government decision-makers, and nine stakeholders who interacted with former terrorists. The interviews were then thematically analysed in line with our research objectives.

The current study represents an initial step in understanding how people in sub-Saharan Africa and developing countries engage in terrorism, and what strategies terrorists use to strengthen their groups. By presenting the actual experiences of suspects and convicts of terrorism in Mozambique, this study reveals a variety of types of engagement and helps to further our understanding of the vulnerabilities, manipulation, and injustices the local people experience and the government's role in ensuring justice in the arrest and incarceration of people accused of terrorism. The results of this research thus contribute to counterterrorism studies, opening a new dimension for further research.

The rest of the article is structured as follows. Section Two presents a literature review. Section Three describes the research methods used. Section Four discusses the findings, followed by a longer discussion and conclusion in Sections Five and Six.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Past studies on terrorism have discussed the concept (Kennedy-Pipe, Clubb, and Mabon, 2015; Schmid, 2013), its root causes (Musgrave, 2015), tactics (Zafra-Davis, 2015), the expansion of terrorist activities (Segell, 2023; Kunaka, 2021; Mabon, 2015; Stahl, 2015), and its links to radicalization and deradicalization (Kohler, 2017; Veldhuis, 2016; Borum, 2011; Bjorgo and Horgan, 2009). However, the study of terrorism is fraught with many challenges, not least because there is no consensus on the definition of the term. Schmid (2013) analysed 250 definitions and identified several criteria: it is a method/strategy of waging conflict; it uses

illegal and immoral violence; it involves threats; an intentional production of terror and propaganda; it targets civilians; its purpose is intimidation and coercion; and it is predominantly politically motivated.

In Mozambique, the *Law for Prevention, Suppression and Fight against Terrorism and Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction* (Law no. 13/2022) of 8 July 2022, defines terrorism as "the use of threats, physical or psychological violence to create social insecurity, terror, or panic among the population or put pressure on the state or organization of an economic, social, or political nature to carry out or refrain from carrying out certain activities." According to this Law, the terrorist is described as any individual who: "by any means, directly or indirectly, illegally, and deliberately commits or attempts to commit acts of terror or related to it; an accomplice participating, organizing, or inducing others to engage in terrorism."

Another challenge is the lack of consensus about the names of terrorist organizations acting in Mozambique (Morier-Genoud, 2020). Initially, the group called itself "al-Sunnah Wal-Jamãa", which conveyed their belief that they represented the orthodox religion. The US Administration (Zenn, 2023) and the Mozambique Defence Armed Force (STV News, June 27, 2023) also use this name. However, Muslim leaders rejected it to deny the religious authenticity of the group. Meanwhile, local people and the media call them al-Shabaab (an Arabic word meaning youth), probably because the modus operandi of the group is similar to al-Shabaab of Somalia, another movement of youth jihadists (Morier-Genoud, 2020), which is the strongest Al-Qaeda affiliate in Africa (Zenn, 2023). However, the group in Mozambique should be differentiated from al-Shabaab of Somalia. Meanwhile, researchers suggest that the group represents the Islamic State (IS), the defector group of Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan following the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 (Barkindo, 2023). This view is reinforced by the fact that in 2019, IS declared Mozambique as its province, "The Islamic State in Mozambique Province" (Morier-Genoud, 2020).

Preventing terrorism requires an understanding of its root causes. Scholars have identified poverty; lack of opportunities; weak states; illegitimate/corrupt governments; rapid modernization; religion (Johnson and Sergie, 2014) or ethnicity; social injustice; political exclusion, mistreatment, and repression (Musgrave, 2015; Cordesman, 2013; McAllister and Schmid, 2013; Schmid, 2013). Since the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers in the US in 2001, religious terrorism has probably received the most scholarly attention.

In this regard, Mozambique is one of the countries affected by the expansion of Islamic jihad to sub-Saharan Africa. However, the country has other characteristics that may be creating favourable conditions for terrorist groups to take root. For one, Mozambique ranks 4th in the world in gas reserves after the Russian Federation, Iran, and Qatar. The place where the terrorist group is based, Cabo Delgado, is a “pot of gold” with liquid natural gas (LNG) as a "golden goose” and also has huge potential for rubies, gold, diamonds, and uranium (Segell, Kostelyanets, and Solomon, 2021), which enables it to generate income. Other important factors include the reorganization of KiSwahili-speaking people in the region; interference of other countries for natural gas exploitation; the marginalization and dissatisfaction of ex-combatants of the independence struggle ; the presence of international organized crimes and drug trafficking involving senior state leaders; retaliation against the violence perpetrated by companies exploring natural and mineral resources; intra-clan conflicts; and the perceived lack

of justice (Bussotti and Coimbra, 2023; Hanlon, 2020; Morier-Genoud, 2020; Pirio et al., 2018; Wiegink, 2015).

The terrorist group first operated in the coastal areas and expanded to the interior. To strengthen their military capacity, they targeted security positions and seize military equipment (Chingotuane, Sidumo, Hendricks, and van Nieuwkerk, 2021). The group's activities are twofold: economic and religious. They engage in illicit businesses, trafficking precious stones, drugs, wood, charcoal, and ivory. They trade in Tanzania, the Great Lakes, China, and Vietnam. They also receive funds and logistical support from outsiders, domestic sponsors, and local communities.

Previous studies have shown that terrorists use several strategies to attract people, such as the promise of scholarships, jobs, or money (Bekoe, Burchard, and Daly, 2020; Bukarti and Munasignhe, 2020). For example, the group initially financed young businessmen, credit institutions, and loan sharks, and offered money to establish new businesses, compensating for the lack of credit from formal financial institutions. They also offered economic incentives to the recruits and transferred money by cell phones via mobile money transfer services such as Mpesa, Mcash, and Conta Movel (Chingotuane et al., 2021; Bukarti and Munasignhe, 2020). Sometimes troops collect monetary and non-monetary taxes and use them to entice people. The groups control communities, but also assist in disasters and health services (Dorsey, 2023).

When economic incentives fail, the group also uses threats of violence. Water and electricity can be used as a means of controlling the population in Africa; in the case of disobedience, the supply can be cut off and water can be poisoned (Segell et al., 2021). Terrorists often use social media (Segell, 2023; Bukarti and Munasignhe, 2020). Families may be forced to offer their members as foot soldiers for salaries to feed the family. Those who resist may face coercive conversion, brainwashing, or torture (Ferguson and Binks, 2015). They also penetrate society disguised as traders, merchants, scholars, and missionaries, and teach extremist ideology (Segell et al., 2021).

The religious activities were primarily conducted through *madrassa* (Muslim schools). The schools are centres for radicalization, teaching a puritanical version of Islam covering the way of dressing, polygamy, disrespect for government institutions, the fight for religion, and the Quran (Bekoe et al., 2020; Morier-Genoud, 2020). The groups use online propaganda mainly through YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook (Bukarti and Munasignhe, 2020; Barkindo 2023). From 1990, via Wahhabi religious educational institutions and NGOs, these groups funded scholarships for youth to go to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, and other countries for training (Segell et al., 2021; Morier-Genoud, 2020). Most of the recruited youth belong to the marginalized ethnic group, Mwani (Chingotuane et al., 2021).

Despite some research in this field, information on pathways of engagement in terrorism is scarce. Ferguson and Binks (2015) identified voluntary radicalization, where people join terrorism by identifying themselves with the group’s ideology, culture, and values, or engage due to ‘idols’ in their community who openly support terrorism. The contextual analysis also suggests that local people "engaging" in terrorism can be victims of circumstances intertwined with exclusion, poverty, and illiteracy (Zenn, 2023; Hanlon, 2020; Morier-Genoud, 2020;). However, empirical studies drawing on primary data from people engaging in these actions are rare. We thus need studies that clarify the vulnerabilities which drive people to terrorism, the strategies used to attract people into terrorism, and what ways people engage with terrorist

groups. We also need more research on the circumstances under which government security forces arrest, confine, and handle people suspected of terrorism. Such studies would allow us to understand the actual situation of terrorist activities in Mozambique.

METHODOLOGY

Schmid (2013) recognizes the challenges in studying terrorism and suggests that there is no single method. Although he warns that some research methods such as participatory observation and interviewing terrorists are dangerous and inappropriate, the current study was approved by the Research Ethics Review Board at the Graduate School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Hiroshima University (HR-HUM-000735) and by the MJCR. For our research, SERNAP provided the necessary security conditions. As for data collection, we used a qualitative approach to gain insights on engagement. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 54 informants, 10 decision-makers at the Ministry of Justice, Constitutional and Religious Affairs (MJCR)/ SERNAP, 3 prison commanders, 3 prison guards; 3 heads of the Rehabilitation and Reinsertion Program in Cabo Delgado Prison, and 35 people detained as terrorists in this prison. The prison has three wings *(Mieze, Female, and BO wing). BO* is the name used in Mozambique to mean maximum-security prison. It comes from the phrase "body odor," which is associated with people in prison. The interviews were conducted in local languages and Portuguese, transcribed in Portuguese, and translated into English for thematic analysis.

Regarding the selection of interviewees, purposive sampling was applied based on three conditions: a) being indicted for terrorism; b) having more than one year of confinement; and c) being confined in cells for terrorists in the Cabo Delgado Prison. The priority was given to those who had participated in the terrorist groups' recruitment process, had been kidnapped/captured by terrorists, had lived in terrorist camps, and/or had experienced combat. Gender and age representation were also taken into consideration. The interviews strictly observed ethical procedures regarding prior informed consent, with an explicit right to refuse any questions or withdraw from the interview. Since this article is part of a broader study on the re-education of people in confinement, we included the heads of District and Provincial Education Services of Pemba and Cabo Delgado.

The interviews were conducted over six days and took between 30 to 90 minutes per participant. The data was triangulated with existing literature and the speeches of "arrested terrorists" and government officials available on national official media (YouTube). To keep the identity of the interviewees confidential, we use pseudonyms or participant numbers in the following discussion.

FINDINGS

Characteristics of People Involved in Terrorism

The participants' first observation was that the group is multinational. The Vice Head of SERNAP noted that "both national and foreigners are involved" and "the locals are enticed by outsiders." The Commander of Penitentiary Operation (PO) in Cabo Delgado Prison confirmed the incarceration of foreigners: "In 2022, after transferring some 'terrorists' … we remained with 44 Tanzanians, one Zimbabwean, one Malawian, and one Burundian." Similarly, nine participants who lived in the terrorist camps confirmed the presence of Mozambicans, Tanzanians, Burundians, Kenyans, South Africans, and people from the DRC. Participant 3

named leaders: “Most leaders are Tanzanians, e.g., Mombassar is from Zanzibar; Ibrahimo, Dar es Salaam; Muhamudo – Twara; and Hassan from Dar-es-Salaam.” Our study also included seven foreign former terrorists, six Tanzanians and one Burundian. Participant 8, who worked as a mechanic and driver and had access to the senior leaders, confirmed that the operational terrorist’s leader was Bonomado Machudi, a Mozambican from Lalane Island. This information was confirmed by the head of one prison.

The various nationalities were also confirmed by their languages. Participant 17 mentioned Swahili, Makua, Arabic, Mwali, KiMwani, and Makonde. Portuguese was also mentioned. However, according to our interpreter (a prison guard who oversees the female terrorist wing and who speaks five local languages), Swahili, the official language in the Republic of Tanzania and spoken in all areas affected by terrorism, may have facilitated the communication and interaction between foreign terrorists and locals. Many of our participants detained in prison could speak Swahili.

Multiple participants stressed that terrorists are young. The head of SOP lamented the engagement of the youth and pointed out some “weaknesses” that make people join terrorist groups, such as poverty and dysfunctional government institutions. The age of our respondent detainees ranged from 17 to 72 years old, with a mean age of 35. Regarding their education, the Head of Penitential Operation Services (POS) explained that "the majority are illiterate… 60-70% do not have any elementary or junior high school education; they are poor; they lack jobs and occupations". Of the prisoners, 15had not studied at school, 16 had not concluded grade 5 and had difficulties in reading and writing, and only 4 studied at a high school. In terms of financial capacity, according to POS, they were poor and came from humble families. The participants included people with low incomes (small-scale fishermen, farmers, carpenters, crafters, small traders, and boat transporters of people and goods). Their family situation varied, including those who were married and had children, lived with their family in the terrorist camp, were separated, or were single.

Personal Invitations to Engage in Terrorism

The Head of SERNAP revealed that “terrorism was taking place only in Cabo Delgado” and that “all the incarcerated people accused of this crime are from this province and surrounding communities.” According to him, terrorists and civilians live in the “same environment,” and in many cases, through their “close relatives and friends” in mosques or their family**,** they attract each other and engage in terrorism. Similarly, the Head of PO in Cabo Delgado said, "Terrorists are people from the community, are our compatriots, our brothers and sisters, and siblings; they live and interact with us 24/7." Because of the intimacy, "it is very difficult to escape that manipulation.”

Our participants shared their experiences of invitation by a close person. The leader of the cell holding terrorists in Mieze, who supports seven other convicts, was “invited by a family member” to engage in terrorism. Participant 20, a former terrorist who had lived in a terrorist camp for three years, confirmed enticement by a family member. “One day,” he said, "I was cultivating my farm. My sister’s husband asked me, 'If you see soldiers passing, inform me'." Participant 20 then told him the time and direction of two helicopters that flew over him on that day. After that, each time he shared information, he was paid money via Mpesa, a mobile phone bank account. One day the same family member (brother-in-law) asked, “Why are you

suffering? Join this group…they came to teach religion and help people. Forget poverty." This is how Participant 20 joined terrorism, first providing information about military movements, and later supplying fish to the terrorist camp.

In addition to family and relatives, close individuals in mosques also attract people. One sheikh recruited several believers, and upon his request, they recruited friends from school and family members. One night, they met in the house of one youth (Participant 11) "to learn the Quran" where they were all arrested by police and confined in a prison cell.

Vulnerabilities in Cabo Delgado

One of the local major vulnerabilities is poverty. The former President of Mozambique (Armando Guebuza) once appealed to the "intellectual classes" to see poverty as a vulnerability, and not as a cause of terrorism. According to him, poverty exists everywhere, including in the capital, and there are worse regions, but terrorism is not there. Poverty in Cabo Delgado makes access to education difficult. The provincial head of education said, "There are many people who have not received formal education." Participant 1 in BO (age 50) said, "In grade 3, I left school because of the challenges of life. My parents did not have the means to send me to school." Similarly, Participant 25, a Tanzanian who lived in a terrorist camp for seven years, lamented, "I do not know how to read or even write. I didn't go to school." The district head of education in Pemba confirmed the limited access to education in the area: "Some of the current problems in education include long distances to school, lack of opportunities and financial capacity for families to send children for further studies after concluding primary school, and lack of technical and vocational training institutions."

The lack of education constrains access to a job, which was the explicit concern of some participants. Participant 18 (age 29) lamented his lack of education and expressed his willingness to "learn carpentry" and get a certificate, because "after release" he "can hunt for a job." Participant 6, a 32-year-old woman who lived in a terrorist camp for two years, was illiterate; she wished to "study cutting and sewing" so that she could be "self-employed" after her release. The head of Provincial Education Services in Cabo Delgado, an individual with an extensive background in the Mozambican Education System, considered "illiteracy" a major vulnerability. According to him, "the province has the worst indicators in the education sector, has a high rate of pregnancy among students, and premature marriage." He continued, "Children from eight to ten years old are submitted to initiation rites, after that they are declared ready for adult life. Therefore, they marry and get pregnant young." He also mentioned child labour: "Fishing also contributes to school indifference; young people have been pulling fish nets. Parents become satisfied with the small-sized fish they take home, and when they grow, they become fishermen." Many children are thus not encouraged to study, and therefore remain illiterate with limited job opportunities.

Furthermore, illiteracy exacerbates vulnerability when it comes to exploitation and manipulation due to the limited "reasoning capacity" as mentioned by the head of the Education Service in Pemba District. According to him, "People engaged in terrorism are poor and unemployed, because of the limited capacity of reasoning, when enticed they easily fall into a trap." One example is Participant 21, a fisherman (age 48) with education up to grade 2, who said, "I don't know how to write and read…(smile), but I know how to count money." When recruited, he received 1000 *Metical* (mt), the currency of Mozambique, equivalent to US$16

(as of April 15, 2024 exchange rate) per attendance at a *madrassa*, and after being convinced, he was fishing and supplying the group. Participant 3, who lived in a terrorist camp, conducted three attacks. In each attack, he was given a "plastic bag with a lot of money," but he was not able to count. When he was arrested by the military force, he learned that he "was carrying 38,000 mt (US$595) in bills of 50 and 100 mt."

Another vulnerability has to do with the dysfunctional government institutions in the fields such as education, defence, and intelligence. An anonymous senior Government decision-maker commented, "…perhaps, this province was marginalized by the central government…the distance from the capital can have contributed." Cabo Delgado and Maputo, the capital, are 1,658 km apart. One anonymous senior officer assessed the province similarly, mentioning "no presence of State or lack of capacity" to solve problems because even "public employees were engaged in terrorism." Regarding defence and migration**,** Participant 10 assessed that the maritime way was easier to enter and exit Cabo Delgado than the inland, and Participant 13 attested that no passport was needed to go to Tanzania as people could "just cross the coastline along the ocean or the Rovuma River." The commander of the prison said, "Many terrorists live and conduct activities at the coastline of the Indian Ocean."

Furthermore, corruption and dishonesty were pointed out by Participant 23 (age 32), who occupied a strategic position in the group. According to him, "Terrorists had ties with public staff in the strategic institutions from top-level to grassroots, in exchange for money… they received information about all the plans and strategies." This information was confirmed by a prison official: "Unfortunately, we have one colleague who was interacting with terrorists…he is in detention, accused of exchanging information…"

Activities of the Terrorist Group

Most people seem to agree that one reason why the terrorist group chose Cabo Delgado was because of its rich natural resources. A fisherman (Participant 9, age 55), who had lived in a terrorist camp for three years, said, "Terrorists came to Cabo Delgado because of resources, particularly the gas, gold, ruby, and sea fish." A SOP participant acknowledged that terrorists selected "…places rich in natural and mineral resources, …the aim can be to control those resources, but also to use the resources to fuel the war in the long run."

However, their activities take place under the banner of religion. The head of the Rehabilitation Program in Mieze prison said, "When the terrorists arrived in Cabo Delgado, they were initially affiliated with the local mosques; later, they created their congregations, started praying and teaching the Quran in the *madrassa*". Participant 2 (Cell 1) said, "In 2015/2016, to attract people, the new mosques offered money. At the end of a prayer, we were given 1000, 1500, or 2000 meticals." Participant 4 said that whether in the communities or terrorist camps, people were taught the Quran and the group's ideology. Participant 12 said, "In the *madrassa*, terrorists teach the Quran seriously, they want people to get the knowledge… but the language (Arabic) was so new that we couldn't understand or memorize." According to him, "It is mandatory to learn the Quran; in the mosque, unlike other Muslims, they enter wearing shoes, holding knives and guns; they tie a scarf on their head." Participant 4 explained life in the terrorist camp: "We were taught in a *madrassa*, that the war will not end until everyone is Muslim…they will fight until the end of the world… the commandment is to destroy the country, the state, the government, total elimination." Participant 7, a Mozambican former terrorist (age

22) said, "They don't want to be governed, they want to fly their flag, people shouldn't have documents, they shouldn't study in public schools, they don't want traditional ceremonies or rituals, they only want *madrassa*." The vice head of SERNAP blamed "the foreigners, mostly Tanzanians, that through religion, in the congregations, they instrumentalized people; they told them not to recognize Mozambique as a country. They want to create the Islamic State, they incite the people not to obey, to fight the government authorities, and only to follow Allah."

The group's activities then expanded to the economic sphere. According to a former terrorist (Participant 15, age 37), the province had many foreigners, and "the terrorists bought land along the strategic roads, built shops, mosques, and petrol stations. The aim was to control movement and use the infrastructure for logistics. In strategic places, land or houses were sold by locals for around one billion meticals. Local people were able to build two-storied apartments in just one year." Although some people might have gained economic benefits, people in terrorist camps were forced into peculiar lifestyles. According to Participant 26 (age 68), old people and women fetched water, went to farms, and stole food. Both men and women were subjected to forced marriage and polygamy. Everyone was instructed to attack and rob farms and communities. Some women became housekeepers in the terrorist leaders' houses and took care of families and children. The bosses' wives did nothing, they just gave orders.

To control the population, the terrorist group used the tactic of terror. They killed people or cut parts of the body in front of others, to coerce them to join or do what the group wanted: "…[T]hey discourage resistance**.** They punish those who resist... Some teachers and students were killed in front of others, while others were kidnapped" (Head of Province Education Directorate). For example, Participant 24 said, "When we were caught (by terrorists), the people who complained about going with them were killed." Participant 8 also noted that "After they selected people they wanted, the remaining were killed."

Engagement in Terrorism

Based on the analysis of the interviews, we found five categories of engagement in terrorism: voluntary, enticement and deception, forced, by birth, and ambiguous engagement. First, some local and foreign people voluntarily engaged in terrorism. Participant 32, Mozambican (age 68), attested, "I was not deceived, I went willingly, later I brought my family (wife and three children) to live in the camp. I never managed to leave, I was fine, but now I regret." Three Tanzanian former terrorists (Participants 22, age 27; 28, age 44; and 33, age 51) also "engaged and came to Mozambique willingly." One of them was with his entire family and his wife was a participant in the female terrorist wing. Three from Tanzania and one from Mozambique declared their engagement through "religious beliefs."

The second category was engagement through enticement and deception**.** According to Participant 30, "…when young people sought to question religion, they were given money, … and they began to appreciate the group because of money and invited more people to come. The believers were telling others that "they came with good religion, and they are also taking care of us…". On the other hand, some were promised jobs, taken away from their communities, and against their expectation, they ended up in the terrorist camps with no choice to return home. In camps, people of one village were taken to another to make the return difficult.

The third category was forced engagement. The terrorists chose and kidnapped the people they wanted. Individuals were taken hostage on the Indian coast while fishing, in their farms,

around the villages while getting water or collecting wood for cooking, in bushes while hiding during attacks, in ambush along the streets, and in many other places. Participant 17, a Mozambican man (age 33), said, "In the first attack in Afungi, I was kidnapped with many other people, children, youth, women, and elderly… I lived there nine months." After a minute of silence, he said, "Terrorists chose the people they wanted… the people remaining, some were killed in front of us, and others, they let them go." Participant 11 (age 35) went to the bush to hunt rats (food for the local community) and was kidnapped with her entire family. In the first base, she "was separated from her children." The family was divided into three different groups. Crying, she said, "…I don't know if my children are alive…" Participant 10 (age 26) was kidnapped on the farm with her 8-month-old baby**,** who died along the way: "My daughter was dehydrated and died in my arm; I was not allowed to bury her. I wrapped her with a 'kitenge' (wrapper) and left her under the tree." The group also kidnapped sick or pregnant people. Participant 30 said that terrorists choose "beautiful women and strong men." According to three participants, upon their arrival in the camp, terrorists branded the people's bodies to permanently link their identity to the group. Participant 8 showed his stamp and said, "This is a sign that we belong to them." He added, "When I escaped from a terrorist camp, I was identified and arrested by the government because of this stamp."

Another forced engagement happened when the terrorist group attacked and occupied villages and communities. The people who failed to escape were taken hostage and forced to live and adopt the terrorists' lifestyle. Participant 34 in BO shared his story: "They captured me... The terrorist leaders asked for a knife from his colleagues to cut my head, but they didn't have one. After being hit 150 times with a tree branch, I was made hostage". The other people who refused to follow the order were killed. When the government took control of the village, "all people were arrested, I and three others came to this prison." Pointing to his leg, he said, "I couldn't run away. My leg hurts. I was shot in one of the previous attacks."

Fourth, in Cabo Delgado, some people fell into terrorist groups from birth. Some women were kidnapped when pregnant. Others were given husbands who impregnated them while in the terrorist camps. During the fieldwork, we met six children in the female prison cell who were born and lived in terrorist camps. Participant 16 said, "I was three months pregnant when they captured me… I delivered at the base..." Meanwhile, Participant 21 (Tanzanian) was kidnapped: "I was young, I had no children; I was captured in Tanzania... given to one man who already had a wife… he got me pregnant, and now I have a 2-year-old son with that terrorist." The last category is ambiguous engagement, whereby individuals have no awareness of engaging in terrorism. For example, in Mocimboa da Praia, the epicentre of terrorism, small traders found an opportunity to offer their services to the terrorists, such as supplying fish. As Participant 13 said, "I am a fisherman and small farmer. I was arrested because I was getting fish on the beach and supplying the terrorists' base; I was paid for it." Participant 6, a small trader, used to order products in Pemba, the capital city of Cabo Delgado, and sell them to the local people, including terrorists who were coming to his stand to buy goods. He said, "I was not aware they were terrorists." Participant 31 (age 24) transported people using a boat. He was arrested being accused of transporting terrorists.

In addition to the "business-related" context, we found cases where terrorists took advantage of people's kindness and involved these good Samaritans (biblical concept, meaning a person of goodwill). Participant 12 said that a terrorist approached him "very worried" and

asked to use his mobile phone to call his family member: "After calling he gave back my phone and left." One week later, the man was arrested and accused of terrorism. One anonymous interviewee said that the cellphone number was identified by the intelligence service as the one who coordinated terrorist missions. Participant 35 said, "A stranger asked for asylum pretending to escape from al-Shabaab. Shortly after, he was found with a gun and traces of blood. Since he has lived in my house, I was also arrested and accused of terrorism, due to my kindness."

Consequences of Engagement

Citing a Mozambican popular saying "*tudo o que tem princípeo tem fim*" (whatever starts has an end), the head of the Rehabilitation Service explained what happens to the terrorists. Besides those who continue conducting sporadic attacks, terrorists end up being killed, escaping from the country, obtaining amnesty, or being detained.

The camp dismantlement can be life-threatening for terrorists. Participant 8 (age 22) witnessed such situations in four major bases (Nakitenge, Mbau, Limala, and Rio Mwena). After being arrested, he was used by the government forces to provide information and show the bases. He shared his experiences: "The dismantlement of Nakitenge base occurred at 3 p.m.… The Rwandese launched an attack which lasted 30 minutes. It was a dramatic situation. Many terrorists were killed. I saw four bodies lying down." In the Limala base, he continued, "I saw three terrorists killed. One was injured in the leg. After answering many questions to the Rwandese, he said, 'I don't want to go with you. It's better you kill me at once'; the Rwandese accepted his wish." Aside from terrorists, many people die of "stray bullets" which are sometimes really stray, sometimes not. In the dismantlement of the Limala base, Participant 8 witnessed the death of a woman and three children. According to him, "when people complain" the terrorists make a list, pretend to take them home, and kill them on the way.

The destruction of camps also forces terrorists to escape. Participant 23 in BO believed that before the dismantlement, the two leaders from Tanzania (Abufassar and Hassan) had an intensive dispute. Abufassar "suggested to end the war and return to Tanzania, but Hassan refused." Participant 9 added that "before departure, the boss (Abufassar) collected all the money we received from the attacks we have conducted."

Some terrorists returned home through a presidential amnesty for those who willingly gave up terrorism and returned home. However, some questioned the fairness of its implementation. Three female participants complained, and one of them, Participant 6, said that they escaped and went to a military base seeking help, but they were arrested and imprisoned, while "other people we know, willingly engaged in terrorism and killed people… came to this prison, and without a long time they were released, under the amnesty initiative." Participant 1 asked, "I'm not al-Shabaab. I have friends who were together in the bush and were also imprisoned but were released under an amnesty program; they went home. Why am I still here?" While waiting for a judgment, "innocent people" such as people escaping from terrorist camps during attacks, or lacking the required documents for the trip, are generally treated as terrorists and incarcerated while waiting for a trial. The vice head of SERNAP said, "The Law on Terrorism, Law No. 13/2022, does not specify how terrorist inmates should be incarcerated. In principle, we isolate them terrorist block cells, but in the same prison.". According to him, they are separated to prevent radicalization, in-prison recruitment, and group reinforcement.

DISCUSSION

Researchers have pointed to poverty, weak states, and corrupt governments as major types of vulnerabilities linked to terrorism (Musgrave, 2015; Cordesman, 2013; Schmid, 2013). Our data confirmed these findings, as summarized below.

First, as Morier-Genoud (2020) noted, nationals and foreigners are involved in terrorism in Cabo Delgado. Both Mozambican and Tanzanian occupy high leadership positions: the operational leader (Homar Mashuri) was Mozambican, and other military commanders were Tanzanian. The majority of the detainees we interviewed were young, illiterate, and from poor families. Poverty deprives people of job opportunities, and the lack of income prevents families from sending their children to schools. Illiteracy limits cognitive capacity and critical thinking.

Second, state institutions are weak and the borders along the Indian Ocean coastline and Rovuma River are exposed. Terrorists enter the country with military logistics and engage in human and mineral trafficking (Pirio et al., 2018). Inland, the intelligence and defence cannot effectively identify and neutralize the insurgents. Exploiting these weaknesses, they built, in strategic places, infrastructure such as shops, mosques, and petrol stations, and use them as points of transit, logistic storage, and sources of income.

Third, because of corruption and centralised power, local people lacked protection against terrorism (Hanlon, 2020), and some public servants in strategic security institutions even sold information to terrorists. The terrorists initially chose places rich in natural and mineral resources, engaged in illicit trading, and gained income to support their actions (Segell et al., 2021). To strengthen their military capacity, they attacked security authorities and seized weapons (Chingotuane et al., 2021).

Our analysis identified five types of engagement pathways. One is voluntary, as discussed by Ferguson and Binks (2015). In these cases, the respondents joined the terrorist group willingly, knowing the ideology of the group. The second type of engagement is through enticement and deception. The third type involves being forced to join the group. Their strategies included kidnapping in one community and transferring the victims to another one; stamping the person's body to create a barrier for social reacceptance in the community; and killing or harming, in front of others, those revolting or trying to escape to discourage the victims from trying to return home. The fourth type is by birth, whereby children who were born in terrorist camps became members of the terrorist community. The fifth and last category is what we call "ambiguous engagement" which derives from the fact that the presence of terrorist groups in Cabo Delgado created business opportunities. Small entrepreneurs got involved in terrorism by engaging in business with the group and getting profit from it. Not all were aware of their engagement in terrorism. Also, the African/Mozambican value “Ubuntu” meaning “*I am because we are; since we are, therefore, I am*” (Vilanculo, 2023), was exploited by the terrorists, trapping “good Samaritans.” Because of their compassion, pity, and kindness, they gave shelter, food, communication facilities, directions, etc. to the terrorists who asked for it. Both innocent traders and good Samaritans were found guilty under the law and are currently in prison.

Finally, the interviews revealed that broadly there are four variety of consequences of engaging with terrorist groups in Mozambique: continuing the terrorist engagement, escaping from it, being killed either in combat or by the terrorists, and being kept in detention by the government. The last category of people may receive amnesty.

CONCLUSION

This article examined people's engagement in terrorist groups in Mozambique, beginning with the characteristics and vulnerabilities of these people, then their engagement path, and its consequences. Our research offers two contributions to this field. First, although it is common to classify all people engaged in terrorist groups as "terrorists" (for example, when putting in prison), the terms "engagement in terrorism" and "engagement in a terrorist group" should be distinguished from each other. While some people took actions consistently based on their ideology and greed, others had no idea that their acts would be part of terrorism. Our interviews also revealed that some people had to engage with the terrorist group although they did not agree with the ideology and did not engage in direct acts of terrorism. These people can be returned to the society after a short period, because they can hardly be deemed terrorists.

Second, the study revealed some of the dynamics behind the rapid growth of terrorist groups and their territory enlargement. It found that both "engagement in terrorism" and "engagement in a terrorist group" result from the amalgamation of three factors: the terrorist groups' strategies, local vulnerabilities, and a weak state. The terrorist group used religious, financial, and coercive means to control the population. It is interesting to note that the terrorist group combined religious and economic incentives to exploit these local vulnerabilities and the weak state, preaching narratives adjusted to local challenges (Bekoe et al., 2020). Since the local people understood and resisted the manipulation through religion, the presence of functional government services could have protected them from engaging with the terrorist group.

There are several limitations to our research. One was the difficulty in triangulating the data due to the lack of access to judicial documents and inputs from the government security institutions (Defence, Migration Affairs, and Intelligence). Our methodology also faced two limitations, the translation process and the prison environment. When the interview was not in Portuguese, the translation had three layers – from the local language into Portuguese through an oral translation, transcribed, and then translated into English. The interpreter was a prison guard, which possibly influenced our participants' behaviours. The prison environment was full of military apparatus and guards, some controlling the prison, and others tasked with ensuring the researchers' security. Because some visitors in the past had cooperated with prisoners, the researcher was informed in advance that the prison guard would listen to the interviews to evaluate if the discussion was pro-terrorism. The noise of metal doors or weapons might have intimidated the participants and also disturbed their concentration during the interviews.

Despite these challenges, we are confident that our data have provided new insights into terrorism and terrorist engagement in Mozambique.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our findings, we have to policy recommendations and some recommendations for future research. First, the Counter-terrorism policy should be developed to address this triangle of engagement factors. Second, the rehabilitation of people accused of terrorism in Mozambique should not focus only on deradicalization, because not all terrorist inmates' engagement was ideologically motivated, and others are only victims of circumstances. Third, further research on engagement in terrorism and terrorist groups in other countries and regions is needed as it would enhance our understanding of global terrorism as well as local terrorist

activities in Mozambique. For example, further investigations into people's engagement in the terrorist group in Tanzania will help us develop a fuller picture of the terrorist group in Cabo Delgado. Other possible directions of further investigation into the Mozambican case are to explore the personal histories of terrorist leaders' engagement and the ways they extended their influence among local people, either through religious or financial means.

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