

# **TERRORISM: INOPERABILITY OR NEED FOR CONCEPTUAL ADAPTATION FOR THE MOZAMBICAN CASE?**

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## **Abstract**

On 5 and 6 October 2017, there were attacks in Mocímboa da Praia, in Cabo Delgado Province, in the Northern region of Mozambique, against police stations and civilian targets carried out by men in Islamic clothing. From how the protagonists presented themselves, it was deduced that it was terrorism driven by Islamic extremism, based on what has been happening in Somalia and Nigeria through Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram. However, more than four years after the violence began, not only has the group not declared its objectives and identity, but its leadership is still hidden, which makes us stray from the already known terrorist pattern. Therefore, this article aims to conceptually frame the phenomenon in Northern Mozambique through evolutionary and historical analysis of the concept and phenomenon of terrorism, while inviting other concepts adjacent to the debate to support the best denomination, namely Islamic extremism, Islamic radicalism and insurgency. To this end, it resorts to a bibliographic and documentary review supported by field information. The main conclusion reached is that the phenomenon in Mozambique fits more into sabotage than insurgency and Islamic extremism, contrary to the trend of literature and political discourse in Mozambique.

**Keywords:** Terrorism, Extremism, Radicalism, Insurgency, Sabotage

## **1. Introduction**

On 5 and 6 October 2017, there were attacks in Mocímboa da Praia, in Cabo Delgado Province, north of Mozambique, against police stations and civilian targets carried out by men in Islamic clothing. Furthermore, these attacks began to grow in their geographic area, covering other districts of the same province, such as Quissanga, Muidumbe, Ibo, Mueda and Nangade. They

also became more sophisticated in moving from violence using machetes and simple firearms to increasingly sophisticated firearms and drones.

When the attacks began, from the way its protagonists presented themselves – the clothes and the speech of appeal to an innovative Islamic religious identity – it was deduced that it was Islamic extremism, as it is known from what has been happening in Somalia and Nigeria through Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram. In such a way, this group's initial denomination in the popular local speeches was Al-Shabaab. However, when studying terrorism, a central element in the manifestation of the phenomenon is that the terrorist action is accompanied by a claiming process in which terrorists declare intentions or objectives that move their terror agenda against the state or the political system being.

More than four years after the violence began, not only did the group not declare its intentions and its identity (even though it was recruiting and carrying out its terror actions), but also when an idea of who they could be glimmered, it was through a website of the Islamic State and later, still in 2020, through a press release from the Department of State of the United States of America (USA).<sup>i</sup>

This whole scenario of uncertainty, unrevealed identities, and escape from the usual and historical pattern of manifestation of terrorism leads to the question of whether we are facing another probable phenomenon, such as sabotage, given that there is a clear consequence of this violence that has been making the gas exploration agenda in the Rovuma Basin unfeasible. Or whether we need a conceptual adaptation to make the manifestation of the phenomenon in Mozambique fit into the concept of terrorism, especially looking at the myriad of denominations and concepts that have accompanied the violence until today, such as insurgents and violent extremists.

This article intends to do so through a historical and evolutionary analysis of the concept and phenomenon of terrorism, while inviting other concepts to the debate to support the best denomination, namely Islamic extremism, Islamic radicalism and insurgency. This will be done based on a bibliographic and documental review supported by the collection of field information.

## 2. Terrorism and the Historical Evolution of the Phenomenon

Terrorism is a fighting resource that many societies have used throughout history. For example, ancient records point to this method used by Jewish Zealots against the Roman Empire (40 to 70 AD) when, while trying to drive the latter out of the holy land, they systematically attacked Roman and Greek political and religious figures. In Russia, for example, anarchists used to assassinate prominent state officials, for example, Tsar Alexander II, to accomplish their agenda.

Rapoport (2004) points out the evolutionary process of terrorism in four main waves. The first wave pointed out by the author, the Wave of Anarchists,<sup>ii</sup> was characterised by the departure from the conventional expression of ideas based on posters and pamphlets that would end in a peaceful demonstration towards actions that go beyond the morally acceptable, including intimidation, physical and psychological violence, through murders using dynamite and other resources.

In the following years (from the first half of the 20th century until the 1960s and 1970s), the national liberation movements were also called terrorists due to their use of the same methodology against the colonising powers. However, an interesting narrative plot twist in this process was that these movements would rather call themselves *freedom fighters*. The well-known expression “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” was coined in this context. In the second half of the 20th century, there was no lack of groups that fit this profile, such as the Organization for the Liberation of Palestine (PLO), which fought against Jewish colonialism, frequently resorted to and continues to use techniques that are classified as terrorists.

In the years following the freedom fighters, we would know the beginning of what would be called Islamic extremism, which is essentially a facet of religiously driven terrorism. A particularity of this phase is that fighting against a process of secularisation of Islamic societies due to colonisation and western presence, ideologues and ideologies of restoration of “true” Islamic values re-emerged in the Middle East. Bonate (2022:524-525) points out that this ideology has its origins in the Salafist and Wahhabi movements. Salafism, according to the author, focuses on the need for a return to the salaf (ancestral) traditions of the first three

generations of Muslims with the aim of combating religious practices considered abominable innovations, ignorant, hypocrisy and idolatry.

In turn, Wahhabism, from the term “Wahhabi”, is a label given to the followers of the teachings of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab. Al-Wahhab was an ideologue, originally from Saudi Arabia, who sought to reform Muslims under the banner of the “true” Islam and get rid of the acts he considered heretical. The ideologies of Salafism and Wahhabism are built on a narrowly defined religious text. Methodologically, they are literalists and puritanical in their approaches to Islamic theology and law, rejecting any belief and practice not commanded by the Quran and the Prophet (Ali & Sudiman, 2016).

In defence of these values or ideologies, groups such as Al-Qaeda and its affiliations, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, ISIS and its affiliations, and others of lesser expression started emerging in different parts. The turning point of Islamic terrorism was the 9/11 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York, for which the USA declared a global war on terror.

In all these contexts, it can be seen that terrorism has been an ancient resource of struggle in the history of humankind. Second, this form of struggle has taken on different facets and has been employed in different circumstances. In all those circumstances, it pursued clear political objectives, namely restoring a presumed lost cultural or religious identity, conquering independence, or defending a value or way of life. Another salient aspect is that terrorist violence is triggered by groups that observe an asymmetry of forces in relation to their opponent. Both anarchists, freedom fighters and even Islamic extremists have done so and continue to do so because they do not have sufficient military capabilities for direct engagement or confrontation with their opponents.

This kind of violence, which has evolved in different attack methods throughout existence, has been accompanied by a process of claiming the attacks. In other words, every terrorist wants to make himself known, present his cause, and negotiate his interests and, failing to do so, by presenting his cause to the public, he wants to gain sympathy and recruit more sympathisers. This feature is called propaganda. In such a way that, with the advent of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), terrorist groups have increasingly sophisticated these means of propaganda by using and creating digital platforms through which they publicise their

cause, recruit and radicalise minds, collect support or donations from sympathisers and exhibit their achievements.

The propaganda element,<sup>iii</sup> for these groups, serves not only for the previously mentioned purposes, but also to delegitimise the government or the authority against which the group fights, denouncing some form of oppression, corruption and lack of virtue on the part of the people, who lead the public affairs. Often, in the context of Islamic religiosity, it is to denounce the worldly and sinful way Islamic societies have been run. Hence, the need for jihad or holy war to purify these societies.

### **3. Terrorism and other Adjacent Concepts**

Several concepts stand out in the debate on terrorism, and are intertwined with the terrorist phenomenon itself. Such concepts are Islamic extremism and Islamic radicalism, widely used in Western literature, and insurgency, very common in the political discourse of the Mozambican government. Understanding these concepts, individually and collectively, is crucial for effectively framing the phenomenon in Northern Mozambique.

The first concept of interest is the concept of terrorism itself. As Siteo (2020) points out, defining terrorism is an intricate task as it is a concept that suffers from the vicissitude of politicisation, lack of rigid analysis and value judgment, especially when it is associated with specific cases. Thus, its definition varies depending on the context and place where the phenomenon occurs, but also on the parties involved, their position and power in the conflict. Indeed, the concept of terrorism is polysomic.

After Siteo (2020:38) considered the definition offered by Lutz and Lutz (2013:275) and other definitions from Blakeley (2009), Chaliand and Blin (2007), Hoffman (2002) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), he defines terrorism as an act of violence carried out by individuals, groups, or even by states, against certain civilian targets with the intention of reaching a larger audience than the immediate victims, aiming at a determined political objective. To this meaning, we can add that terrorism is a phenomenon accompanied by the need for publicity or propaganda.

In turn, Islamic radicalism or radical Islamism is a term that has grown in Western discourse and has been linked to the idea of terrorism. This term can be conceptualised as:

Ahistorical, socioeconomic, political and cultural movement that perceives Islam as a comprehensive religion, a revolutionary political ideology, and a state...These terms are therefore intrinsically associated with the radical transformation or destroying and tearing up a system by its roots through Jihad/violence and replacing it with an alternative Islamic system based on Islamic laws (shari'a) and which uses the Quran and Prophetic Traditions (sunnah) as referential frameworks (Hassan, 2013:1).

Hassan's notion of Islamic radicalism is easily confused with extremism, presented below. Some authors refer to this as a rhetorical trap, very present in social and media discourses. As for Bötticher (2017:74), radicalism is a political doctrine that inspired republican and national movements committed to individual and collective freedom and emancipation, directed against monarchs and aristocrats. The radical was, therefore, anti-clerical, anti-monarchist and pro-democracy. This notion is reinforced by Harper (2018), who explains that radicalism can be understood as the active search for profound social change, which may or may not involve violence. Therefore, although recurrent in the social and even political language about terrorism as inherently linked to extremism, it presents few traits that resemble the latter, constituting, in this case, a more progressive ideology and responsible for important advances in the history of humanity, mainly those that concern universal human rights, meaning that the radicalists' struggle is the conquest of rights and not their suppression.

The concept of insurgency is undoubtedly one of the most important and recurrent in Mozambican political discourse when addressing violence in Northern Mozambique and is also endorsed by academics such as Morier-Genoud (2019). It is probably because it is an intermediate way of naming Cabo Delgado's aggressors without necessarily calling them terrorists. Especially in a context of lack of sufficient elements to definitively attribute the denomination of terrorism to the acts of violence practised in that part of Mozambique.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines insurgency as "a condition of revolt against a government which is less than an organized revolution and which is not recognized as a belligerence".<sup>iv</sup> In turn, Duruji et al., (2018:448) consider insurgency as:

Arebellion against authority when those taking part in the rebellion are not recognized as belligerents. The nature of insurgencies is an ambiguous concept in the sense that not all rebellions are insurgencies. There have been many cases of non-violent rebellions, using civil

resistance. It develops into an insurgency when the group establishes control of territories against a sovereign state.

The difference between the two definitions presented above is that the second considers territorial control as an insurgency ambition. Moreover, the similarity is that both definitions, and others not listed here, consider insurgency violence on a smaller scale than a revolution and a larger scale than a rebellion perpetrated by a certain group against a government. However, O'Neill (1980:1), cited by (Palma, 2016), adds one more element of great value in understanding the phenomenon by explaining that:

Insurgency represents a struggle between a non-governing group and the governing authorities in which the former consciously employs political resources (organizational skills, propaganda and/or demonstrations) and instruments of violence to establish legitimacy for some aspect of the political system that it considers illegitimate.

In this case, the author above additionally presents the modus operandi of insurgent groups, which is the usage of demonstrations, propaganda and violence, that may be terrorists to achieve their objectives, as well as the will to establish legitimacy in the disputed territories. When the author brings practical elements, such as the modus operandi of insurgent groups, it facilitates a better framing of this type of phenomenon for practical situations, such as that of Cabo Delgado. Therefore, the insurgent is an individual or group of protestors opposing a government employing combined means of struggle, both violent and non-violent, with the desire to exercise authority over a certain territory or region.

Finally, the concept of interest to address is the concept of Islamic extremism. Prior to that, it is important to first understand what extremism is. The British government defines extremism as a “vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and intolerance of different faiths and beliefs” (UK GOV, 2011:107). The British government's position is based on the values defended by its constitution, which are democracy, the rule of law, respect, tolerance, and individual freedom. In this case, any vocal or active opposition to the essential values of its constitution is considered an extremist act. This definition is possibly one of the most contextualised about extremism. However, it is certainly less viable to guide a scientific and theoretical debate on the phenomenon due to the various circumstances not foreseen that can constitute an extremist attitude.

For The Tony Blair Institute for Global Change (n.d.), an extremist is one who considers his beliefs, whether religious or political, to be correct and unquestionable, and therefore has a responsibility to impose them on the rest of humanity if necessary, using violence. As such, some of the signs of extremism are:

- Seeking to impose one's beliefs, ideologies or values on others through force or indoctrination and being intolerant of other beliefs and perspectives.
- A binary 'them and us' worldview, which seeks to divide communities along communal lines, enforcing this through violence.
- Seeking to limit or curtail the civil liberties or human rights of others on the basis of gender, religion, sexuality and race.
- Excluding other groups, particularly minorities, from public life through discrimination, fomenting hatred, or acts of violence.

Richer elements can be found in this definition to understand the extremist attitude, even beyond Islam. Thus, extremism may be understood as a set of beliefs or worldviews characterised by intolerance of others' beliefs and worldviews. In addition, an extremist is an individual who, in defence of these beliefs, could easily engage in acts of violence.

Bötticher (2017:74) adds that "extremism is, due to its dogmatism, intolerant and unwilling to compromise". Extremists who view politics as a zero-sum game tend – circumstances permitting – to engage in aggressive militancy, including criminal acts and mass violence. Although strictly limited to political issues, this is a perfect example of how the extremist acts in defence of what he believes to be the right thing for a given society or group.

Based on the previous definitions, we can understand extremism as an individual or group ideology, behaviour or attitude (possibly more attitude than ideology) that has a certain worldview, intolerant of others because it believes that its own is the best, and that it is willing to, if there are conditions, to impose this vision on others using violence. Extremism can be of two types: non-violent, one whose convictions are limited to the sphere of ideas and thoughts; and violent extremism, which has the desire to impose its beliefs and generate transformations through concrete actions of violence, as with terrorist groups. In this case, the Islamic extremist

is the one who applies extremist attitudes in defence of a vision of the Islamic religion and society.

#### **4. The Concept of Terrorism and its Adjacencies in the Mozambican Case**

On 5 and 6 October 2017, there were attacks in Mocímboa da Praia against police stations and civilian targets. Such attacks, carried out by a group of armed men in Islamic clothing, resulted in the death of the National Director of Reconnaissance of the Rapid Intervention Unit (UIR), police officers and civilians; the destruction of houses; vandalism of churches; and alteration of public order, deserted streets and interruption of traffic to and from Mocímboa da Praia (Beúla, 2017<sup>v</sup>cited by Siteo, 2019:5).

These attacks, which took place in other districts of Cabo Delgado and some regions of Niassa, such as the District of Marrupa, caused the displacement of more than 784,000 people and 4,000 deaths,<sup>vi</sup> in addition to the destruction of infrastructure and the weakening of the local economy. They continued in the following years and extend to the present day (2022), having reached the need for intervention by Rwandan and Southern African Development Community (SADC) forces since 2021. These interventions managed to significantly reduce the actions of violence perpetrated by the group – having even guaranteed the recovery of regions that were already under the movement's control, such as Mocímboa da Praia, the recovery of mobility within the province of Cabo Delgado that had been limited due to the high frequency of attacks.

Since these attacks began, the first studies were peremptory in assigning the terrorist designation to the group, specifically Islamic extremism. The ease with which the group was conceptualised was due to visual elements expressive of this Islamic religiosity associated with extremist attitudes. As mentioned by Habibe et al.,(2019:12):

They wore their own attire, especially white turbans, tied around their heads; they wore black smocks and short pants, which reached a little below the knees; most of them had shaved hair and had a full beard; they did not take their children to formal schools, simply to the daaras (madrassas) they had built; they always carried bladed weapons (like knives and machetes) to symbolize *jihād*; they incited violence and disrespect for community leaders, particularly the *Álimos*, whom they called “*káfir*”.

In a field study conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CEEI) (2021) of Joaquim Chissano University, it was possible to corroborate some of these external aspects. Even in the first attempts to install the group in the District of Chiúre, it was through the promotion of Islamic teachings different from local practices, in this case with great appeal to the disobedience, on the part of young people, of the existing Islamic authorities in Chiúre and other regions of Cabo Delgado where the group would later settle, such as Mocímboa da Praia. In more advanced cases, they taught disdain for the state and government. As the District Police Commander of Chiúre stated:<sup>vii</sup>

Men arrived with groceries in trucks, then they got involved in mosques and during prayers they gave bags of onions and potatoes to young people to start businesses. They also gave 5,000 meticais and after a while they opened their own mosques and forced young people to stop going to local mosques and said that they should not respect the authorities or their parents... At night they taught strange ideologies.

An outstanding element that accompanied these attempts to install the group and attract more and more young people to its ranks it is the offering of economic advantages to those who would join the group. As mentioned by the District Police Commander, others were offered job opportunities in gas projects in the District of Palma, and others were offered employment in Mocímboa da Praia – although, in practice, some were later forced to join the group after realising that the job promises were false. In addition, money transfers were made to these recruits, mainly through the M-Pesa digital wallet.

In this case, on many occasions, opportunities for economic and financial integration have become a mobilising factor for young people in those regions, more than religion itself. This information was corroborated in many individual interviews and focus groups in Cabo Delgado, where, in the words of some interviewees, “they give a lot of money to young people, especially to the unemployed, promising employment in Palma”. This was also corroborated by the study conducted by Habibe et al., (2019:23-24) when referring to:

Our local sources revealed that a significant part of the people who joined the Al-Shabaab group were poor unemployed youth, many of them from poor families, who dropped out of school or simply attended the daaras and carried out their activities as informal vendors in the village headquarters... With no job opportunities, living in poverty and with difficulties in social integration, these young people saw in the Al-Shabaab group the possibility of satisfying their own and their families' basic needs.

In more advanced stages, as it was during the seizure of the District of Quissanga on 25 March 2020, in an image in front of the District Command Police Officer of Quissanga, visual elements that strengthen the idea of violence carried out for Islamic religious motivations, such as the display of a black flag with Arabic inscriptions of Islamic battles in white, turbans and masks, as well as robes, can be seen. Associated with this were the beheadings of civilians in several other districts where the group carried out attacks, which reproduced the modus operandi of groups such as Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram. Furthermore, during some videos and audios that accompanied the group's terror actions, oaths were also taken with Islamic religious references.

Thus far, despite having this element of economic and financial enticement to join the ranks of the group, there are still adequate elements to assume that this is a situation of Islamic extremism, in such a way that there was, still in 2019, an oath of the group to the Islamic State and cluster it in the East Africa branch.

However, we still lack key elements to completely frame this violence into the typical cases of Islamic terrorism. Those elements are the declaration of intentions, or the presentation of demands to the Mozambican government, followed by a denunciation of the way of conducting the affairs of state, and propaganda to the wider national audience, which also allows it to gain sympathisers and supporters to finance its activities because no act of terror is committed as an end in itself. Terrorism is a means of struggle used to achieve a larger political objective.

As far as the claim is concerned, it is not just a matter of presenting an audio record of the attacks and showing the victims of violence. It is, above all, a matter of the group presenting its name, which until now has only been speculated – both by the population and some academics calling them Al-Shabaab, as well as by research groups calling it Ahlu Sunnah Wal-Jamâa, or translated into Arabic, “followers of the prophetic tradition and the congregation” (Morier-Genoud, 2021; Habibe et al., 2019:10-11) and still others by Ansar Al-Sunna<sup>viii</sup> (Bonate, 2020; Mutasa & Muchemwa, 2022; Kunaka, n.d.). In other words, everything said about the group's name comes from speculation, especially in interviews with the local community and religious leaders, and not exactly from the mouth of the group itself.

As for the declaration of intent, this goes beyond what studies on Islamic extremism lead us to assume – the installation of a state governed by *sharia law*. It is, therefore, above all, what the group in a state as religiously diverse as Mozambique – predominantly Christian and with many traditional religions<sup>ix</sup> – can achieve. Meaning, what is their idea of the ummah, or Islamic community, and what are the territorial limits of their claim?

For the motivational issue, thus far, the group's motivations have been speculated based on the common precepts of political violence – the logic of frustration-aggression or relative deprivation – and on the potential for conflict existing in Cabo Delgado due to the inefficiencies of the government (poverty, corruption, low educational levels and marginality). On the other hand, others appeal to elements of ethnic cleavages between the predominant ethnic groups – Macua, Mwanis and Macondes – in access to resources; and not necessarily for what the group presents as the motive for its violence, which is unusual in any form of insurgency or political violence. Additionally, in elements such as ethnicity, field studies have proven that the group has a great diversity of members, from national to international. Therefore, it is difficult to faithfully reflect a picture of ethnic conflict in the motives of its actions.

Finally, when speaking of propaganda, it is about how they convey their message to the wider national audience. How do they legitimise their actions of violence and win public support for their cause? Thus far, what has been seen are indiscriminate acts of violence without concern for winning the hearts and minds of the masses, much less justified with some kind of dissatisfaction with the Mozambican government.

The Rational Choice Theory in terrorism phenomenon assumes that terrorist actions derive from a conscious, rational and calculated decision to opt for the strategy as the best way to achieve its objectives. This approach is complemented by the Organizational Theory, which understands terrorist organisations as any other organisations or companies whose objective is survival and prosperity, so they organise and act for these purposes (Sitoe, 2020:69-75). In this case, if the terrorists' objective in publicising their cause is to gain sympathy and denounce the government or any social structure, which in turn guarantees their survival and prosperity, what is the rationale behind the group never coming out publicly to expose and mobilise people nationally after more than four years?

All this insufficiency strays us away from the concept of Islamic extremism and leads us to the concept of insurgency, preferred by the Mozambican government. In rational and organisational terms, the violence in Cabo Delgado has had a little framework for normal and similar terrorist groups, such as Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab, which, when they emerged and during their incubation and maturation process, there was clear information about who they were and what they wanted in their states. Furthermore, these two groups, as well as ISIS and Al-Qaeda, have clear backgrounds in their formation process, unlike the group operating in northern Mozambique, where ethnic differences and views of Islam are called to justify the emergence of the group.

The few antecedents and a weak correlation with the current dynamics of violence in Cabo Delgado are brought by Morier-Genoud (2021:13) when he posits that “a Muslim leader mentioned that a similar movement had arisen in 1989-90 in Nangade District. The adherents of this sect claimed to be followers of Moses, a prophet in the Muslim tradition. They had a dress code similar to the current Al-Shabaab members”. Bonate (2020), in turn, traces religious cleavages within Islam as a problem that dates back to the implementation of Islam in Northern Mozambique since the 8th century, which lasted until the post-independence years of Mozambique, in 1975, “each time a new conception of Islamic discourses and practices ventured into Northern Mozambique”. Mainly because the local Islamic religious dynamics have never been isolated from the global Islamic religious dynamics.

The concept of insurgency, despite being preferred by the Mozambican government, since it makes it clear that, due to the violence itself and its level of organisation, there is a group of dissatisfied people in Mozambique, or with its government, that intends to exercise control over a part of the Mozambican territory. However, from the point of view of political violence analysis in a rational approach framing the violence in Cabo Delgado into this category carries the same problems as with violent extremism because we lack the same elements to generate a clear framework for the concept of terrorism, namely who are the insurgents? What do they want in Mozambique? Why don't they advertise or make themselves known to receive support from society, especially because no insurgency survives without such support or legitimacy in the society where it is unleashed? Otherwise, it's just banditry.

As we move away from the concepts of Islamic extremism, Islamic radicalism and insurgency (also with an Islamic appearance), and automatically from the more puritanical concept of terrorism, we move closer to the concept of sabotage. Sabotage is the deliberate destruction of property or slowing down work with the intent to harm a business or economic system or weaken a government or nation in times of emergency (Britannica, s/d). Sabotage usually takes place with some form of secrecy and disguise. This means in times of war, sabotage is carried out secretly, usually by spies, and if possible, assigning blame to third parties so that the identity remains covered and the sabotage can continue to take place without being dismantled.

The attacks in Northern Mozambique have all the features to be called sabotaged. This is due to its features, namely covered in the traits of Islam but without popular legitimacy, without faces or hierarchy, no claiming process and without making any effort for propaganda to gain legitimacy in the communities where it is unleashed (many of the victims are practitioners of Islam, the same ones that could be the source of legitimacy for the group); being financed and sometimes counting on mercenaries; focusing on the regions of exploration of natural gas, although there is a much larger Islamic community in the province next door, in Namapula.

Contrary to terrorism, Islamic extremism, radicalism and insurgency, the targets and perpetrators of sabotage must remain hidden. The more elements of disguise it presents, the better it is for achieving its goals and preserving the identity of its perpetrators.

## **5. Conclusion**

Since the outbreak of violence in Mozambique, the phenomenon was automatically called terrorism in its Islamic version, and the denomination quickly expanded in national and international academic circles. However, when we analyse the characteristics of the terrorist phenomenon, especially Islamic extremism, we find that in Mozambique, there is a lack of a claiming process, which underlies the need for propaganda to legitimise the cause and attract more sympathisers and supporters to the cause. This may be added to the persistent difficulty in identifying the perpetrators of violence, their motives, leadership and funding structure.

This lack of claiming and propaganda renders the framing of the phenomenon incomplete. It leads us to debate other concepts also used with some regularity, especially by the government of Mozambique, such as the concept of insurgency. Due to its imprecision to fit into the

Mozambican case, the latter also showed inadequacy. This has brought us closer to the concept of sabotage. The occultism in relation to the group, its objectives and leadership, especially after more than four years of violence, make this idea more acceptable.

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<sup>i</sup><https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2020/> (Accessed 6 July 2022).

<sup>ii</sup>Rapoport (2004) subdivides terrorism into four important waves: the first, of anarchists; the second, the Anti-colonial Wave; the third, the New Left Wave; and the fourth, the Religious Wave. Each of these waves represents a philosophical and operational orientation in the use of terror, that is, a dominant characteristic.

<sup>iii</sup>It should be noted that the way these groups have been advertising has varied over time. Between 2013 and mid-2015, this advertisement was more visible as they used media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. From mid-2015 to the present, these groups have preferred lesser-known platforms and more private spaces to advertise

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(Winter, 2019:2-3). This change may be due to the level of content censorship that took place on the usual platforms.

<sup>iv</sup><https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/insurgency> referring to August 1, 2022.

<sup>v</sup>Beula, E. (2017, December 19). Director of the UIR murdered in Mocímboa da Praia. Retrieved October 1, 2018, from O País: <http://opais.sapo.mz/director-da-uir-assassinado-em-mocimboa-da-praia>.

<sup>vi</sup><https://www.dw.com/pt-002/mo%C3%A7ambique-viol%C3%Aancia-faz-79-mil-deslocados-internos-em-2021/a-62148090> (Accessed 11 July 2022).

<sup>vii</sup>Interviewed on September 22, 2020, in the District of Chiúre.

<sup>viii</sup>Ahl al-Sunna or Ansar al-Sunna, is described by Bonate (2020) as a movement created in 1998 by young graduates of Salafi-Wahhabi universities, who were cut off from opportunities by the Islamic Congress after they returned from their studies at the end of the 1990s.

<sup>ix</sup>About 27% Catholic, 19% Islamic, 16% Zion, 15% Evangelical and other unknown and less predominant (INE, 2019) in [http://www.ine.gov.mz/iv-rgph-2017/mocambique/03\\_religion/frame-11-population-by-religion-by-area-of-residence-age-and-sex-mozambique-2017.xlsx/view](http://www.ine.gov.mz/iv-rgph-2017/mocambique/03_religion/frame-11-population-by-religion-by-area-of-residence-age-and-sex-mozambique-2017.xlsx/view).