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**CHARACTERIZATION AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF
MACHABABOs FROM THE DISCOURSES OF KIDNAPPED
WOMEN**

Translation into English

João Feijó

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SUMMARY

The intensification of the military conflict in Northern Cabo Delgado has attracted the attention of journalists, investigators, security analysts and diplomats. The fact that armed rebels do not give interviews to journalists and researchers results in a great ignorance about their internal dynamics in the occupied areas, and so the world of insurgents is a territory full of mysteries. On the other hand, the abduction of hundreds of young women raises questions about their whereabouts, causing social unrest. The little knowledge of the insurgents' forms of internal organization stems from eyewitness testimonies of those who lived with the group, including defectors or women who have been in captivity.

From 23 interviews with women victims of aggression or kidnapping by insurgent groups, it was possible to conclude that the group members have heterogeneous socio-geographic origins and paths, most of them from the north coast of Cabo Delgado, with records of individuals coming from the Mueda plateau, the Nampula coast, as well as a growing number of foreigners from the East African coast and Arab countries. The insurgents have different bases, installed in villages abandoned by civilians or in the forests.

The group revolted against the state, but also against its traditional structures. Although links are in many cases with domestic groups of origin (through the provision of logistics, camouflage, and information), there has generally been a rupture, reconstituting new, sometimes polygamous, relationships in the forests. Kidnapped women and young teenagers are placed on intermediate bases, located in abandoned villages. Over the course of several days, women are subjected to actions of political and religious indoctrination, during which themes of exclusion and social injustice are explored to capitalize on individual resentments. The messianic promise of social order, combined with the distribution of concrete benefits – food, clothing, and protection – have a seductive effect on vulnerable populations, especially in a scenario of violence, great social precariousness, and food insecurity. The women kidnapped longer presented themselves as resigned with their condition, seeking to take advantage of the new situation.

In the group, individuals are distributed by different functions, ranging from attack and defense activities, reconnaissance, filming and telecommunications, mechanics and nursing or logistics. Although women are given primarily the role of wives, it is still noticeable tasks of observation and espionage, recruitment and loading of goods. Although in residual numbers, women handling weapons were identified in attack actions, including in command positions. The group shows disinterest in agriculture and food production, relying on the sacking to populations and commercial shops, while there is no suspicion of external supply from Tanzania.

Throughout 2020 the group demonstrated the ability to recruit and expand in number, war power and logistical capacity, network of observers and access to information, betting on camouflage and surprise attacks. The enormous war power held raises suspicions of external supply. Unlike the defence and security forces, which gave demonstrations of disorganization, indiscipline and demotivation, the insurgent group revealed a high morale and conviction of attack. However, the group's growth has also grown its diversity, both in terms of religious conviction and level of violence and motivation. This heterogeneity and rivalries for protagonism are generating tensions and conflicting divisions, but also successive waves of desertions, depending on the existing material benefits.

CHARACTERIZATION AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF MACHABABOS FROM THE DISCOURSES OF KIDNAPPED WOMEN

Introduction

Over the past few years, a group of radical individuals has been organizing themselves in the form of sects in the Northeast of Cabo Delgado, assuming the violent dimensions group from October 2017, with the attack on the police facilities of Mocímboa da Praia. The conflict spread in the following years through 8 districts of the province, resulting in the attack and occupation of several district offices. The group became locally known as Al-Shabaabs¹ and became famous for the fundamentalism of the speech (albeit vague), for the extreme violence of his actions, but also for his ability to camouflage (in the forests of Cabo Delgado and within the populations), and the effectiveness of their attacks. However, the fact that the machababos do not give interviews to journalists and researchers results in a great ignorance about the internal dynamics in the occupied areas. The world of insurgents is a territory full of mysteries. The knowledge that comes to public about the way the machababos are organized stems from eyewitnesses of those who lived with this group, namely deserters or women who have been in captivity. In fact, the carrying out of hundreds of abductions of women and the ability of many to have managed to escape captivity has resulted in a wealth of information available about the forms of organisation of this group, which has not been properly analysed.

during the second half of 2020, 23 women were interviewed, who at some moment were victims of aggression or who were kidnapped by insurgent groups. The women interviewed were residents in the districts of Mocímboa da Praia (9), Quissanga (7), Macomia (4) and Ibo (3), all of which moved to Pemba (and, in one case, to Maputo), where they were interviewed. Most of the women were married (12), were single (10) and widowed (1). In terms of age group, the interviewed population was aged between 15 and 20 years old (3); between 21 and 30 years (7); between 31 and 40 years old (6); or over 41 years (7). The majority were illiterate (10), studied up to 4th grade (5), with 9th grade (4) and 12th grade or higher level (4). The interviews were made in the mother tongue of the interviewees, namely in (19) in Makonde, (2) in Makua, and in Portuguese (1).

The interviews were conducted by humanitarian assistance volunteers. This condition with which they presented themselves, providing water, food, psychological support, and other essential aid, strengthened the confidence felt by women victims of violence to share experiences in captivity. With the support of a semi-structured script of questions, the interviewees were invited to share their personal experiences, describing the aggressions to which they were subjected, the experience in captivity, as well as the dynamics and forms of organization of the group of insurgents, in the context in which they interacted. In some cases, the emotional trauma of the interviewees, resulting from the recent experience, made it difficult to conduct the interview (interrupted with tears), making it impossible to perform some questions.

The interviews were recorded with the consent of the victims and later translated, transcribed, and verified the credibility of the translation. For the sake of protection of all interlocutors, the identity of all interviewees is hidden throughout the text. The women's testimonies were confronted with

¹ Literally meaning "young people", this group should not be confused with the terrorist organization that has become famous in Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya, even though the recurrence of this designation reveals some familiarity of the population of Northern Cabo Delgado with this movement.

journalistic reports and other academic reports, with the aim of confirming, but also complementing the information collected.²

Having remained in captivity, in some cases for several weeks, the women interviewed constituted eyewitnesses, with information about their experiences and forms of organization. The interaction of women with the group of insurgents took place throughout the second half of 2020, in a clear military strengthening scenario relative to Mozambique's armed defense forces, with violent attacks on various district headquarters and access to logistics and military equipment. Through the analysis of their reports, this text allows to recover the discourse of women victims of violence, giving a voice to those who have a small space for this purpose.

Commentators, journalists, investigators, and government members have been using different terms to designate the armed group operating in Cabo Delgado: "Al-shabaabs", "insurgents", "rebels", "terrorists", "Daesh" or "Islamic State", among others. Throughout this analysis we chose to use the term "machababos" (because it is the local designation used by the populations on the ground), but also of "insurgents" or "rebels".

1. CHARACTERIZATION OF ARMED INSURGENTS

The process of interaction of the women interviewed with the group of armed insurgents allowed them to make a set of observations about the socio-geographic origins of the rebels, forms of recruitment, but also about their internal organization, the distribution of functions and sexual division of tasks, reconstitution of family groups, and about levels of cohesion and conflict.

1.1 Socio-geographical origins and paths

In a situation of captivity, the feeling of fear by women and the rebel group's need for camouflage did not facilitate the process of identifying the rebels. The fear manifested by the victims during the process of captivity, often in tears, in withdrawn and low postures, discouraged the observation of the surrounding environment. The recognition and revelation, in public, of the identity of an insurgent (as a leniency strategy) is a risky option, which may have the immediate measure of execution, followed by the general warning: "nobody knows *anyone here*" (Pinnacle News, 07.09.2020 cf. Moçambique para todos, 07.09.2020).

During the attacks, during periods of concentration and capture of civilians or on returning to the bases, most of the young rebels circulate with their faces covered, preventing recognition by third parties. Despite hearing the names of the insurgents, while relating to each other, some interviewees were suspicious of their authenticity:

- "*Most of the names there weren't real names. Here they call me.... Because outside there are other names. Some said the names, but I always had the impression that the names were not those*" (interview 21).

The concern to hide the identity and the fact that many young insurgents express themselves in the local languages of the north of the country, supports the conviction that many of them are individuals from the region. Despite attempts to disguise, the victims recognized some of the

² In most situations, the women who escaped captivity did not remain long in the city of Pemba. According to the interviewers, the trauma experienced during this period, the fear of discovery of their whereabouts by insurgent groups, or suspicions by security and defence forces of collaboration with them, led these women to move to places further away from the conflict.

young rebels, among former capulana³ vendors, from Mocímboa da Praia, neighbors of Macomia or prisoners from Quissanga:

- "*They were men, even one of them the aunt knows him. He is really from Macomia. One of the bandit boys is Macomia's son*" (interview 6);
- "*When someone speaks Kimuani, one realizes he local or from outside. These were local people, Muanis of Mocímboa*" (interview 10);
- "*In Pangane [...] I could recognize the identity of each al-shabaab; for example, this is from Natutupo, this is from Naunte [...] were children of home, spoke Kimuani; all spoke Kimuani*" (interview 19);
- "*I met a person, he was a capulana salesman I knew*" (interview 21).

While it is true that Muani and Swahili are the languages most used by the insurgents, revealing the preponderance of local recruitment, eyewitnesses reveal that they have heard many other languages spoken by the group of rebels, either from the province of Cabo Delgado (especially Makonde and Makua), or from further south of the country, particularly Nampula, proving the existence of large geographical areas of recruitment. According to the reports, several variants of Makua from Nampula province are reported, including the "parapato de Angoche"⁴ (interview 2), "macua nacalense" or "nahara"⁵ (interview 4). With much less reference come southern languages, having been mentioned Changana (interview 4). Anyway, one of the heads of a group of rebels in Mocímboa da Praia was originally from the center of the country, allegedly a defector from the Armed Forces of Mozambique (interview 21). Among national languages, Portuguese is a language little used by insurgents, at least in interaction with captive populations, and it is understood that most insurgents are largely recruited in rural or peri-urban areas.

The reports reveal the presence of foreigners from the East African coast, especially Tanzania, with reference to Somalians, and individuals presumably from Arab countries, structuring different groups, with a relatively autonomous and independent margin of action:

- "*(...) those who make war are not those of Mocímboa. You can tell they're guests. They're not local. Many accuse us that they are our children, but I ask: who was born Arabs among us? They charge us for nothing. They're not from Mocímboa. They make the FDS run away and kill people indiscriminately. They're well-trained. Who's the local person that could put up with a war like this?*" (interview 9);
- "*But they said that among the bosses, there were many foreigners as well. They were talking about a camp site that was almost a Shangri-la. They said that⁶ there, in that camp, where the whites are, we have all the support' (...). We were interviewed by two people whose face we did not see (...). I think he was white. A mask that only leaves your eyes out. (...) He only spoke English. He did not speak Portuguese and did not speak Swahili*" (interview 21);

³ A capulana is a type of a sarong worn primarily in Mozambique but also in other areas of south-eastern Africa. It is a length of material about 2 metres by 1 metre. It can either be used as a wrap-around skirt, dress or can become a baby carrier on the back. It is considered a complete piece of clothing. [Wikipedia](#)

⁴ Parapato is the name of a hill of Angoche, having been used by the interviewee to designate the variant of Makua spoken in this region of the province of Nampula, locally called Koti.

⁵ Nahara is a Makua variant associated with the districts of Mossuril and the Island of Mozambique.

⁶ Shangri-La is a literary creation of James Hilton, in his famous novel *Lost Horizon*, located in the Himalayan mountains, representing a mythical place of difficult access, and characterized by the harmonious coexistence of individuals from various backgrounds.

- "I saw a person who looked like another nationality but didn't come too close to us. There were three boys who had non-black skin. Indian type. Their faces were a little more tapered. The nose was also more tapered. And the hair was straight with waves" (interview 21);

- "Another person met with a group of Somalis who said they were not from the Islamic State group. Another extremist group. I think there are totally independent groups of extremists in Mozambique. Because of the characteristics of the attacks and what they spoke of, these groups (...) act independently" (interview 21).

It was reported the existence of relations of the insurgents with other countries in the region, particularly where Swahili is used as a lingua franca (Tanzania, Kenya, Somalia, or Congo), with exchange of information and experiences of indoctrination. Some of the leaders operating in Mocímboa da Praia accumulate guerrilla experience in countries in the region (notably Tanzania), where they have not succeeded, diverting their operations to Mozambique:

- "That boy was from Mocímboa da Praia. Another time I spoke to him, he told me that he spent 10 years outside Mozambique being prepared to be chief(...) He went to the Congo. He went to Arabia. He went to at least 3 or 4 countries. He speaks fluent Arabic, English, Portuguese he was speaking, Swahili and local languages. He was extremely intelligent and well prepared, both intellectually and militarily. Most of those young people didn't know the Quran. But he knew the Quran too. He was prepared to know the Quran" (interview 21);

- "Those who left [to other countries] were prepared to be chiefs. Looks like this group was born in Tanzania. One of them told me that. In Tanzania there was a cell of the group. And the president of the time then attacked their group camp. But many survived. Most of them came to Mozambique to prepare the Mozambicans. All had guerrilla experience" (interview 21);

- "The group that was with us said they were from the Islamic State, especially the Tanzanians. They said it just like that. They even put [a banner] in a house there, in English, that Islamic State was good; and the young people, a Tanzanian who had been in Mocímboa for three years, he said he found the Islamic State through a group on a social network. And he volunteered. And he began to be prepared in other countries and, when he was prepared, he came to Mozambique" (interview 21).

According to the reports, the vast majority of the rebels are quite young, including numerous teenagers. Leadership positions tend to be held by relatively older and more experienced individuals. The interviewees referred to dozens of abducted pre-adolescents, who are provided with military training and indoctrination:

- "I couldn't tell because I was scared [but] there were many. [In terms of age] they were like you and like that guy who passed by here [points to a 25-year-old]. (interview 6);

- "look, they are kids like that [points to a teenager], there's no adult. There's only one of their commanders like you" (interview 20);

- "We saw a slightly more advanced training of teenagers, between 12 and 14 years old. (...) They were training a kind of fight with boys. They were training the use of machete. The first, who were captured in 2017, are already being prepared to be used as a group of boy soldiers" (interview 21);

- "We saw a 14-year-old boy going on his first mission. We saw him, very happy, telling the soldiers how he had killed people. He had killed with a shot and then behaved." (interview 21).

1.2 Internal organization of rebel groups

a) . Different military bases

The organization of the bases of the machababos is quite variable depending on the military location, and it was possible to distinguish at least three types of camps. A first type of camp is around the areas of advanced occupation (for example, around the area of the municipality of Mocímboa da Praia), for the purpose of defense and military patrol (including capture of hidden individuals), several cantonments are formed, each with "about 100-armed youth" (interview 21). The rebels occupy abandoned houses, using them to overnight, access to water and sanitation, and cook. A second type is, about 30 to 40 km from the sites attacked, the formation of temporary camps, usually in villages abandoned by the populations, where women and children kidnapped are provisionally placed, under the surveillance of dozens of military personnel. The hostages remain in these places between one and two weeks, and they are subject to indoctrination sessions, with the aim of reducing fear and anxiety. More permanently and presumably located in the dense forests of the Mbau administrative post or in the Macomia district, a third type of camp, designated by the insurgents themselves as "home", is where the group's command center is located, as well as their families:

- "Our camp was a passage camp. There were no families there. There were people captured and lots of soldiers. There passed the soldiers who came and went (...) Then they took them to another camp, what they called 'home'. There were thus two camps in that area of Naquitengue [village located about 30 km south of Mocímboa da Praia], but not nearby, which they called 'home', which would be the permanent camp. Inside the woods. It must have been a dense forest. Some of these people were already being transferred to these camps" (interview 21).

b). Rupture and reconstitution of the family group

In terms of relationship with the home group, even if there are situations of involvement, in terms of recruitment, supply of logistics and information, coverage and protection, most of the young people have broken ties with the family of origin, having reconstituted new family relationships in the group of insurgents, sometimes polygamous:

- "He's the one who told me that his parents encouraged him to join the group. He was the only one who told me that his uncle belonged to the group and his father and mother agreed to it. And he was Mozambican. He was from Palma" (interview 21);

- "Most of them constituted a new family. A boy who was there, who was from Mocímboa, said: 'my family ran away. My wife and kids - I don't know where they are. My parents don't agree with that. I don't know where they are. But if they are captured...; then, he said, 'if they don't accept, they're going to have to die'" (interview 21);

- "One soldier [machababo] had 4 wives and children. Of what was stolen, they shared and also took to the family" (interview 21).

c). Recruitment and integration of women in the armed group

A very frequent phenomenon in the attacks, which is widely reported in interviews, informal conversations, and social communication, is the abduction of young female and male adolescents. The March 2020 attack on the municipality of Mocímboa da Praia is described as one of the moments of greatest capture of children and girls, with reports of large dozens transported in open-box vans. The evidence shows that hundreds of young girls have been kidnapped throughout the conflict:

- *"They took many women of all ethnicities, they are countless. (...) They can find a child, they take away the child to be taught in the madrassa"* (interview 9)

- *"This fourth or fifth time many women, children and men were captured by the group (...) Some have lost three to four children. They went house to house and captured the girls and took them"* (interview 12).

"Many of the abducted are Muanis; many children are not known their whereabouts. The children of the house and others were kidnapped. My five cousins were kidnapped" (interview 16);

- *"In Quirimba they kidnapped 37 minors; to this day, only 5 children returned, who managed to escape, three boys and two girls. The others, to date, have not yet returned"* (interview 17);

- *"What I've watched is that, when they come, they don't forgive, they capture underage boys and girls."* (interview 18).

The process of capturing women is not related to belonging to any ethnic or religious group but is closely based on age and sexual attraction. The younger and attractive ones are particularly chosen. According to the interviewees' reports, the less dark-skin young women (aka *Lulu*) are the most sought after. The codes used in the selection of women are based on food concepts, distinguishing those that are called noodles, the most desired, and those called *ntama* (sorghum), the least desired, translating a representation of the woman as a sexual object for consumption and male satisfaction. Noodles represents the most desired food (tenderest, associated with urban consumption and greater purchasing power, therefore widely preferred among young people), as opposed to sorghum, a food to resort to in the dry periods, more tasteless and less attractive:

- *"Teenage girls are the most favorite victims; the other age groups [that] are spared. Girls and damsels are the most sought-after victims, they call them noodles; so, if they are around, they are captured"* (interview 3);

- *"These girls are not selected, there is no choice of Makonde or any other. Every girl found is noodles, immediate travel, while the old ones are called ntama. And because you are old, they leave you, but the maiden, being noodles, must be taken on the journey."* (interview 3);

- *"They don't choose, they kidnap Muani, Makonde, Swahili, just be beautiful and less dark skin girl. The so-called Lulu. Even if pregnant, they take you to give birth right there. More young girls. They take without discrimination"* (interview 8).

- *"In general, as long as they're a damsel with breasts, women like me, up to 30 years old, kidnap. If they like girl; they may leave behind pregnant or old women"* (interview 15);

- "They don't choose. They take all kinds of women, especially important is the girls' age. They take them to be their wives. They call them noodles" (interview 18).

Women least vulnerable to abduction are the oldest and those with disabilities or injuries, therefore sexually less attractive or a burden in terms of assistance:

- "We were many kidnapped women (...) On the way, they freed the old women, telling them 'go while it's early'" (interview 2);

- "In my case, they claimed I can't hear well. I didn't even understand what they were telling me. My kidnapping colleagues informed them I was deaf. They immediately freed me" (interview 2);

- "They searched me and saw that they shot me in the arm and chest. 'Because she's a shot, leave her. She's sick. Otherwise, you're going hassle us on the way, so leave her. She's going to die in the bush, you can leave her', ordered one of them. From there they abandoned me" (interview 6).

Women kidnapped in the municipality of Mocímboa da Praia were taken to temporary camps, located about 30 or 40 km south of the municipality, usually in abandoned villages, transported by dozens in open-box vans. In Quissanga district, they were taken north by foot. The pedestrian travel process follows strict safety rules:

- "They [machababos] stay far away and well distant from the people. Even we, captured, followed in Indian queue, subdivided into small intervals, which is interspersed with their vigilantes in the middle of the queue. The persons in the queue are placed by categories or age classes. The old men follow behind the line with their watchman. In the middle, there is also a vigilante with your group, as well as at the beginning of the queue. Each captured person carrying the luggage is watched more closely, both from behind and in front" (interview 2);

- "we didn't make it to their base. They put you in a tree and tie with cloth and say 'stay here'. They go to the base and come back. And when they want to get you there, they tie you in the face and take you there; and, when getting out, they do the same thing. Thus, it makes it difficult to know paths from there in the base" (interview 20).

Women kidnapped in Mocímboa da Praia were staying in abandoned villages, about 30 km further south, in houses belonging to displaced families, usually in groups of 40 to 60 per house (two or three rooms), using the beds, mats and existing furniture equipment and having several meals a day (made by themselves). The women remained in these places for weeks before moving on to the definitive sites. This transitional period has several functions.

First, it has a goal of political and religious indoctrination, reducing women's anxiety and fear, gaining their trust, and promoting integration into the group. During this period, sessions of political-religious debate are held, where young people, with a deeper knowledge of the Quran and the ability to articulate ideas, explored the theme of exclusion and social injustice, in a clear attempt to capitalize on negative personal experiences and individual resentments. From messages in the Quran, a message of justice, equality and social order are promoted, in a relatively appealing tone for some women:

- "On the day we arrived, they did a reading of the Koran, talked about all the trouble of injustice in the country, of social abuse, of corruption. They asked if the women knew the situation and if they suffered police violence, if they had to go through a situation of corruption. Some felt

encouraged and talked and said they had been through similar situations. And they concluded that with, their new government, they were going to end the injustice. That all people were going to be respected. There would be no more theft, no more corruption in the government. One of the things they repeated most was that democracy was demonic, because in Mozambique it allowed politicians to steal and the people to continue starving and dying without any kind of care. And they did an indoctrination to those women so that they would end up accepting their proposal. In seven days, they made this meeting twice. (...) Men who, apparently, knew the Quran very well. Two different men. Both Tanzanians" (interview 21);

- "Most of them kept quiet, listening. But this happened twice a week (...) About 3 or 4 [intervened], did not reach 5. But as you listen, they began identifying..." (interview 21).

Despite all the aggression unleashed by the group of insurgents in their attacks, during the indoctrination a discourse is constructed according to which the great aggressor is the Mozambican State, presenting the radical group as the protection against social injustices. The messianic promise of a social order, combined with the distribution of concrete benefits – food, clothing, and protection – are particularly seductive for vulnerable populations, especially in a scenario of violence, great social precariousness, and food insecurity, such as that existing in the region:

- "One told us it was no use crying. Because there they had food and security, and she had been hiding in the woods for so long, that it was better there than in the bush" (interview 21);

- "The boys who were captured with us were still treated differently. They got orange. The insurgents were kind to them. The boys who had mothers in the house where we were, arrived saying they had won shirts from the insurgents. They had stolen them from somewhere and they were giving the shirts to them. They were starting to think it was good to stay in that camp. That part where people felt comfortable with them. With girls and women, it was like that. And with the boys too. They arrived happily showing their mother what they had gained" (interview 21).

The testimonies of women kidnapped longer translate a situation of resignation to the situation of captivity, seeking to take advantage of the new situation:

- "she started counting and venting, and she said, 'After a while, all the women start to think that is real. And they all want to come home.' The way they see for getting home is by helping the group. A lady said, 'after a week you get used to it. You cry, you don't eat for a while. But then you find out there's no way.' They begin to conform to reality and begin to change sides. And some very young people, wives of these people, they start to think that's real. So, they re-insert themselves. This is what they said happened" (interview 21).

Secondly, these meetings aim to prepare the women for what is their role in the destiny group, in the light of the understanding made of Islam. It is the role of wives and educating mothers, responsible for the inculcation of what they call the correct principles of Islam:

- "[They were] preparing the young woman to become a true Islamic, to become a good Islamic mother. Because they believed that the woman is the one who educates the family to follow Islam correctly" (interview 21).

At the end of this transitional period, women are divided into three groups, depending on the destination that is presented to them:

"For girls and women, they had three options: to be chosen by one of the soldiers to be a future wife; or be chosen by any of the men, not for marriage, but to follow the most radical norms of Islam. It was a word I forgot. Which is a preparation for the young woman to become a true Islamic, to become a good Islamic mother. Because they believed that the woman is the one who educates the family to follow Islam correctly. The third option was for those who were Christian and who did not want to convert, who would be chosen by soldiers to be slaves" (interview 21).

The huge number of young women kidnapped, and the special treatment given to the youngest and most attractive have raised suspicions of trafficking in women:

- "there was a group of girls who didn't go to this camp. A group of girls said 'we're going to a place where we're going to learn English (...) a very beautiful young woman, who must have been about 12, 13 years old [said] that she, and her friends were going to Tanzania to learn English (...) That's when we thought this group of girls was a victim of women's trafficking. Because it was a group of very young and very beautiful girls and they did not go to the camp they called home" (interview 21).

The reality is that the high number of kidnapped women, verified from the reports of those who escaped captivity, but also the number of families with young girls kidnapped, would raise a serious logistical and military problem, supporting the hypothesis of abductions of human beings, possibly to finance the armed struggle.

Trafficking in women and children for sexual exploitation on the African continent, including southern Africa and East Africa, has been a widely documented phenomenon in recent decades. A report by the International Organization for Migration (Laczo and Gozdzik, 2005) reveals that trafficking on the continent is quite complex, involving various origins and destinations, inside and outside the region. There is evidence of women and girls trafficked from Mozambique to South Africa (in Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal South-African provinces). From Malawi, women and girls are trafficked to Northern Europe and South Africa. In East Africa, Tanzania and Kenya are also on trafficking routes for women. In Kenya, there are references to trafficking in girls to Europe organised by international trade unions. Kenya also serves as a trafficking route for Ethiopian women to Europe and Gulf States (Butegwa, 1997). In both countries, some orphaned girls under the care of adoptive parents are allegedly sold to traffickers under the pretext of protection and education, scholarship, or marriage. In Uganda there are references to recruiting young teenagers to work as prostitutes in the Gulf States. In Northern Uganda kidnappings are reported for the sexual satisfaction of rebel commanders or simply as slaves to wealthy men in Sudan and Gulf States. Similarly, there are reports of Ethiopian women recruited to work as domestics in Lebanon and the Gulf States, ending up sexually abused. On the other hand, human trafficking has been a common practice in Islamic terrorist organizations in the Middle East and North Africa (Besenyő, 2017), enabling the recruitment and retention of foreign mercenaries and the financing of violent actions, constituting a reward mechanism for the most successful fighters. There is a great need to deepen the understanding of this phenomenon, to understand its role, not only in ensuring a new generation of fighters, controlling the population, reducing the morale and resistance of the enemy, but also financing the armed group itself.

d). Functions performed and sexual division of tasks

The group of insurgents organized a series of internal services, based on a rigid separation of tasks, following a patriarchal logic. Men have the role of leadership and combat, both defense (surveillance and patrol, capture of hidden FADM soldiers), attack (including destruction, kidnappings, abductions, and murders), but also political and religious indoctrination. The reports

reveal the existence of mechanical services (repair of motorcycles), communication and filming of activities and health nursing, activities which were always performed by men. In frontline camps, where there are no women, food-making activities are carried out by men:

- "Yes, they cook, but men are the ones who cook. They themselves behave goats, prepare, cook and eat" (interview 2);
- "There were two or three boys who were nothing else but mechanics. They took care of the bikes and the cars, which they had stolen in these attacks" (interview 21);
- "They have those people responsible for communication, they record everything. They recorded us. One of these people who is responsible for communication (...) made a point of recording the people who were captured. But they didn't post anywhere (...) He said 'These movies are very important, because we can use them later.' They have a very well-organized communication network too" (interview 21);
- "Doctor, didn't have. Medicine had what they stole from the hospitals. There was a nurse. All the men there were armed. Even those who were in other roles. There were those who went on missions and had those who stay there more in the camp, taking care of the camp. Everyone had a gun" (interview 21).

Although most armed rebels are men, there are reports of women actively participating in military attacks. Both in Quissanga and in Mocímboa da Praia, armed women were observed, some registered in the justice, wielding machine guns, sometimes assuming leadership functions, with decision-making power over the future of the prisoners:

- "In the village they had invaded only men, but in Quissanga capital we found a woman. She's the one who set me free; she told me, you can come down to your home in Quissanga Beach. The men didn't say anything, this woman was in charge ... was a woman who ordered and chose who would stay and who would follow the journey or those freed" (interview 2);
- "In total there were 16 men and one woman from Quissanga. The girl is a natural thief from Quissanga and is with the bandits. They wore military clothing like this one" (interview 20);
- "One of the chiefs and a woman stood there as guards; went to the market, began to collect everything from motorcycles to other goods (...) there were women in uniforms" (interview 22).

Another military role assumed by women, more passively, but generally, is that of information gathering:

- "Some, when they talked to us, they told us to be careful of others who were there, to be careful what we were talking about because the al-shabaabs would know" (interview 21).

Despite the participation of women in military strategies, compared to the male sex, their role is reduced and seconded. In continuity with the values widely shared in the rural world, in the universe of women's machababos, submission to male power is expected. The woman represents a trophy, owned by man as a reward for his war effort, but also an important element for the creation of a new family organization, where she has a role of subjugation to the family:

- "They all had women. But the women weren't there. They were in this camp that they called home, which was far from the camp where we were. (...) They spend time on mission duty and

then they return home. Then, another group comes and stays on a mission. When they go home, they take back the women that was set to stay with them" (interview 21).

A relevant fact is the clear lack of interest and lack of concern for agricultural activity, despite the growing need for logistical supply of a growing group of armed men. This apparent disinterest can be explained by a set of four aspects. First, for the theft of food to the population, to local merchants, especially during the assaults on the main villages, district, including food vessels. Secondly, as a military strategy, in a guerrilla scenario, in which success depends on the possibility of rapid movements. Opening up large areas of cultivation or livestock farming would make insurgents more sedentary, identifiable and vulnerable to FDS attacks. Thirdly, there are suspicions about the international supply of food, due to the international links of this group. Finally, it should be noted that an important part of the recruited comes from suburban areas, being traders, workers in small workshops or small service providers (Habibe et al, 2019). For these groups, agriculture is represented as a secondary activity and little income-generating:

- *"they said they weren't going to make machamba, that they weren't going to plant anything (...) for from Allah came all the food. Maybe in those home camps they plant (...) for them the food came very easy. Because either they took it out of the robbery, or that group sent it to them; the group, which they called the whites, brought them this food. (...) Or, then, because they consider themselves soldiers and soldiers do not plant" (interview 21).*

1.3. Strategies, warpower and military personnel

The insurgents' military strategies are based on rapid, often nightly attacks and constant camouflage. According to the reports, the groups have three important advantages, namely: 1) increasing human workforce; 2) increasing war power and logistics capacity; 3) camouflage capability, wearing military uniforms, confusing the population and the enemy; or even fusion with the population, used as a human shield; 4) vast network of observers and access to information.

a). Number of insurgents

Reports on the number of rebels are variable, usually vague, and imprecise. There are reports of attacks operated by groups composed of a few dozen insurgents, and other reports where hundreds of attackers are mentioned. In fact, women who were held hostage after an attack on Quissanga-capital estimate that the operation was carried out by "about 360 insurgents" (interview 2). The testimony of a woman who was held hostage in Mocímboa da Praia, during the month of August 2020, states that the municipality was attacked by "more than 500 soldiers" and the subsequent constitution of three bases for defense of the municipality, each of which with about a hundred military (interview 21). According to the same testimony, the group can replace, in a single day about 100 armed individuals. Hundreds of kidnapped women, as well as adolescents and children, are added to this contingent. From these observations it is plausible to estimate that the group may have already had a military force well over 1,000 individuals. The number will certainly have fluctuated, depending on the recruitment capacity, the supply of counterparts, the number of casualties made by the FDS or defections.⁷

⁷ Other eyewitnesses confirm the participation of hundreds of guerrillas in the attacks on Mocímboa da Praia (notably 400 in the March and 800 attack in June). It is important, however, to admit a tendency towards overestimating estimates.

b). Growing war power

Eyewitnesses report a great deal of warpower of the Machababos, sometimes far superior to that of the Mozambican army, largely captured from the defense and security forces (namely armored vehicles, Mahindra jeeps, weapons, and ammunition), but also of numerous motorized vehicles captured from civilians. The quantity and quality of available weaponry does not cease to intrigue the population about the origin of military equipment:

- "*The groups, when they come, I don't know if they use cars, but we hear motorcycles snoring. Even with the silence of the dawn, when you hear the sound of a motorcycle, you have to run away, it is them*" (interview 13);
- "*This last time the FDS were very strong, they put up with the fight, but what came to defeat them was the bandits' armored car, because they assumed that this was FDS's aid, but it was the enemy's attack, having wounded many FDS; even in the morning when they were helping each other, in the morning, they told us that they were injured because of armored car because they imagined it was their help*" (interview 14);
- "*The insurgents had many weapons. And they had a lot of ammunition. They'd move their guns and show them the boxes of ammunition in front of us. Where does all this come from? In the March attack, the army fled when the ammunition ran out. It's not from the government because the government doesn't have enough. They may have stolen from the government a little. But what they had was a lot. That was a lot of guns. Too much ammo.*" (interview 21);
- "*We even saw five or six cars. But mostly motorbikes. The cars that were there were stolen cars. They had a police car. Two or three cars that were from the police and the army. They had that armored car they used. (...) They had a four-wheel motorcycle. And new motorbikes. (...) One day they arrived with a truck with lots of motorbikes. I think there were about 20 bikes in that truck. It's all robbery, isn't it? (...) Gasoline, they stole all the gasoline at gas stations in Mocímboa da Praia. So they had a lot of gas. (...) They had big trucks. (...) They circulated. Cars also circulated to one place and another all the time*"(interview 21);
- "*Al-shabaabs have many weapons, each carry two weapons. It's not those guns that are given to the cops. Those aren't guns. They are big*" (interview 23).

These accounts are corroborated by videos and photographs circulating on social media, where young rebels appear in stolen car vehicles, including armored cars. The reports are consistent with the testimonies of militias in the districts of Muidumbe and Nangade who, due to inferiority in terms of military equipment, are forced to withdraw upon hearing the first shots.

The machababos access telecommunications technology facilitating the exchange of information and military organization, as well as food supply capacity:

- "*I had the impression that they also had satellite phones to talk to their bosses in Mbau. We had no phone signal in Naquitengue and they had information. So, somehow they had some contact*" (interview 21);
- "*They had food. When lack of food started, after they had plundered everything in Mocímboa da Praia, one of the chiefs, who was there with us, said: 'You have to alert the higher boss, who was in Mbau, that he has to send food'. There were two camps*" (interview 21).

c). Camouflage and fusion capacity with the population

A third characteristic of the respective group is the camouflage capability. The use of Defence and Security Forces uniforms creates enormous confusion between all actors on the ground, including civilians and the FDS themselves, providing them with a decisive advantage to penetrate on the ground, even bypassing the lines of defence. In any case, the use of a headscarf, often for the purpose of hiding the face, is a distinctive mark of the armed group:

- "*The uniform they wear is the same as the FDS's, so it makes us fool. Even the owners themselves are mistaken, sometimes they think they are colleagues while they are enemies. Here in our area (...) [the machababos in uniform of the FDS] were well received. They said 'we're hungry'. So, the community cooked and attended them well thinking they were military, but, by night, they surprised the community. In this way you will never distinguish your friend from the enemy. The serious problem is that the uniform is the same, the cars and weapons are the same* (interview 14);
- "*We don't know why the uniform is [the] same for al-shabaab and the FDS. This is confusing us.*" (interview 18);
- "*They wore normal clothes, some were masked, others in a normal way, some were masked behind and on the face, and others masked only one side with scarves,*" (interview 7).

In addition, taking advantage of the dense forests of Cabo Delgado, hiding in the municipality of Mocímboa da Praia or mixing with the civilian population, the group demonstrates the ability to protect itself from helicopter attacks or military raids. The reports show a great ability to listen to the approach of the air force, of prior knowledge of the times of attack and camouflage, hiding among the vegetation or covering the traces of human presence with dry leaves and grass:

- "*They had come by helicopter, but the bandits hid in the population places so as not to be killed or die with the people, in the form of a human shield when they saw that the FDS were attacking them*" (interview 17);
- "*And they knew the times the military was going to attack with the planes, because they went out to do the jobs they had to do outside the schedule of the military's attack. So, the military was flying the helicopters from 9:00 to 15:00. So, they did all the work they had until 9:00. And they knew how to hide very well. And they'd get off a motorcycle, but if any planes came, they knew very well to hide. There was no danger of them hitting an insurgent. It was easier for them to kill the elderly who were captured in the houses than an insurgent*" (interview 21);
- "*They know the time the government helicopter arrives. And when the helicopter arrives, all al-shabaabs are silent and no one shoots. After the helicopter leaves at 15:00. We ate at 9:00 in the morning. From 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., the helicopter arrived*" (interview 23).

The group created its own signals, for internal communication and identification of its presence:

- "*I realized that we, when we were going, they had a sign in the trees. Signs written in Arabic. Most of them didn't know Arabic. I think it would be an easy signal to set the camp. To know they're there. Also among them, most of them were dressed in military clothing, they recognized each other as well. They should have their own signals*" (interview 21).

Finally, the group shows that it has an important capacity to access information, due to the holding of a wide network of observers. Reports of residents of Mocímboa da Praia refer to young

women (more "sassy" – "atiradiças") who engage with military and young adults⁸ who drink in tents with military, in order to obtain information⁹, but also family members and neighbors, and inform about the movements and schedules of the defense and security forces and their military personnel.

- *"The first stage of the attack was always observation. They stayed a few days in that area, seeing how was the region, what people were doing. The group that was going to make the observation was not always the group that was going to attack"* (interview 21);
- *"They told me there were people inside the police, the army, even in the government. They're very well organized. They have a lot of money"* (interview 21).

1.4. Cohesion and conflict

Several analysts highlight the fundamentalist nature of the group members and anti-state attitude (Morier-Genoud, 2020), social exclusion as an important recruitment factor (Habibe et al; Feijó and Maquenzi, 2019) and the extreme violence of the group during the attacks. Although the information is very vague, from the reports of the women interviewed, it is concluded that the situation is more complex.

Firstly, the group is not exactly homogeneous in terms of motivation. On the one hand, less young (over 30 years of age), more internationalized (often foreign), indoctrinated (strictly following orthodox interpretations of Islam) and emotionally more controlled, performing leadership and leadership roles, were observed. On the other hand, the reports account for younger and materialistic individuals, particularly resentful of the excesses of the defense and security forces, who are outraged by socio-economic poverty, and who find in the group of machababos an escape to express their revolt. These young people tend to be much more out of control and violent, including with women. While the former tends to follow the precepts of what they consider Islam, among the latter there is a more distant attitude towards religion, and may even escape prayers:

- *"The Tanzanians believed they were making a benefit to the world by purifying the earth. They had a certain kind of behavior. But there were some young people who had moved into the group after the conflict. And these had an even more violent attitude than those. They had an attitude of hatred towards what they had lived. One of them said so. 'I wasn't al-shabaab, they arrested me for saying I was al-shabaab. They hit me.' He had been assaulted, had been arrested. He said that when he had left, and joined the group, which was the right thing to do. (...) Many of these men who, did not have that previous preparation, they had a greater anger at the government. (...) And they also had a different behavior with women. They were more aggressive to women"* (interview 21);
- *"The group that was with us is a group of a different moral plot. It is a radical group that had studied radical Islam. That group that was with us. Most were concerned about making the right moments of prayer. And there was one group that didn't have that concern. It was a group that*

⁸ As the attacks intensified in the Mocímboa da Praia district and as the threat of an offensive to the municipality increased, women were encouraged to join the group of machababos in exchange for protection, involving themselves as wives (aka *handing over the arruxi*, i.e. their virginity), participating in the recruitment of other women or supporting the hideout of rebels and weapons. Particularly after the attack of March 23 to Mocímboa da Praia, several reports refer to the visit of family members in the bases of insurgents, in order to verify the respective living conditions.

⁹ Residents of Mocímboa da Praia reported that it was frequent for young people from coastal neighborhoods to sit drinking with military personnel in tents located in the Nanduadua neighborhood or in the expansion zone. The interlocutors also report that on the eve of the attack of March 23 on the municipality of Mocímboa da Praia, which led to its occupation, dozens of military personnel got drunk throughout the night, in the company of local individuals, allegedly as a strategy to weaken the armed forces.

"was only coerced. But it wasn't a group that was there because of ideology. We have the ideological group and the group that are there for financial interest" (interview 21).

According to the report, religion does not represent the only unifying element of the group of rebels, but rather obedience to military power. As the interviewee said, "[because] *they are Islamic, they do not have a guarantee of life. What guarantees people's lives there is believing what they want them to believe*".

On the other hand, the group is heterogeneous in terms of social origin, and it is possible to find several strata of a tiny urban and suburban middle class (including ex informal market vendors, civil servants, and qualified staff), ex-prisoners and unemployed young people:

- "*This chief, who was from the central region, stayed two days there (...) He told me he was from a family with possessions. He said 'Not everyone who's in here came because they're miserable. Many here had jobs.' He had a degree in agriculture. He was ex-military. And he joined the group by choice*"(interview 21);
- "*He said 'I didn't have anything anymore'. You imagine a young man already with nothing! People with no perspective. People who didn't have a job. Fanaticism was mixed with a lot with the basic needs for some*"(interview 21).

In a *context of combat stress*, several situations of tension and conflict between the machababos themselves were reported, related with the treatment to be given to prisoners and the frustration of material expectations:

- "*And in that link, that boss was scolding him because he said, in Swahili, to this lower level boss, that what were we doing there?, we should have gotten out of there*" (interview 21);
- "*They were arguing because one said that he is no longer having advantages, they have not received money for a long time; in these days they only survive from robberies in the houses they attack. The other insurgent had the idea of running away. He didn't have benefits anymore. They're not having any money. I used to get a lot of money. These al-shabaabs themselves say this. They were telling this to the population, that was captured by them*" (interview 20).

These testimonies are consistent with other journalistic reports (Pinnacle News, 18.02.2021), in which survivors of captivity report situations of logistics scarcity, because of the abandonment of the populations of their places of residence and the reduction of opportunities for theft of food products. Reports refer to meetings between insurgent groups, during which a Tanzanian citizen, "*leader of the group*" advised "*members of Mozambican nationality to return to their homelands*" (O.O. & Carta, 28.01.2021). The reality is that the alleged practices of paying monetary values to young rebels, widely mentioned in local discourses in previous years, have ceased to be frequent in recent months, revealing the interruption of guerrilla financing circuits and reduction of the rebel groups' moral¹⁰.

The most serious conflicts are resolved with the application of capital punishment:

¹⁰An analysis of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria conducted by the Israeli organization Meir Amit Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, makes a detailed analysis of the terrorist group's remuneration practices, referring to the monthly payment of amounts between US\$200 and US\$600 per operational, depending on their nationality and household size (ITIC, 2014: 155).

- "There, when an al-shabaab conquered a woman and she wouldn't accept, he informed his colleague that that girl doesn't want me. So, they'd take him and beheaded him." (interview 23);

- "They had a commander prior to the one who captured us. He had made an attack before August 12 (...) And in the previous attack, he did something wrong. I heard the al-shabaabs counting. And he was murdered in front of all of them because he didn't act properly. He was murdered by their bosses there because he hadn't done it the right way." (interview 21).

The murdered commander¹¹ had (co-)led the attack of March 23, 2021 on Mocímboa da Praia, the first time the city and the entire region were actually taken. The attack took place during a period of concentration of many displaced people and difficulties in supplying the city, which resulted in shortages and rising food prices. The offensive was known for the widespread destruction caused, but also for the small number of civilian casualties and, above all, for the sacking and distribution of food products by the population, followed by a small rally. In a period of great food shortage, this attitude had an impact on the group's popularity in the region, as shown in several videos that circulated on social networks. During the first half of April, rumors¹² circulated in the village of Mocímboa da Praia about major conflicts between young rebels in the bush, allegedly around the attitude adopted towards civilians during the attack. The group that participated in the occupation of Mocímboa da Praia was accused of complacency towards the population, in contrast to the attitude adopted in other villages of the district and violating the orders received. The internal trial and assassination of the commander, who successfully occupied a nerve point, raises doubts about the group's cohesion, raising hypotheses of dissent around military strategies, or even power conflicts within the insurgent group. The reality is that in the next attack (on 27 June 2020), largely carried out by the same individuals, but already led by a new commander (interview 21), there was much greater brutality on civilian populations, with dozens of bodies scattered in the streets, many of which were dismembered. Similarly, the weekly *Savana* referred to "sources that follow the Cabo Delgado war carefully", according to which one of the explanations for the decrease in insurgent attacks throughout January 2021, will have been related to "*a possible internal crisis in the group's leadership*" (Nhantumbo, 19.03.2021: 4).

Several reports reinforce the hypothesis of an internal diversity in terms of the use of violence. In their journeys to agricultural production fields or when circulating on the beaches (in Mocímboa da Praia and Macomia), several local individuals reported having crossed paths with groups of machababos, who asked them for food or information and who, in the end, advised them to change their route, in order to avoid another group of machababos, commanded by "foreigners" (sometimes also referred to as "Tanzanians" or "whites"), which would be much more aggressive.

¹¹ Local sources say they recognized one of the commanders who led the attack. It is allegedly a young man named Jamal, born in Mocímboa da Praia who lived several years in Tanzania.

¹² According to residents of the village of Mocímboa da Praia, after the attack, the municipality remained without members of the Government (including police and military) during the following week, and the machababos remained during this period near the village (including near the beach, in the neighborhoods of Milamba and Nandadua), returning frequently at night and circulating motorized. During this period, information circulated in the village, brought by these individuals, about a heated conflict within the group of insurgents, around the posture of the attackers during the occupation of the village of Mocímboa.

CONCLUSION

The reports allow us to verify the involvement of women with the rebel groups, not only in the reconstitution of family nuclei and education of children according to the principles considered correct, in the preparation of meals and transport support, and as observers and spies, providing information on positions and movements of military and civilian.

Sometimes remaining in captivity for several days, the interviewees' reports provided information on the internal organization of the machababo group, namely about geographical origin, recruitment strategies and group integration, differentiation and internal conflicts.

Although most of the rebels come from the northeast of Cabo Delgado (mainly from the districts of Mocímboa da Praia, Macomia and Quissanga), the geographical recruitment base is much wider, having been identified young people from the Mueda plateau, the Nampula coast and the center of the country, as well as a large group of foreigners from the East African coast (mostly Tanzanian, with reports from Somalians) and from Arab countries.

The armed group proved skilled at capitalizing on historical feelings of exclusion by the local population, compounded by resentment stowed towards State violence, leading them to rebel against it¹³, and against their communities of origin. Recruitment was carried out through persuasion (exploiting family and formal networks), but also by coercion and kidnapping, fomenting terror in those who do not cooperate. Exploring feelings of exclusion and social injustice (denouncing corruption and the opportunistic grandeur of the rulers), the group stresses the justice of its cause and presents itself as a political alternative, through the dissemination of seductive ideals of equality and justice. During the data collection, a high morale of the group was found (based on the conviction of their ideas and reinforced by the sharing of the spolia after the assaults), which contrasted with the demotivation and unpreparedness of many young soldiers of the armed forces, expressed in videos circulated in the social networks or in reports, of widespread flight in the face of enemy attack¹⁴. As one interlocutor said "...)
They know exactly what they're going to do. They're going there. They're going to kill. They're going to die, but if they die, they're going to die in the name of a cause. Unlike the soldiers, they don't even know why they're fighting" (interview 21).

The establishment of close relations with local populations, the insertion and knowledge of the terrain and camouflage capability (using light weaponry and easy movement and hiding), give rebel groups a strategic advantage over the defence and security forces. The rebels managed to implement a model of prolonged fighting, sometimes of low intensity¹⁵, promoting the wear and tear of government forces, difficult to withstand indefinitely. The situation worsened with the growing distrust of the FDS in relation to the local population and consequent violence, reducing collaboration with the armed forces.

¹³According to one interviewee, the camp's own chief "replied that Mocímboa da Praia was the place where they managed to create a stronger group of local people, local soldiers. They managed to catch Mocímboa da Praia due to the social and political fragility there. The extreme poverty of Mocímboa da Praia, the lack of perspective of these young people was the environment they needed to start there. (...) Mocímboa da Praia was chosen for having many Muslims. And Muslims lived in extreme poverty. So do Christians. But it was easier to manipulate those who already knew Islam (...) Some of them [machababos] were ex-Christians. There was one who came to see me. (...) He belonged to church groups. And converted to the group. Some joined the group simply because there was no other perspective and the group offered a possibility, an ideology, a possibility of growth. Some had recently entered because they had been accused of being insurgents. They weren't. They were tortured. And when they were released, they joined the group.

¹⁴ The reduction of these incidents makes it possible to admit the hypothesis that there has been an improvement in logistics and discipline within the defence and security forces or, at least, greater control of information.

¹⁵ The records of armed incidents released by the ACLED show that during the rainy season (notably between January and February), due to floods and travel difficulties, the number of attacks tends to decrease considerably.

The reports allow us to see a high diversity within the machababos, particularly in terms of religious conviction and level of violence. Comparing the reports of Mocímboa da Praia with those of Quissanga, different forms of treatment of women were found, much more violent in the second case, with macabre reports of sexual violations. The behavioral difference was explained by the personality of the respective commanders, but also by the operational ones themselves, including the presence of violent and ex-prisoners, young people. The reality is that the different forms of action and growing presence of foreigners among the leadership of the groups allow us to raise the hypothesis of some autonomy and independence in the form of action. On the other hand, while some members of the group were particularly indoctrinated, with greater inner discipline and emotional intelligence, the reality is that among the younger ones, the observed behavior is particularly distinct. The indoctrination deficit is compensated with a great grudge against the Government, and the motivation is predominantly material. As one woman who was in captivity for several weeks, " there, *in our group, did not have to deliver. But the money handover thing will catch on. That group that was trained differently is there by ideology. But the other one doesn't. There will come a time when those who were coerced for money...*" (interview 21). There are recent reports of great unease within young rebels or intentions of desertion, due to the interruption of payments and supply of logistics, make it possible to assess that the motivation for the adherence is above all material and not so much religious. If the massive recruitment of violent and revolted youth may lead to more combative violence during attacks, and the reality is that it increases the potential for indiscipline, opportunism and betrayal, generating internal power conflicts, with the risk of creation of factions, weakening of the group.

Throughout the interviews, a growing internationalization of the movement was perceived, not only by the marked presence of foreign citizens from various parts of East Africa, but also from Gulf countries, known as "*Arabs*" or "*whites*". The immense amount of weaponry used (in contrast to complaints of war shortages by members of the Defence and Security Forces), as well as the constant concern about filming (documenting all the groups' actions) reinforce suspicions of external support at least over the period under review.

Population displacement stemming from the military attacks has had a profound impact on Cabo Delgado province at various levels. The exodus of the population resulted in a decrease in agricultural production, with profound impacts on the amount of food available to military groups. The evidence points to a great disinterest of the machababos in the level of food production, constituting the theft and loot of food stores and warehouses the main source of supply of the group. The reduction in food reserves will make future attack targets more predictable, with a greater impact on agricultural production, food storage, food transport routes or cross-border areas. At the same time, the exodus of the population has diminished the advantage of camouflage, access to information, logistics and recruitment.

Following the diagnosed reality, the following suggestions are presented:

Establishing strong alliances and obtaining international support, particularly with countries affected by terrorist attacks, involving cooperation in border patrolling, intelligence sharing and criminal investigation services. Border control will be key to preventing international trafficking in women, logistical supply, military flight or the financing of violent organisations. It is urgent to assess the extent of trafficking in women, but also to assess how crime supports terrorist acts in terms of financing operations or ensuring a new generation of combatants by taking control over the region;

Strengthening the information system to learn about the enemy's maneuvers, exploiting dissent and factions within insurgent groups, with a view to weakening their unity and cohesion;

Promotion of amnesty, accompanied by the creation of reception centres for defectors, ensuring their security and socio-professional integration, but also de-radicalisation. The violence practiced and the suffering generated will make it difficult for the rebels to accept by the communities of origin, so it will be necessary to create transitional spaces, technical and professional training, but also to carry out youth activities (including sports, internet access) that imply the development of citizenship skills. The reintegration process should involve local leaders and religious organizations;

Strengthening and expanding access to justice by investing in criminal investigation, particularly of mistreatment against populations (including FDS agents themselves), and it is essential to present assertive political messages in this regard. The affirmation and demonstration of the moral superiority of State agents in the defense of human rights will be a decisive advantage in winning the trust of the people;

Involvement of the military in psychosocial actions with the populations, mobilizing military medicine for vaccination campaigns and maternal and child care, involving military engineering in the construction of population resettlements, or assigning military contingents for food distribution, gaining the confidence of populations and reducing their adherence to violent groups;

Socio-economic development of the region: The adoption of development models based on intensive work, generating employment and income opportunities (focusing on agriculture, fruit farming, fishing and food processing, as well as the extension of quality public services (health and education, but also agrarian extension), will be the best counter-insurgency strategy, reducing young people's adherence to violent groups;

Widening the possibilities for citizens' participation, including strengthening and empowering civil society organisations, creating channels for peaceful negotiation, and claiming group interests.

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- Promover e realizar estudos e pesquisas sobre políticas e outras temáticas relativas ao desenvolvimento rural;
- Divulgar resultados de pesquisas e reflexões;
- Dar a conhecer à sociedade os resultados dos debates, seja através de comunicados de imprensa como pela publicação de textos;
- Constituir uma base de dados bibliográfica actualizada, em forma digitalizada;
- Estabelecer relações com instituições nacionais e internacionais de pesquisa para intercâmbio de informação e parcerias em trabalhos específicos de investigação sobre temáticas agrárias e de desenvolvimento rural em Moçambique;
- Desenvolver parcerias com instituições de ensino superior para envolvimento de estudantes em pesquisas de acordo com os temas de análise e discussão agendados;
- Criar condições para a edição dos textos apresentados para análise e debate do OMR.

Patrocinadores:



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Suécia
Sverige



Rua Faustino Vanombe, nº 81, 1º Andar
Maputo – Moçambique

www.omrmz.org