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Introduction¹

The sixth general elections after the 1990 introduction of multiparty politics in Mozambique were held on 15 October, 2019. The elections took place in a context where, since 5 October 2017, Cabo Delgado province in the far north of Mozambique, had been the target of attacks against civilians and state institutions by a group known locally as "Al Shabaab"², with the Mozambican government claiming to know nothing about its motivations, objectives and leaders. In this article, I argue that it is a group that defends radical Islam and does not recognize the current secular state, which puts it on a collision course with local Muslims and civil authorities. The attacks by "Al Shabaab", that the government also calls "insurgents", "criminals" or "bandits" and other names reminiscent of how the Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo) was described during the civil war (1976-1992), have been claiming lives and paralyzing the local economy. They have also influenced the elections, in two ways: i) by preventing voters from registering or voting; and ii) by dominating the discourse of political parties during the election campaign, particularly the opposition, that accused Frelimo of having created conditions for the emergence of "insurgents". The existence of huge reserves of gas, rubies and graphite in Cabo Delgado also dominated the speeches of political parties who associated it, directly or indirectly, with the conflict, accusing Frelimo of excluding local people and thus making them vulnerable to the appeal of Islamists.

The purpose of this article is to analyse the impact of these factors on the October 2019 elections in Cabo Delgado, particularly the actions of "Al Shabaab" and the existence of immense mineral reserves. It discusses how the presence of "Al Shabaab" and natural resources influenced the elections in the province. First, it shows the impact of the conflict on voter registration and the vote, and then explains how political parties used the conflict and the natural resources in their campaigns in Cabo Delgado. It also explores probable reasons behind the emergence and motivations of "Al Shabaab". To this end, speeches by candidates from Mozambique's three main political parties are analysed: Filipe Nyusi from Frelimo, Ossufo Momade from Renamo, and Daviz Simango from the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM)³.

¹ The extracts from speeches presented here were reproduced literally, without modification.

² The term "Al Shabaab" is used as an analogy to the group operating in Somalia and Kenya (Habibe, Forquilha & Pereira, 2019).

³ Mário Albino of the United Movement for Integral Salvation (Movimento Unido para a Salvação Integral - AMUSI), the fourth presidential candidate, did not campaign in Cabo Delgado, alleging "security reasons".

The impact of “Al Shabaab” on voter registration and voting in Cabo Delgado

The “Al Shabaab” attacks disrupted voter registration and voting in Cabo Delgado province, particularly in parts of Mocímboa da Praia, Palma, Macomia and Meluco districts. Voter registration should have started on 15 April 2019, but in some of these places it did not happen. It either started late or was paralyzed for a long time, following attacks that forced people in the affected regions to take refuge elsewhere, in particular the provincial capital, Pemba, and the district capital, which until then had escaped attacks. In May, “Al Shabaab” attacks forced five registration posts in Meluco district to close after the population and registration team fled, and a registration post in Nacate locality, Macomia district, was wrecked⁴.

Renamo, the main opposition party that has always classified Mozambique’s elections as fraudulent, said that in areas affected by the conflict in Cabo Delgado some registration posts only opened three days before the end of the process, and others never opened. Renamo also complained about duplicate electoral rolls, with Frelimo district secretaries doing a parallel registration. Voter registration was also being upset by constant equipment failures. For these reasons, Renamo asked for the registration deadline to be extended for another thirty days. (Uantale, 2019a).

However, despite the attacks, the Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (*Secretariado Técnico da Administração das Eleições* - STAE) painted a positive picture of voter registration, asserting that 652 293 of the 644 022 voters predicted for Cabo Delgado had been registered. STAE also said that, of the 474 registration teams planned, only five were unable to work because of the violence and cyclone Kenneth. These figures have been strongly contested by civil society organizations and opposition parties, especially Renamo.

For civil society, the STAE figures did not reflect the real situation as many people had left their usual places of residence not only due to the attacks, but also because of cyclone Kenneth that devastated Cabo Delgado in April 2019, as shown by this DW interview with the Bishop of Pemba:

“Many people who would like to register are not only away from home, but are also worried about their own lives. Many people lost everything, lost houses that were burned down, many people lost family members. So it did have an impact on the census. If many people cannot register because of the attacks, because of the cyclone, how can we reach the target?”

⁴ For more details see (CIP, 2019).

Society's questions must be answered (Uantale, 2019b)".

Like the attacks, cyclone Kenneth that hit Cabo Delgado and Nampula in May, destroyed various registration posts that were paralysed for weeks, as well as causing dozens of deaths and injuries and destroying thousands of homes, scattering the population. Registration posts in these districts had police protection and others operated close to barracks. (Baptista, 2019).

Similarly, the election campaigns of political parties were concentrated in district capitals and carried out under military escort, as confirmed by the spokesman of the National Elections Commission (CNE), Paulo Cuinica:

"[The election campaign] is running as far as possible. Political parties, their candidates, are there but are of course affected. Clearly the limitation is working up to a certain time. The limitation, of course, is having to be done by a certain time. There are some places where you have to be very careful in order to get there, other places cannot be reached unless you are escorted by the defence and security forces (Issufo, 2019)".

It should be noted that the Frelimo party headquarters in Mocímbo da Praia was the victim of an attack attributed to "Al Shabaab" that, according to reports, killed 15 people. The situation was so bad that, on voting day, the police recommended people to go in a group for better protection from "Al Shabaab":

"In areas affected by criminals, we would like people living some distance from polling stations when they leave their villages, they shouldn't walk alone. I would like them to walk in groups of more than five people, for their own safety (Uantale, 2019c)".

According to CNE, 10 polling stations were unable to open because of the conflict, preventing 5,400 people from voting in in Macomia, Mocímbo da Praia and Muidumbe districts out of a universe of 1,185,024 registered voters in the province.

"One polling station in Muidumbe, six in Macomia and three in Mocímbo da Praia district. The people who were there scattered, leaving their documents behind, and they cannot vote without these documents. Even if we change the polling place, unfortunately, people went to various places and it is not possible to bring them together on that day. Unfortunately, it is not possible to open those polling stations on the 15th of October (Mueia, 2019)".

It is clear from the above that the elections in Cabo Delgado took place in a context of fear and intimidation, a context where attacks were reported almost daily, and affected not only voters but also the activities of election administration bodies and political parties.

“Al Shabaab” and natural gas in the election campaign in Cabo Delgado

The violence caused by “Al Shabaab” and the presence of immense natural resources were themes that dominated the election campaign in Cabo Delgado. Daviz Simango, running for MDM for the third time, was the first of the three presidential candidates to campaign in Cabo Delgado, on 12 September. In Pemba, one of the first stops on his tour, Simango said that Cabo Delgado’s main problem was the exclusion of local people from access to natural resources and jobs, promising to reverse this situation if he were elected:

“With the natural resources we have here, Cabo Delgado has everything to grow, but the big problem is that there is no room for people from Cabo Delgado to find jobs in the exploitation of these natural resources. What MDM will do, where there are natural resources, we will give priority to residents. Today there are all kinds of ways, and technology, to train young people in a short time, so that young people can fill vacancies. We cannot develop Mozambique by ignoring the local population (STV, 2019a)”.

For Simango, the lack of opportunities and the exclusion of local people from access to resources would explain their vulnerability to Al Shabaab’s message. For this reason, Simango feels that the conflict will not be resolved by resorting to arms, but through dialogue and economic inclusion:

“Men and women are dying in Palma; they are dying in Nangade. We cannot let people continue to die. Instead of oppressing the insurgents, we must look for the reasons that drive this insurgency and find ways to get closer to them... Mozambicans must be brought together. The MDM government’s priority is to avoid conflict... because if young people, local men and women, realize that they have no opportunities in life, they become vulnerable and are convinced to follow the wrong path. We have to share our wealth and we must start at the base, the people at the base must be number one [the first] to benefit from resources (Uantale, 2019d)”.

In Montepuez, an area rich in rubies, Simango spoke again about the origins of the current violence, pointing out that to the violent way the government dealt with “illegal” artisanal miners in the ruby mines as, to some extent explains the current conflict. He denied the government’s thesis that the “insurgents” have no face, no-one knows who they are, or what motivates them, so it is difficult to dialogue with them:

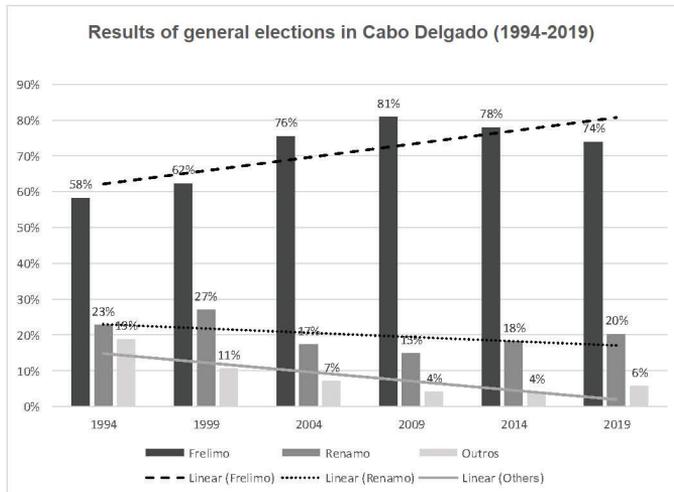
"The problem needs to be studied, solutions found, and for us the solutions are clear. Remove the artisanal miners, but before removing them, find opportunities where they actually get satisfaction and motivation to continue as human beings useful to our society, and above all useful for their own families ... It is true that it could be said that there are no faces, but there are faces, because nothing comes out of nowhere, and if we continue to be extremely radical, with repression, cheap publicity,...this cheap publicity creates hatred in people ... the big problem is the inability to manage conflicts (STV, 2019b)".

Eln Balama, the district with the largest graphite mine in the world (according to the company running the mine, Australian Twigg Exploration) Daviz Simango again insisted that natural resources were not benefiting the local population, only foreigners, and that once in power, MDM would reverse this situation:

"We are pleased that here where you live there are natural resources, there is graphite, but our main concern is that these natural resources should serve the local people. Serving local people, means that we must be proud that nature has given us something, that this same nature is bringing benefits for us. This benefit must result in a better income for families; it must result in better health conditions, it must result in the best educational conditions for the family, it must mean that the young people and women of this land are able to have something at the end of each month ... people who were born here cannot get a job. MDM wants to reverse this, because we who are from here seem to be foreigners in our own land, foreigners who others look after, we cannot allow this (STV, 2019c)".

Filipe Nyusi of Frelimo, who was running for his own re-election, was the second of the three candidates to campaign in Cabo Delgado where he was born (he is from Mueda), and the province where his party has won every election since 1994 (see graph 1). While his speech in Pemba, where he opened his campaign, was dominated by issues of poverty and infrastructure, elsewhere, like Daviz Simango, his campaign was dominated by the conflict and natural resources. For example, at the rally in Mocímboa da Praia, Nyusi began his speech by talking about "criminals" or "insurgents", saying that the government was now in a better position to fight them, as it now had more information about how they acted:

"... I wish to start by regretting the attitudes of criminals, of insurgents who kill people in this region and I wish to declare that the government will continue to take strong measures, because we now having a lot of information about this group's modus operandus. We know that they are watching our movements and we are also watching their movements. The government will not allow the people in this part of the country to continue to die, their property sacrificed... (Frelimo, 2019)".



Nyusi also insisted on what he called the “concept of wealth distribution in the country”, particularly the fact that the production of natural gas and its export will only start in 2024, and that only then will the country benefit from this resource; that at the moment the government was creating conditions so that when gas production and exports started, the country could make the most of this resource, from both an institutional and a human point of view. Just as Daviz Simango highlighted people being excluded from access to resources, Nyusi said:

“Nowadays it has become fashionable, everyone is saying that we should go ahead and distribute wealth, let's do that, wealth must benefit the people, that is exactly what we want, but we must explain what it means, so as not to confuse people. The Frelimo government is organized to proceed as we are doing... We want to emphasise to the people of Mocimboa and Cabo Delgado province, and the country in general, that the gas from the Rovuma basin is not yet being exploited, we are working and accelerating ... to see whether it actually becomes real wealth in 2024, so that it does not cause confusion, suspicion or impatience for a product that has not yet appeared (Frelimo, 2019)”.

At the same time, Nyusi insisted that, as gas is a non-renewable resource, conditions must be created for its benefits to be long-lasting and sustainable, and that the government was working towards this, giving examples of how this was being contemplated and done:

“We also want to emphasise and draw attention to the fact that gas is a resource that can also run out, so we have to manage the process so that when gas finishes, the country does

not return to poverty. This is what we have been doing now, we are not only discussing the equitable distribution of wealth, we are also discussing how to make the process sustainable ... We will use the proceeds of that wealth ... to invest in the productive sector, in agriculture ... in fishing, to promote livestock, to build more industries, we will also invest in social activities, but productive ones are important because they will produce new incomes that will enable us to invest in other activities, specifically, education, health, etc.; the elderly, children, the vulnerable population, people living with disabilities ... The fund we are referring to is that money that we are going to earn from natural resources ... we are not going to eat it all. Because there are countries where the Sovereign Fund failed, it was created, they started to "feed from it", or they did not know how to invest ... there are also good ideas that make the Sovereign Fund ... so we are now discussing the Sovereign Fund concept for Mozambique... (Frelimo, 2019)".

Still trying to counter criticism by his detractors, Daviz Simango for example, Nyusi explained how gas revenues would be used to benefit everyone, particularly local communities and national companies as soon as this resource started to be sold:

"Another criterion that we have found to protect wealth and ensure that it is for everyone, is local content, nationals, national companies can provide services to the multinationals that exploit gas here in Mozambique. We don't want a bricklayer to come from abroad, we don't want a metal worker to come from abroad, so we've been working to train and build the capacity of young Mozambicans so they can work in these places. Hiring national companies... employing more Mozambicans... The other way we are going to distribute wealth is to serve local communities, employment, so that instead of bringing people from their own countries, they have to employ more young people who are there ... So, as I said, local communities, employing more young people ... Wealth cannot emerge and then nothing happens. There are those who will say, let's get to it ... But don't forget that the gas hasn't come out yet. So don't talk as if you were smart ... (Frelimo, 2019)".

In Mueda, Nyusi claimed that, thanks to the collaboration of the Cabo Delgado population, the government was neutralizing the "criminals" and asked for patience:

"We have also been in Mocímboa, and there were some people from Palma there too; we would like to begin our visit to this area by expressing our sorrow over the murders being perpetrated by these criminals in this region. I have told you that the government is determined, it is working, it will continue to work. Processes like these take time because we need to catch whoever is in charge, who is giving them money to create disturbance in Cabo Delgado province ... With every passing day, we are understanding how they act ... and we are going to get organised to face this challenge to the Mozambican people ... our contribution in the

Mocímboa area is managing to alleviate ... because the people tell us where they are, who is in charge, where they are going and each day they are fleeing because they know we are going to get them (Frelimo, 2019)".

Ossufo Momade of Renamo was the last of the three candidates to campaign in Cabo Delgado and the one who invested the least in the province, only visiting three districts: Mocímboa da Praia, Chiúre and Pemba. Momade chose Mocímboa da Praia, the target of the first "Al Shabaab" attack in Cabo Delgado, to open his campaign in the province. Participating for the first time as a candidate in a presidential election, Momade was received by Muslim leaders and dressed in clothes symbolizing this religion that is predominant in the region. He was also received by a group of young people who sang in the Mwani language: "Frelimo ndi adjawana Al-shabaab" (Frelimo created "Al Shabaab"). Not surprisingly, his speech was also dominated by the war by "Al Shabaab" against the state and natural resources. In a first moment, he claims that the attacks in Cabo Delgado were led by "strangers" and in a second moment, he directly accuses Frelimo of having created "Al Shabaab".

In Mocímboa da Praia, for example, Momade says that strangers were killing many people and Frelimo had proven incapable of dealing with the situation, emphasizing that Renamo was the only one capable of beating the group attacking Cabo Delgado and that only he deserved the people's vote:

"We know that Mocímboa da Praia is in the heart of the fire by those who are creating destabilization. We don't know who they are. But we know that they are killing a lot of people. The current regime is failing to solve the problem. They have no ability to fight that group. As long as Frelimo continues, the only salvation is Renamo and Ossufo Momade, who are here (STV, 2019d)".

In Pemba, where he ended his campaign, Momade directly accuses Frelimo of having created "Al Shabaab" in order to expel the population from places where there are natural resources, a position that seems to have been spurred by the reception he received in Mocímboa da Praia:

"When they go to the ruby mines, where the rubies come from, they are killed. There are death squads, there is FIR⁵. When they go there, in the Rovuma basin, they are killed, aren't they? They even organized a group they call a shabaab terrorist group... do you think that group will put an end to them, those I don't want to name? ... when the shabaab destroy a village, they arrive there, pam [imitating the sound of guns] and then leave. Is that not true? Have

⁵ Rapid Intervention Force, today the Rapid Intervention Unit, a special branch "prepared and destined essentially to combat situations of declared violence, the resolution of which surpasses the usual resources" (Ministry of Home Affairs, n.d).

they ever chased after them? They are deceiving us. Enough, enough, my brothers, my sisters, enough, did you hear me? As long as those I don't want to name remain, that group will never disappear ... Because they are the ones who are feeding that group ... they are making our life dark ... in the front they tell the people they are against that group, but in the back they are the ones feeding that group. Then they tell the lie that um, they are Al Shabaab, they are Muslims... a lot of stuff... we cannot be deceived my brothers... (Chichava, 2019)."

The reception given to Ossufo Momade and the accusation by the people of Mocímboa da Praia that it was Frelimo who brought "Al Shabaab" forced Filipe Nyusi to return to the district, three days after the Renamo leader left Cabo Delgado. His speech focused not only rebutting the idea that his party had created the movement, but also that Frelimo was unable to put an end to the "insurgents":

"How can you be governing and organizing people to kill the people you yourself are governing? They want to deceive us, don't bring us any more war, we don't want war here ... now bring people and you offend the person who has lost a house, lost a field, saying that it is you who are killing each other is not good. When there is suffering what we want is solidarity, don't we? Be it Islam, not wanting to kill anyone, when someone dies, people will give comfort, the Christian ditto. Now to be encouraging blood, creating confusion among Mozambicans to kill each other, no, no, no, we want peace, peace, peace here (STV, 2019e)".

At the same time, orders were given for the Frelimo campaign in the province to end in Mocímboa da Praia and not in Pemba as planned:

"It was more because of the pressure we were getting from the opposition, so we also had to put on pressure. So the president went there, us, a member of the political commission, the substitute governor, the First Secretary. Soon after Ossufo Momade went there, the President had to go back there, because when Ossufo Momade goes there, he distorts everything. The President understands this, he went there too, saying things are not like that... later he thought we should go too (Interview with JM, Pemba, 18.10.19)".

It should be noted that Mocímboa da Praia has been very difficult ground for Frelimo. In 2005 dozens of Renamo supporters were killed by the police and the army, and others detained, following a demonstration that challenged the results of the mid-term municipal elections, following the death of mayor Cássimo Abdala. According to CNE, Frelimo and its candidate, Amadeu Pedro, had won the elections by 52% against 47% for Assane Saíde, the Renamo candidate. Disputing the results, Renamo decided to organise demonstrations and install a "shadow government". The skirmishes also had ethnic aspects, with local witnesses claiming that the Kimwanes, who were Muslims and considered politically close to

Renamo, would not have accepted to be led by Amadeu Pedro, a Christian and Maconde (the ethnic group that, for historical reasons linked to the anti-colonial struggle, is close to Frelimo) born in Mueda. They preferred Assane Saïde, a Muslim and Kimwane, born in Mocímboa da Praia i.e. a "son of the land". In the 2003 municipal election that elected Cássimo Abdala, Renamo and its candidate, Jaide Assane, lost by a narrow margin: 51.07% to Cássimo Abdala and 50.72 to Frelimo, compared to 48.93% for Jaide Assane and 49.28% for Renamo⁶.

But where does "Al Shabaab" come from?

The inability of the State and the government to deal with poverty, unemployment and a lack of prospects for young people, coupled with police brutality during the establishment of companies exploiting natural resources in Cabo Delgado, such as the case of Montepuez Ruby Mining (MRM) created favourable conditions for the penetration of Islamists. The arrival of MRM in Cabo Delgado in early 2017 was preceded by the violent expulsion of illegal artisanal miners by the police, with some of them being buried alive, others slaughtered in cold blood, women raped, houses and property destroyed, among other humiliations. Accused of violating human rights, while MRM refused to take responsibility it acknowledged the existence of incidents and agreed to pay compensation of some \$8 million in 2019 (Leigh Day, 2018, 2019; RFI, 2017).

Interviews in Cabo Delgado reveal that some former Montepuez miners, revolted by the humiliation and torture inflicted by the forces of law and order, would have joined "Al Shabaab"⁷. Likewise, (Habibe, Forquilha & Pereira, 2019) state that one of the sources of funds for "Al Shabaab" was the miners. It should be noted that, in May 2019, in a rally in Montepuez police commander pointed to former artisanal miners in Montepuez as being some of the financiers and leaders of "Al Shabaab":

"They who were the leaders of those criminals who took our precious stones, rubies and other precious stones, and were going to deliver them to the young people who carried them to the coast and then took them out of the country. They were miners, especially their leaders, they were the ones who traded our precious stones ... And with hatred, when we launched the operation against the prospectors they became our enemies and started to fight us. We must be vigilant to dismantle, to denounce, these people who transfer money to criminals through

⁶ For more details on these elections see (Hanlon, 2003; Zambeze, 2005).

⁷ Interviews between September and November 2019 in Maputo and Cabo Delgado. In order to protect them the sources are not named.

m-pesa⁸ here in Montepuez. We have to dismantle those who want to recruit young people into the ranks of criminals (RFI, 2019)".

According to the Mozambican authorities, local miners were being manipulated by “foreigners” from Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), who had been expelled from the ruby mines, where they were mining covertly, causing chaos in order to continue mining resources illegally and with impunity in Cabo Delgado. For the police commander, Congolese Muslims, who live from artisanal mining in their own country, have recruited and trained Mozambicans in the DRC to wage war in Mozambique, in collaboration with Tanzanians (Miguel, 2019).

A Mozambican who was part of a group with three others and, according to the police, was trained in the DRC and later arrested by the police in that country and extradited to Mozambique, said in an interview with Mozambique Television (TVM) that he had been recruited by a Tanzanian to go to the DRC to receive military training in order to do *Jihad*:

“A Tanzanian man named Kiyenda took me to Tanzania ... to spend time in Congo, because there are some Tanzanians who have fled Tanzania and are in Congo... to train for Jihad... (TVM, 2018a)".

However, in addition to Tanzanian and Congolese citizens, the police say there are Somalis, Malians and “foreigners” of Asian origin (TVM, 2018c).

According to President Nyusi, in addition to setting Mozambicans against the government and other state institutions such as the army, the objective of these “foreigners” was to use tribalism to divide Mozambicans. President Nyusi also expressed his willingness to talk to these “foreigners”, as long as they identified themselves and said what they wanted:

“... Those people who are killing here in Cabo Delgado, if they come out and show themselves, and tell us what they want, we'll listen to them. But what they are doing is cowardice, cowardice, they want to divide us even from the population. They want to divide the defence and security forces from the population; they want to divide the government from the population and even within the population they want to say that this is Kimwane, that is Maconde, that is Macua, that is Ngoni, there is no such thing in this country, don't bring us that (STV, 2020)".

For the Mozambican government, these “foreigners” also take advantage of the fact that Cabo Delgado is mainly Muslim to set this religion against the State.

⁸ A mobile phone banking service offered by Vodacom Moçambique

It should be noted that, according to President Nyusi, the government also believes that, in addition to the miners, Mozambican businessmen in Beira town, unhappy with the State's fight against the illegal traffic in timber, are financing the "insurgents":

"There are signs that some are Mozambicans living here, living well in Beira, who are dissatisfied, because they no longer have certain opportunities, because things are done transparently. When we said that timber now has to be done like this, he gets angry and goes off into the bush. When, for example, things were found without (having gone through) a tender and he is told that he must bid in the tender he gets angry, and sends someone else's son off to die. We must be vigilant, we cannot be used, enough is enough! I think that the first people to be denounced will be accused by the young people (Miramar TV, 2019)".

In December 2019, two months after the general elections, Nyusi again visited Cabo Delgado, where he suggested the possibility of someone from "inside" trying to perturb his governance by supporting the "scoundrels" (STV, 2019f).

The other hypothesis put forward by the government immediately after the 5 October 2017 attacks is that the group comprises individuals (foreigners and Mozambicans) who want to install an Islamic State in Mozambique. Rodrigo Parruque, then Administrator of Mocímboa da Praia, said that the group was made up of Mozambicans who had studied fundamentalist religious doctrines in Tanzania, Sudan and Saudi Arabia, together with Tanzanian and Somali citizens. Their aim was "the glorification of doctrines not common in Islam, to discredit the Government and set up an autonomous region (Notícias, 2017a). The same thesis was defended by Basílio Monteiro, then Minister of Home Affairs, during Nyusi's visit to Cabo Delgado in April 2018:

"It is a group that intends to use the Koran as the basic governance document, but we would like to convey a message of peace because the group has already been weakened enough, a large part of its members has been neutralized, both Mozambicans and foreigners (Miramar TV, 2018)".

According to the authorities, using the Islam as a tool, this group is enticing young people, promising them wealth and eternal life. Consequently, awareness-raising campaigns are being carried out. Some are led by President Nyusi, appealing to the population, particularly young people, not to be fooled by false messages in the name of religion:

"...Young people who are listening to me, it is not true when they say that you die on earth and will live right there [in heaven], whatever the cost, killing your father, burning your father's house. Why? You do not know what they are demanding of you, or the religion. The

Muslim faith that is practiced in Palma is not the one they want; they want to bring another one. Let us be vigilant, and not leave our district of Palma or our province, thinking that it can solve the world's problem of religion. Or you can get rich. When these people are caught, they say that there are adults who tell them that you can die, but afterwards you will live well there [in heaven]. And these people in charge do not go to the fire, they stay behind and the young people die. Don't let this happen... (TVM, 2018c)".

So it was not surprising that, immediately after the attacks, various citizens in Cabo Delgado were arrested on charges of belonging to "Al-Shabaab". Several mosques in the province have also been closed on suspicion of collaborating with "Al Shabaab". These actions have led to some friction between the authorities and the Muslim community, particularly the Islamic Council of Mozambique (CISLAMO), most of whose leaders were trained in Tanzania, Sudan and Saudi Arabia, and who saw some of their mosques being closed. Muslims accused the Mozambican authorities of serious human rights violations, complained of being doubly victimized: on the one hand, they were persecuted by "Al Shabaab" for not agreeing with the group's message and ideals and, on the other hand, by the government, for thinking that they were part of or collaborated with the attackers (Carlos, 2019).

However, and in what could be considered an attempt to avoid problems with the Mozambican Muslim community, the authorities have changed their discourse, saying they are not sure that the attacks are linked to a group with religious motivations, that Islam is a religion of peace and that in Mozambique there is no history of fighting religions. They also reiterate that the insurgents who kill in Cabo Delgado are not even Muslims:

"We are still not sure that the motivation is religious. They haven't appeared yet. They are ashamed. In fact, they don't know why they kill other people. That is why they don't say that I killed. So it has been a little difficult to find an approach. Because we Mozambicans solve our problems with dialogue (VOA Portuguese, 2020)".

This context is also marked by a growing collaboration between the Mozambican authorities and the Muslim community, particularly CISLAMO.

It should be noted that the actions of "Al Shabaab" in Cabo Delgado were denounced by local Muslims long before 5 October 2017. Indeed, local Muslim leaders complained that they had unsuccessfully warned authorities about the existence of a group that, among other things, spread messages contrary to the Islam practiced in Mozambique, forced women to wear the burka, stopped children from attending government schools, they could only go to madrassas, and appealed to the population not to recognise the state and the government. This is clear in the report by a religious leader from Mocímboa da Praia, who

states that the presence of “Al Shabaab” in the region was already evident in 2014 and has always been reported to the authorities:

“The ideologies of this group (Al Shabaab), they have manifested different ideologies, contrary to ours in Mocímboa da Praia, since 2014... We always collaborated with the local government, denouncing more and more the evil that this group and its ideologies represented, but the government never took precautionary measures (Interview with A. C., Mocímboa da Praia, 04. 10.2020)”.

“Al Shabaab” was also denounced in public events, religious festivals such as “Eid Ul Fitre”. For example, in July 2016 Muslim leaders in Cabo Delgado denounced the existence of individuals who defended attitudes contrary to Islam and denied the State, particularly in Mocímboa da Praia, Chiúre and Pemba districts. (Wazir, 2016).

Likewise, in an Islamic Conference entitled “*The challenges of today and tomorrow in Mozambique*”, held in Nampula in November 2016, Muslims denounced various radical Islamic sects that questioned Islam and the State, particularly in Nampula, Zambézia, Niassa and Cabo Delgado provinces. Once again, the government did not take the necessary precautions⁹.

The thesis that “Al Shabaab” is a group of individuals who want to establish an Islamic State in Mozambique, first put forward by the Mozambican authorities, coincides with the results of our research in Cabo Delgado. It is also confirmed by the group’s during attacks on Mocímboa da Praia and Quissanga on 23 and 24 March 2020 where, according to several videos and images that circulated on social networks and by the local press, an Islamic State-like flag was hoisted¹⁰.

It is difficult to say when this sect got established in Cabo Delgado. However, Muslim leaders in Mocímboa da Praia claim that the presence of “Al Shabaab” dates back to 2014. It is also possible to find some indications of the group’s presence in 2015, through news of strange acts in Cabo Delgado - a ban on the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages by religious leaders, on the grounds that it was against Muslim principles. This resulted in considerable unrest, for example in Pangane, Macomia district and State had to intervene to restore order (Domingo, 2015; Notícias, 2015b, 2015a). However, the term “Al Shabaab” only appears in the press in early 2016, before the 5 October attack on Mocímboa da Praia. In June 2017, the Notícias newspaper reported that three members of the “Al Shabaab”

⁹ See, for example, the interview with Sheikh Aminudim, President of CISLAMO, in the Savana newspaper, Nhampossa (2020).

¹⁰ (Habibe, Forquilha & Pereira, 2019), also provides a detailed analysis of this dimension of “Al Shabaab”.

sect had been arrested in Macomia district, for misinformation, disrespecting the State and preaching radical Islam, adding that others had been detained in Quissanga a month earlier. At that time, the leader of CISLAMO in Cabo Delgado, said *"This group is nothing more than a political movement that is making demands of the Government, using a certain path to win over the community, as if they were Islamic principles when in reality they are not"* (Notícias, 2017b).

The mutations that "Al Shabaab" underwent over that period until 5 October 2017, when it went from being a simple religious sect to a military organization, remain to be studied. However, the hypothesis that Al Shabaab's difficulties in penetrating the local Muslim milieu or in convincing local Muslim leaders to adhere to its ideals, could also explain in part its transition from a strictly religious sect to "military" insurgency. According to (Morier-Genoud, 2019), some cases of repression against "Al Shabaab" by the Mozambican police were only possible because of denunciation by the local Muslim community.

Conclusion

The war waged by "Al Shabaab" against the secular Mozambican state in Cabo Delgado province since October 2017, and its abundant natural resources in a context of extreme poverty and state violence against the local people, particularly those working in artisanal mining, structured the discourse of political parties and complicated the October 2019 elections. Moreover, if the government fails to put an end to the situation, the issue of the war in Cabo Delgado, which is now tending to spread out of control across the province, will end up dominating political discourse and polarise political rivalry in that region in particular, and in Mozambique in general. It should, however, be noted that the discourse on poverty, misery and exclusion explored by the opposition against Frelimo is not specific to Cabo Delgado. The difference lies in the fact that the current Al Shabaab emergency is linked to these factors. However, if the opposition used the discourse on natural resources and "Al Shabab" to gain the support of the electorate, accusing Frelimo of being behind the emergence of this group, it is difficult to measure the impact of this strategy from an election point of view, as Frelimo won by a landslide, despite the numerous irregularities denounced by civil society organizations. Nevertheless, the mobilizing effect of this type of speech cannot be denied, as seen by the Ossufo Momade rally in Mocímboa da Praia, where hundreds of young people accompanying the Renamo party leader shouted spontaneously *"Frelimo created Al Shabaab"*.

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(Articles produced by permanent and associated researchers of IESE. This collection replaces the series "Working Papers" and "Discussion Papers" which have been discontinued)

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