![Resilience logo] **RESILIENCE**
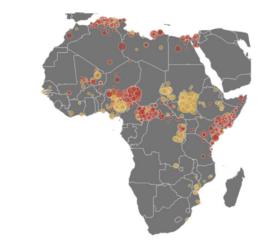
POLICY BRIEF

UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONDING TO EXTREMIST THREATS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

KEY POLICY MESSAGES

1. In Africa, violent extremism has spread outside of its epicentres to previously low risk countries.

2. Geographical, socio-political, and economic factors make Mozambique a potentially attractive operating environment and target for violent extremism and a possible corridor for international jihadists going to South Africa and beyond.

3. Attacks in Mozambique pose a threat to South Africa given the country's political and economic vulnerabilities, lack of social cohesion, history with terrorism and recent events involving ISIS.

4. As more pressing developmental concerns are prioritised, Southern African countries have been slow to develop robust responses to terrorist threats.

5. Holistic responses are needed now, at this critical juncture, in order to prevent violent extremism as opposed to countering it.

Figure 1: Fatalities from terrorist attacks in Africa (2006-2015). Red dots represent attacks carried out by terrorist groups associated with religious ideologies. Yellow dots represent attacks by other terrorist groups.

VIOLENT EXTREMISM IS ON THE RISE IN AFRICA

Since 2006, there has been a tremendous growth in the number of violent extremist attacks across the African continent. The growth of violent extremism – and the devastating impact of groups espousing violent ideologies – is not only setting in motion a dramatic reversal of the development and democratic gains already made, but also threatening to stunt prospects of political and economic development for decades to come.
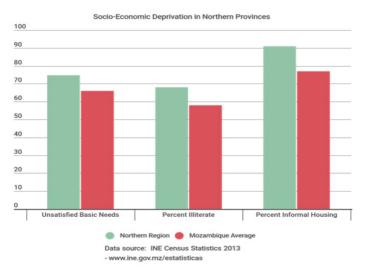
The most vulnerable and at-risk regions are in West Africa, the Sahel, and East Africa. The continued presence and influence of violent extremist groups has spread outside of its epicenters, most notably from Somalia. In the last decade, Al-Shabaab and its offshoots have made successful in-roads into Kenya and Tanzania. In 2015, the UNDP labelled Tanzania an at-risk country for violent extremism. In the last few years, southern
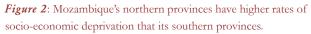
The northern provinces of Mozambique are particularly vulnerable to the emergence of violent extremism.

Tanzania has witnessed a number of attempted and successful attacks from violent extremist groups, and a growing presence of training and indoctrination camps along the border with Mozambique. This puts Mozambique in a precarious situation, where the North of the country is at particular risk.

ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISTS POSE A GROWING THREAT IN MOZAMBIQUE

The development of violent extremism is often the result of deprivation and marginalization, underpinned by weak and corrupt governance. Furthermore, economic conditions that do not favour the majority, and often leave entire regions poor and left out, contribute to this growing risk. The northern provinces of Mozambique are particularly vulnerable to the emergence of violent extremism. The provinces of Cabo Delgado, Nampula, and Niassa are predominantly Muslim, poor, and have largely lagged developmentally from the rest of the country. Furthermore, northern poverty, insecure and porous borders, the presence of natural resources, inequality and problems with democratization make it a potentially attractive operating environment and target for violent extremism and a possible corridor for international jihadists going to South Africa and beyond.

Figure 2: Mozambique's northern provinces have higher rates of socio-economic deprivation that its southern provinces.

Since October of 2017, there have been a number of violent events in northern Mozambique attributed to Islamist elements. According to Inacio Dino, head spokesman for the national police, efforts to combat violent extremism in Mozambique are ramping up, and resources are being diverted to aid in the capture of those responsible for the attacks.

Figure 3: Violent incidents in northern Mozambique attributed to Islamist elements in October 2017

Despite the police activity, the national attention to the issue, and the closing down of mosques and arrests of suspected militants, the attacks have not stopped. As recently as January 15th, attacks were confirmed (Xinhua, AIM, VOA) in the Palma district, Cabo Delgado. Five people were reported killed, and 35 houses were burned down. The attack happened in the administrative post of Ulumbe which is a resettlement area for villagers affected by LNG projects conducted by American owned Anadarko. Another coordinated attack occurred at a health center in the district of Nangade, located next to Palma district, where armed men assaulted civilians and killed two, including a health technician. The armed men stole medicines and fled in four vehicles.

The Mozambican government has been quiet about making public statements discussing these recent events or acknowledging them. There has also been hesitation from the government to directly link these attacks to Islamic Fundamentalists publicly. January 3, 2018 was the first time that the Mozambican government classified the attacks as terrorism.

Despite the hesitancy towards addressing the armed group as Islamists or related to Islam, the government's tactics against Muslims in the region have been noted. Young Muslim men have been targeted in Nampula, and Cabo Delgado and the

government has forced mosques to shut down in many of the largest towns and cities of Northern Mozambique. These actions suggest that the government has acknowledged the growing threat in the North as a by-product of Islamic fundamentalism. However, the government's response to these continued attacks is being monitored closely. According to Pedro Pinheiro, director of AON Financial Solutions, there is a fear that heavy-handed tactics by the government will lead to an escalation of violence, abductions, and terrorism directed at foreign entities, police and the government.

IS SOUTH AFRICA AT RISK?

With attacks in Mozambique, this specific type of threat is only one porous border away from South Africa. The South African government's stance is that the country is largely immune to terrorist threats because of its non-interventionist foreign policy. Experts agree that this position is short-sighted given the country's vulnerabilities, its history with terrorism and recent events involving ISIS. South Africa is one of the most unequal countries on earth and over half of the population lives in poverty – which means that the majority have a vote but not a voice. The slow pace of transformation after Apartheid, coupled with high levels of corruption in the executive branch and state capture, has bred popular discontent with the government. And a lack of national identity and social cohesion means that people are "othered" more than they are included.

Historically, South Africa has also been used as a place of planning and respite for terrorists due to its good communications technology, its strong banking infrastructure (coupled with low levels of corporate awareness about terrorist funding mechanisms) and its corrupt officials, particularly within the Department of Home Affairs. For example, Khalfan Khamis Mohamed, a Tanzanian trained by al-Qaeda, was arrested in Cape Town in 1999 for his role in the US Embassy bombings. The White Widow, who is linked to Al-Shabaab and is speculated to have been involved in planning multiple terrorist attacks leading to the deaths of hundreds of people, spent time in South Africa periodically and travelled on a fraudulent South African passport.
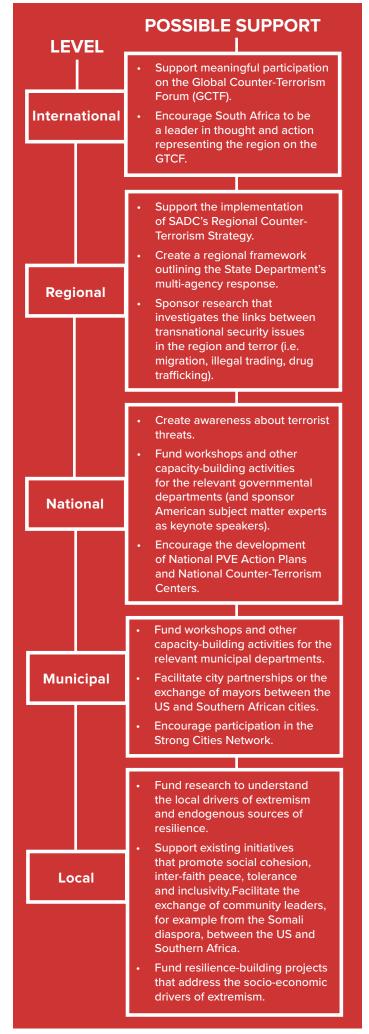
An estimated 60-100 South Africans have joined and travelled to fight with ISIS in the Middle East. These represent a fraction of the South Africans exposed to ISIS propaganda online. Twins Brandon and Tony Thulsie were arrested in July 2016 and accused of plotting an attack on the US Embassy in Pretoria and Jewish centres in Cape Town on ISIS' behalf. Yet the government has not articulated its strategy for the reintegration of returnees, or for the prevention of home-grown attacks.

HOLISTIC RESPONSES ARE NEEDED

On the whole, Southern African countries have been slow to develop robust responses to terrorist threats. Regional security issues and domestic challenges, including porous borders, international migration, human trafficking, drugs and international crime, massive inequality, low social cohesion and corruption, are well researched but not understood as potential drivers or indicators of extremism – and terrorism is low on the list of regional priorities in the face of these issues.

In order to protect the democratic and development gains made in the region over the last few decades, efforts must be made *now* at this critical juncture where we can prevent violent extremism as opposed to countering it. Robust responses assess **vulnerabilities** in communities that are potential targets for recruitment; analyze **threats** and raise awareness about them; and foster the **capacity** of all key stakeholders to respond to those threats. Support would ideally be holistic, aimed at several different levels of engagement (see Figure 4).

With attacks in Mozambique, this specific type of threat is only one porous border away from South Africa.

LEVEL	POSSIBLE SUPPORT
International	• Support meaningful participation on the Global Counter-Terrorism Forum (GCTF). • Encourage South Africa to be a leader in thought and action representing the region on the GTCF.
Regional	• Support the implementation of SADC's Regional Counter-Terrorism Strategy. • Create a regional framework outlining the State Department's multi-agency response. • Sponsor research that investigates the links between transnational security issues in the region and terror (i.e. migration, illegal trading, drug trafficking).
National	• Create awareness about terrorist threats. • Fund workshops and other capacity-building activities for the relevant governmental departments (and sponsor American subject matter experts as keynote speakers). • Encourage the development of National PVE Action Plans and National Counter-Terrorism Centers.
Municipal	• Fund workshops and other capacity-building activities for the relevant municipal departments. • Facilitate city partnerships or the exchange of mayors between the US and Southern African cities. • Encourage participation in the Strong Cities Network.
Local	• Fund research to understand the local drivers of extremism and endogenous sources of resilience. • Support existing initiatives that promote social cohesion, inter-faith peace, tolerance and inclusivity.Facilitate the exchange of community leaders, for example from the Somali diaspora, between the US and Southern Africa. • Fund resilience-building projects that address the socio-economic drivers of extremism.

Figure 4: Priority actions by governance level

AUTHORS

Leigh Hamilton
Leigh Hamilton is a Program Officer at ALPS Resilience, where she manages projects on forced migration and violence prevention, including violent extremism.

Dave Bax
Dave Bax is the Founder and Program Director of ALPS Resilience. Dave has over twenty years of experience in stabilization and development projects.

Rami Sayed
Rami Sayed is a PhD Candidate with the Political Studies Department at the University of Cape Town. His dissertation focuses on political violence in Mozambique.

ABOUT ALPS RESILIENCE

ALPS Resilience was founded in 2015 to serve communities negatively impacted by conflict and displacement by drawing from the best practices of emergency humanitarian relief, development aid and law enforcement. We focus on the issues of forced migration and violence prevention, including the prevention of violent extremism. ALPS Resilience works primarily with the Somali diaspora in South Africa, promoting integration and self-reliance through activities that provide free adult education, promote access to services and foster social cohesion. Our team has combined over thirty years of experience in field missions in conflict and post-conflict environments. From our experience in the field, we advocate resilience as the critical lens through which to implement and measure stabilization and development projects.

For more information about our work, including full project proposals for resilience-building in Mozambique, please contact our Program Officer, Leigh Hamilton, at leigh@resilience.africa or +27 76 060 5461.