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A group affair: understanding involvement in terrorism in Mali

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Terrorism in Mali

On Friday 20 November 2015, a group of armed men entered the Radisson Blu hotel in the Malian capital Bamako and took 170 hotel guests and personnel hostage.¹ A number of hotel guests were in Bamako to attend a conference on countering violent extremism. Other foreign guests included Air France and Turkish Airlines personnel, American embassy staff, and a number of Chinese businessmen. The militants belonged to the jihadist organisation al-Mourabitoun, a group that claimed to cooperate with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The attack left 21 people dead, including two of the attackers.² This attack marked the start of a period in which the country saw a rapidly deteriorating security situation. From 2015 to 2020, Mali faced the rise of terrorist groups in the country and escalating violence in the form of both interethnic attacks within communities as well as terrorist attacks carried out against the United Nations' forces and the armed forces of Mali.

The situation culminated in a deadly attack March 2019, when over a 100 armed men raided the small town of Ogossagou in Mali's Mopti region, killing over 150 Fulanis and set their houses on fire.³ In 2020, after weeks of civil protests against the government over insecurity and corruption, Mali's military staged a coup and arrested the president Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IB), as well as the prime minister Boubou Cissé. While the international community insisted on the restoration of the IBK's elected government, many Malians have hailed its demise.⁴ The political instability continued when in May 2021, another military coup took place that toppled Mali's president Bah Ndaw.⁵

The Sahel region has become a focal point for many insurgent and terrorist groups over the past decade⁶ and West African states have been faced with a range of security issues including cross-border narco-trafficking, terrorist attacks, and the rise of radical Islamic networks in the region. For Mali, terrorism and insurgent groups are the country's number one security problem, as illustrated by the 2015 Radisson Blu attack as well as a proliferation of terrorist attacks in the central regions of Mopti and Ségou⁷ and in the capital Bamako⁸ in the six years since the Radisson Blu attack. Mali and its direct neighbors, Niger and Burkina Faso, have witnessed the rise of an intricate web of militant, separatist and Jihadi terrorist groups with blurry linkages but with the shared goal to setup a Caliphate in the wider Sahel region. While many militants share allegiance with multiple groups and groups are often split internally across ethnic lines, the two dominant actors are the so-called 'Islamic State in the

¹ Peter Walker and Charlie English, "Mali Attack: More than 20 Dead after Terrorist Raid on Bamako Hotel", the Guardian, 21 November 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/nov/20/mali-attack-highlights-global-spread-extremist-violence>.

² Walker and English.

³ Liesbeth van der Heide. 'Dumping One Government Won't Fix Mali'. Foreign Policy. Accessed 1 August 2019. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/04/20/dumping-one-government-wont-fix-mali-security-west-africa-sahel-ogossagou-fulani-dogon-tuareg-azawad-terrorism/>.

⁴ Kathryn Salam, "Can Mali Escape Its Past? Politics in the country have followed familiar cycles of violence and collapse.", Foreign Policy, 21 August 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/08/21/mali-coup-history-violence-collapse/>.

⁵ David Lewis, "Military detain Mali's president, prime minister and defence minister.", Reuters, 24 May 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/military-arrest-malis-president-prime-minister-defence-minister-sources-2021-05-24/>.

⁶ Grégory Chauzal and Thibault van Damme, "The roots of Mali's conflict", *Clingendael CRU Report* 11 (2015).

⁷ Including an attack on a hotel in Sévaré and many deadly attacks between ethnic groups such as the attack on Ogossagou in 2019.

⁸ Including an attack on nightclub 'La Terrasse' and the Radisson Blu attack in 2015 and a terrorist attack on wellness facility 'Le Campement' in 2019.

Greater Sahara' or ISGS, which is linked to the terrorist group 'Islamic State' and Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), which is linked to the terrorist group Al Qaeda. These, and other terrorist groups, armed rebels, and criminal groups are connected by individuals and ethnic groups with rapidly switching allegiances and fluid coalitions between government and armed groups that do not always hold up in practice. In Mali, a patchwork of terrorist groups, including JNIM and ISGS as well as smaller groups co-exist alongside other armed groups such as criminal groups and defense militias. All these groups confront and fight each other but also cooperate and facilitate one another on different occasions.⁹

In a country where achieving clarity on the status of the number of terrorist groups, their members, and in what region these groups are active, it is all the more difficult to determine the motives and ambitions of armed groups and jihadist networks.¹⁰ The ethnic fabric and the cultural history play a central role in the ties between groups¹¹ and individuals and only intricate knowledge of this history can shed light on these various groups and individuals.

Since Mali experienced a violent uprising in 2012, many individuals have been arrested and incarcerated on the basis of terrorist-related charges. In 2015 alone, approximately 500 individuals were arrested in connection with the conflict in the North. Of the overall prison population in Mali, nearly 70 percent is on remand – in pre-trial detention.¹² For many of these incarcerated individuals it is not clear if they are involved with terrorist groups and if so, why and how. Some authors on terrorism in Mali point to structural factors such as the general rise of Islamism on the African continent, the post-colonial struggles of Mali including its relationship with France, and Tuareg nationalism.¹³ Others argue that the main source of radicalisation lies on the group level – as a result of the tensions between different ethnic groups and communities.¹⁴ On the individual level, it is argued that people become involved with terrorist groups in Mali as a result of a search for identity and social status,¹⁵ or for economic reasons.¹⁶ However, to date, no thorough, empirical study has been conducted to analyse and deconstruct involvement in terrorism in Mali to identify what factors play a role in involvement in terrorism.

1.2 Research topic and aims

How can we understand involvement in terrorism in Mali? That is the overarching question this thesis seeks to answer. The analysis focuses specifically on Mali as a case study and the situation described above forms the context against which this study took place. Although terrorism is a global challenge and is among the most complicated and demanding security challenges for the international community, some countries are much more affected by it than others. Over the past ten years, countries like Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Somalia have consistently ranked in the top ten of countries where most terrorist attacks take

⁹ Liesbeth van der Heide, 'Dumping One Government Won't Fix Mali'.

¹⁰ Arthur Boutellis and Naureen C. Fink, "Waging Peace: UN Peace Operations Confronting Terrorism and Violent Extremism", 2016.

¹¹ Liesbeth van der Heide, "Dumping One Government Won't Fix Mali", *Foreign Policy*, 4 April 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/04/20/dumping-one-government-wont-fix-mali-security-west-africa-sahel-ogossagou-fulani-dogon-tuareg-azawad-terrorism/>.

¹² "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017", accessed 20 November 2018, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

¹³ Hussein Solomon, 'Ansar Dine in Mali: Between Tuareg Nationalism and Islamism', in *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Africa* (Springer, 2015), 67–84.

¹⁴ Annette Lohmann, 'Who Owns the Sahara? Old Conflicts, New Menaces: Mali and the Central Sahara between the Tuareg, Al Qaida and Organized Crime', 2011.

¹⁵ David Gutelius, 'War on Terror and Social Networks in Mali', *ISIM Review* 17 (2006): 2.

¹⁶ Morten Bøås and Liv E. Torheim, "The international intervention in Mali: 'Desert blues' or a new beginning?", *International journal* 68, nr. 3 (2013): 417–23.

place and where terrorism causes most fatalities.¹⁷ When taking a regional approach, it is mainly Southeast Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East that are disproportionately affected by terrorism. Over the past years, the African continent – aside from the southern region – has experienced an exponential increase in terrorist activities.¹⁸ The Africa Center for Strategic Studies published a study that showed that for example in Burkina Faso alone, terrorist attacks rose from 12 attacks in 2016 to 137 attacks in 2019.¹⁹ Mali witnessed a total of 456 deaths due to terrorism in 2019, which makes that year, according to Human Rights Watch, “the deadliest year for Malian civilians since the beginning of the crisis in 2012”. In the same year, the number of so-called internally displaced people (IDPs) in the country rose to almost 200,000 individuals.²⁰

The increasingly escalating security situation in Mali can be seen not just in the rising number of terrorist and militant attacks, the situation is also deteriorating across the region and affecting countries including Niger, Mauritania, Guinea and Burkina Faso. For example, while terrorist incidents declined worldwide in 2017, African countries faced an expansion of terror groups in parts of the continent.²¹ In East Africa, specifically in the Horn of Africa countries like Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia, it is mainly the Somalia-based al-Shabab group that poses a threat to the region.²² The Lake Chad region, including countries like Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria is dealing with a resurgence in attacks on civilian, government, and military targets by groups like Boko Haram and the Islamic State’s branch in West Africa, the Islamic State’s West Africa Province (ISWAP).²³ Finally, the US, in its annual Country Reports on Terrorism refers to the Sahel region, bordering the Sahara Desert and including Mali, Niger, Chad, and Mauritania, as “the new front in the war on terrorism”²⁴ as “in the Sahel, terrorist groups – including affiliates and adherents of al-Qa’ida and ISIS – have expanded their operations in central Mali and the Tri-Border Region of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger.”²⁵ Additionally, the report states that:

AQIM and JNIM continued to conduct terrorist attacks, primarily targeting Malian and international military forces. The terrorist groups launched attacks against civilians, security forces, peacekeepers, and others they reportedly perceived as not adhering to their interpretation of Islam. Attacks by terrorist groups expanded beyond the traditional conflict zone in the north to Mali’s center and south. Malian Security Forces continued to

¹⁷ ‘Global Terrorism Index 2019: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism’ (Institute for Economics & Peace, November 2019), 8, <http://visionofhumanity.org/reports>.

¹⁸ Ruchita Beri, “Rise of Terrorism in Africa”, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 13 April 2017, https://idsa.in/idsacomments/rise-of-terrorism-in-africa_rberi_130417.

¹⁹ “The Complex and Growing Threat of Militant Islamist Groups in the Sahel”, Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 15 February 2019, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/the-complex-and-growing-threat-of-militant-islamist-groups-in-the-sahel/>.

²⁰ ‘Situation in Mali. Report of the Secretary-General.’, United Nations Security Council, 30 December 2019, https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_2019_983.pdf.

²¹ Ibrahim Ahmed, “Report: African Countries Struggle to Contain Terror Groups”, Voice of America, 2 October 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/report-african-countries-struggle-contain-terror-groups>.

²² Akinola Olojo, “Time to Consider Negotiating with Al-Shabaab in Somalia?”, ISS Africa, 11 June 2019, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/time-to-consider-negotiating-with-al-shabaab-in-somalia>.

²³ Jacob Zenn, ‘Mindful of the Islamic State, Boko Haram Broadens Reach into Lake Chad Region’, The Jamestown Foundation, 6 February 2015, <https://jamestown.org/program/mindful-of-the-islamic-state-boko-haram-broadens-reach-into-lake-chad-region/>.

²⁴ International Crisis Group, ‘Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction?’, Africa Report 92 (2005). <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/chad/islamist-terrorism-sahel-fact-or-fiction>

²⁵ ‘Country Reports on Terrorism 2017’, United States Department of State, n.d., <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2017/>.

suffer the largest number of casualties resulting from terrorist attacks. An estimated 138 Malian soldiers were killed in numerous incidents.²⁶

In line with that, in a review of terrorism in Africa covering 2010-2018, the Africa Center for Strategic Studies wrote that “Mali remains the focal point of militant violence, accounting for roughly 64 percent of the reported events in the Sahel in 2018.”²⁷ The death toll in the country has risen steadily, with civilians caught in the crossfire. From 2015 to 2018, over a thousand people have died, hundreds have been injured, and thousands more have been displaced in the country, with the central Mopti region becoming the deadliest region, accounting for nearly half of the country’s violent deaths.²⁸

However, while the majority of terrorist attacks take place outside of countries in Europe and North America, the majority of research on terrorism focuses on terrorism in the northern half of the hemisphere.²⁹ The literature and research on terrorism in Africa, its forms and connections with other forms of crimes, is very limited and suffers from a Western bias, as illustrated by a former Officer in Charge of the Terrorism Prevention Branch of the UN and a renowned scholar in the field of terrorism studies Alex Schmid. The latter notes in his meta-review of terrorism studies, “we [the Editorial Board of one of the main terrorism journals] were confronted with an abundance of submissions regarding the conflict in Northern Ireland while there was an absolute shortage of good-quality submissions from Africa or on African groups.”³⁰

Additionally, the literature that is available focuses heavily on terrorist organisations and strategies rather than the individual perspectives of those charged with or sentenced for terrorism.³¹ (Suspected) terrorist offenders’ individual narratives of historical conflict and its aftermath rarely feature in work on political violence.³² As such, the field of terrorism studies still lacks a solid foundation of primary data based on interviews and life histories of individuals engaged in terrorism.

Thus, the academic literature requires further expansion and empirical research in the field,³³ especially when it comes to paying attention to individual narratives of (those who are labeled as) terrorists in non-Western contexts. The present study seeks to increase our understanding of involvement in terrorism in Mali in the following ways: (1) it seeks to provide the current state of the art in the literature on involvement in terrorism (including both empirical and theoretical studies); (2) it aims to empirically assess involvement in terrorism in Mali through a comparative analysis of narrative interviews; and (3) it will assess

²⁶ ‘Country Reports on Terrorism 2017’.

²⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸ Recently, several human rights organisations have documented dozens of episodes of tit-for-tat violence, largely perpetrated by *dozos* against Peul civilians, and to a lesser – but not negligible – extent, by jihadists who are mostly Peul against Bambara and Dogon villagers. See “Dans le centre du Mali, les population prises au piège du terrorisme et du contre-terrorisme”, FIDH/AMDH, November 2018; “‘We Used to Be Brothers’: Self-Defense Group Abuses in Central Mali”, Human Rights Watch, December 2018; UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council, “Situation of Human Rights in Mali: Report of the Independent Expert on the Situation of Human Rights in Mali”, January 2019.

²⁹ Ruth Blakeley, ‘Bringing the State Back into Terrorism Studies’, *European Political Science* 6, no. 3 (2007): 228.

³⁰ Alex P. Schmid, *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (Taylor & Francis, 2011), 467.

³¹ Martha Crenshaw, ‘The Psychology of Terrorism: An Agenda for the 21st Century’, *Political Psychology* 21, no. 2 (2000): 405–20.

³² Thus engaging with the research subject on the human level, something that conflict-studies author Sara Roy labeled ‘humanizing the other’ Sara M. Roy, *Failing Peace: Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict* (Pluto Press, 2007), viii.

³³ Richard Jackson, ‘Critical Terrorism Studies: An Explanation, a Defence and a Way Forward’, in *BISA Annual Conference*, 2009, 18.

to what extent the academic theories of involvement in terrorism relate to the case study Mali. In doing so, this study seeks to find out to what extent the current academic knowledge on involvement in terrorism based is applicable to non-Western settings, and for what reasons it might or might not be applicable.

1.3 Studying involvement in terrorism

After 9/11, literature in the field of (counter) terrorism has grown exponentially.³⁴ In the subfield of terrorism studies, a number of scholars have studied the process of becoming involved in terrorism whereas other scholars have mainly focused on the process of leaving terrorism behind. According to terrorism scholar Peter Neumann, the term radicalisation has become the most dominant concept for involvement in terrorism, or: “what goes on before the bomb goes off”³⁵; in other words, the process that individuals go through preceding terrorist attacks. In the context of involvement in terrorism, radicalisation is usually referred to as the process of adopting certain – more extremist – beliefs and attitude changes.³⁶ It is described as a process of socio-psychological change, linked to the adoption of an “extremist belief system”³⁷ with the aim to bring about change.

In the quest to identify the reasons why individuals join, stay in, or leave terrorist groups, authors have identified factors on various levels. Explanations on the individual level often are of a psychological nature. Questions on this individual, micro level include why individuals radicalise, why they join terrorist groups, and why they continue to stay in a group or choose to leave terrorism behind. The main explanations of why and how individuals engage in terrorism are the relative deprivation theory³⁸ and exposure theory. McAdam et al. have emphasised the role played by the political system and the state propensity towards repression in explaining collective violence.³⁹ Their views have inspired a new branch of terrorism studies that has specifically zoomed in on “the processual and relational understanding of violence”.⁴⁰ Several authors⁴¹ have highlighted the importance of going beyond the individual focus to broaden the analysis to socio-political context and the

³⁴ Andrew Silke, ‘The Road Less Travelled: Recent Trends in Terrorism Research’, in *Research on Terrorism* (Routledge, 2004), 206–33; Magnus Ranstorp, *Mapping Terrorism Research: State of the Art, Gaps and Future Direction* (Routledge, 2006).

³⁵ P. R. Neumann, J. Stoil, and D. Esfandiary, ‘Perspectives on Radicalisation and Political Violence: Papers from the First International Conference on Radicalisation and Political Violence’, *London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence*, 2008, 4.

³⁶ Kurt Braddock and John Horgan, ‘Towards a Guide for Constructing and Disseminating Counternarratives to Reduce Support for Terrorism’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 39, no. 5 (3 May 2016): 381–404, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2015.1116277>.

³⁷ Elaine Pressman, ‘Risk Assessment Decisions for Violent Political Extremism’ (Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, October 2009), <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2009-02-rdv/2009-02-rdv-eng.pdf>.

³⁸ Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, N.J.: Published for the Center of International Studies, Princeton University [by] Princeton University Press, 1970).

³⁹ Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contentious Politics*, Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁴⁰ Didier Bigo and Daniel Hermant, *La relation terroriste, analyse de la violence politique des organisations clandestines dans les démocraties occidentales* (Paris: Etudes Polémologiques/Documentation Française., 1988).

⁴¹ Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Suicide Bombers: Allah’s New Martyrs*, trans. David Macey (London and Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2005); cf Gilles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West*, trans. Pascale Ghazaleh, 1 edition (United States: Harvard University Press, 2004); cf Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence*, illustrated, reprint, Cambridge Studies in Contentious Politics (United States: Cambridge University Press, 2003); cf Laurent Bonelli, ed., ‘De L’usage De La Violence En Politique’, *L’Harmattan*, Le passage par la violence en politique, no. 81/82 (11 October 2011): 7–15.

biographical exposure to violence. Scholars agree that there is not one pattern or profile of terrorists and analyses of past perpetrators have revealed that they have been rather “unremarkable individuals, who have led unremarkable lives, have held unremarkable jobs.”⁴²

On the group or meso level, explanations are sought at the level of socio-psychological group processes, such as the ideological characteristics of groups,⁴³ or peer group pressure and social movements.⁴⁴ The third level of explanation of involvement in terrorism focuses at the macro or structural level and primarily attempts to find “correlations between certain historical, cultural, economic, and socio-political characteristics of the larger society and the occurrence of terrorism”.⁴⁵ Factors that might play a role on this level include the effects of (neo-) colonialism, processes of democratisation, poverty, and widespread social inequality. Although there has never been found a direct causal connection between a weak socioeconomic position and involvement in terrorism,⁴⁶ there are some elements that may be conducive to terrorism, such as political frustration,⁴⁷ and particular socioeconomic, cultural, and historical conditions.⁴⁸ It is indeed fundamental to underline that every terrorist is moved by his/her own specific motivations, that could be intrinsic (the motivation comes from within, the person feels a calling), extrinsic (the motivation comes from outside/external factors), or a combination of the two.

This study incorporates all three levels of analysis. Substantial attention has already been devoted to explaining terrorism on the individual level. That is the result of the predominant view in the 1970s that it must be terrorists’ abnormality that accounts for their involvement in terrorism, a view that has survived in some form or other since then. This includes the scholarly search for psycho-pathological factors in individuals engaging in violent extremism,⁴⁹ as well as the idea of the so-called “terrorist mindset.”⁵⁰ Nonetheless, strong evidence has been presented that points to the need to look beyond mere psychopathological profiles for explaining involvement in terrorism.⁵¹ This makes it all the more relevant to study the factors that play a role in involvement in terrorism beyond the micro level. The more interesting question thus becomes how the socio-political factors impact the individual level.

⁴² Mitchell D. Silber en Arvin Bhatt, *Radicalisation in the West: The homegrown threat* (Police Department New York, 2007), 2.

⁴³ Paul Wilkinson, ‘Trends in International Terrorism and the American Response’, *Terrorism and International Order* 107 (1986): 107.

⁴⁴ Tore Bjørgo, *Strategies for Preventing Terrorism* (Springer, 2013).

⁴⁵ Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedazhur, and Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler, ‘The Challenges of Conceptualizing Terrorism’, *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16, no. 4 (1 January 2004): 777–94, <https://doi.org/10.1080/095465590899768>.

⁴⁶ J. Maleckova, ‘Impoverished Terrorists: Stereotype or Reality?’, in *Root Causes of Terrorism: Myths, Reality and Ways Forward*, ed. Tore Bjørgo and Norwegian Institute Of International Affairs (London: Routledge, 2005).

⁴⁷ Christiane Nischler and Roger Morefield, ‘An Actor Oriented Empirical Model of the Roots of Terrorism’, *Journal of Business and Behaviour Sciences* 24, no. 3 (1 October 2012): 53.

⁴⁸ Domenico Tosini, ‘A Sociological Understanding of Suicide Attacks’, *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 4 (1 July 2009): 67–96, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276409104969>.

⁴⁹ Max Taylor, ‘Is Terrorism a Group Phenomenon?’, *Aggression and Violent Behaviour* 15, no. 2 (March 2010): 121–29, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2009.09.001>.

Lia Brynjar, Skjølberg Katja H-w, and Jan Erik Torp, *Why Terrorism Occurs - A Survey of Theories and Hypotheses on the Causes of Terrorism*, 2000.⁵⁰ Jerrold M. Post, *Current Understanding of Terrorist Motivation and Psychology Implications for a Differentiated Antiterrorist Policy* (Bristol: Taylor & Francis, 1990) cf; Jeff Victoroff, ‘The Mind of the Terrorist: A Review and Critique of Psychological Approaches’, *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 1 (February 2005): 3–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002704272040>.

⁵¹ Andrew Silke, ‘Holy Warriors: Exploring the Psychological Processes of Jihadi Radicalization’, *European Journal of Criminology* 5, no. 1 (1 January 2008): 99–123, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370807084226>.

1.4 Shortcomings in current research on involvement in terrorism

Describing and explaining involvement in terrorism is not a new endeavour; however, despite the increase in literature, “most research work scores poorly in terms of validity and objectivity,”⁵² mainly due to a lack of primary sources, and is therefore overreliant on secondary sources.⁵³ In a review of all research published between 1995 and 1999 in the two leading journals in the subfield of terrorism studies (*Terrorism and Political Violence* (TPV) and *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (SCT)), Silke concluded that over 80 percent of studies relied solely on data gathered from secondary sources.⁵⁴ In 2006, Lum et al. conducted a literature review and concluded that of the 6041 peer-reviewed articles on terrorism published between 1971 and 2003, a mere three percent were based on empirical data. The most recent review of the field, conducted by Schuurman⁵⁵ and covering 2007-2016, concluded that even though there is a positive methodological increase of using primary sources, the use of the literature review method as the only method of data collection is still dominant in the field, accounting for roughly 40 percent of all studies.

According to Borum,⁵⁶ a persistent characteristic of terrorism research is “the attempt (implicit or otherwise) to emphasize how terrorist behaviour is different or ‘special’.” As a result, a specific body of literature on terrorism has emerged with its own terminology. Although it has been argued that terrorism is unique because it is an anomaly statistically speaking as well as from a societal perspective,⁵⁷ at the same time terrorist behaviour is governed through the exact same dynamics that underpin all human behaviour.⁵⁸ The field of terrorism studies thus could benefit from broadening its scope to include lessons from criminology, sociology, and psychology. Nonetheless, while the existing body of literature in other disciplines can contribute to our knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon of terrorism, a gap that remains to be filled is the conceptualisation and understanding how the individual, ideological, group, and societal conditions that contribute to or hinder involvement process play a role vis-à-vis one another and how that differs across different geographical regions. Overall, we can conclude that despite the rise in interest in the process of becoming involved with terrorism, the field is still fragmented and “there is a great deal of potential for learning, development and refinement.”⁵⁹

1.5 Used definitions

The field of terrorism studies has long been plagued by conceptual ambiguities. Scholars have spent decades trying to formulate universally accepted definitions of core concepts such as terrorism, radicalisation, and violent extremism.⁶⁰ Despite these efforts, it is

⁵² Silke, ‘The Road Less Travelled: Recent Trends in Terrorism Research’.

⁵³ Andrew Silke, ‘The Devil You Know: Continuing Problems with Research on Terrorism’, *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no. 4 (2001): 1–14; Marc Sageman, *Misunderstanding Terrorism* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Bart Schuurman and Quirine Eijkman, ‘Moving Terrorism Research Forward: The Crucial Role of Primary Sources’, *ICCT Background Note*, 2013, 1–11.

⁵⁴ Silke, ‘The Devil You Know: Continuing Problems with Research on Terrorism’.

⁵⁵ Bart Schuurman, ‘Research on Terrorism, 2007–2016: A Review of Data, Methods, and Authorship’, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 2018, 1–16.

⁵⁶ Randy Borum, ‘Psychology of Terrorism’ (University of South Florida Tampa Department of Mental Health Law and Policy, 14 December 2007), <http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA494527>.

⁵⁷ Christopher Gelpi, and Nazli Avdan. “Democracies at risk? A forecasting analysis of regime type and the risk of terrorist attack.” *Conflict management and peace science* 35.1 (2018): 18-42.

⁵⁸ Guilain Denoeux and Lynn Carter, ‘Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism’, *USAID, February*, 2009.

⁵⁹ Sam Mullins, ‘Rehabilitation of Islamist Terrorists: Lessons from Criminology’, *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* 3, no. 3 (2010): 162–93.

⁶⁰ See for example A. Schmid and A. Jongman, ‘Political Terrorism. Oxford.’, 1998.

often unclear whether authors have a shared conception of these terms. In this thesis, the focus lies on involvement in terrorism; therefore, the main concepts that warrant a clear definition are *involvement* and *terrorism*. Given that the concepts of terrorism and violent extremism are often used as if they were synonyms, violent extremism will also be defined. Finally, the concept of radicalisation will be discussed given its central place in the academic literature on involvement in terrorism and I will explain how it is perceived of in this thesis vis-à-vis involvement in terrorism.

1.5.1 Terrorism and violent extremism

While a commonly-agreed upon definition of terrorism is lacking, both in the scientific body of literature as well as among policymakers and practitioners, “most definitions tend to coalesce around the idea that terrorism aims to instil fear and fear-driven responses”.⁶¹ According to Irish terrorism scholar Louise Richardson: “terrorists aim to provoke from their enemies a psychological and behavioural overreaction, because overreactions are often self-destructive and bear high financial and societal costs”. These high costs can refer to things such as increased intergroup tensions, loss of privacy, and a climate of fear and uncertainty. Moreover, fear-driven responses to terrorism are often accompanied by indiscriminate aggression and violence, which can mobilise support for the terrorists’ cause among the affected communities.⁶²

In this dissertation, I adopt the academic definition of terrorism provided by Dutch and Swiss terrorism researchers Jongman and Schmid, who define terrorism as “an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent actions employed by (semi-) clandestine individual, group, or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, whereby – in contrast to assassination – the direct targets of violence are not the main targets.”⁶³ This study takes as a baseline that terrorists differ from *regular* criminals in their willingness to communicate a message through their acts. They seek to reach a larger audience through their acts, based on their personal beliefs: they have an underlying (political) ideology. It is not just the material damage or the direct victims – but government, specific *target audiences* within society or society at large that they want to address. From this perspective, the terrorist act is a strategy, a means to attain a (political) goal – there has to be an underlying ideology, a conflicting concept of justice and injustice, at play.

Violent extremism as a term has been used as a synonym to political violence and terrorism. According to an Australian study into the nature and definition of violent extremism in academic literature the term is often employed without providing a definition as if it’s meaning is self-evident. “Thus, no real distinction between violent extremism and terrorism has been fully developed, it remains an evolving concept.”⁶⁴ Violent extremism may, in fact, be somewhat of a pleonasm as extremists are often by definition inclined to use violence. Schmid wrote an extensive paper on the use (and usefulness) of the terms radicalism and extremism in which he states: “While radicals might be violent or not, might be democrats or not, extremists are never democrats. (...) They are positively in favor of the use of force to obtain and maintain political power.”⁶⁵ Taking that as baseline, Schmid goes

⁶¹ Pete Lentini, *On Terrorism and Its (Re) Sources: A Review Essay* (Sage Publications Sage UK: London, England, 2003); cf E. J. van der Heide, ‘Individual Terrorism: Indicators of Lone Operators’ (2011).

⁶² Louise Richardson, ‘The Roots of Terrorism: An Overview’, in *The Roots of Terrorism* (Routledge, 2013), 13–26; see also Ethan Bueno De Mesquita, ‘Conciliation, Counterterrorism, and Patterns of Terrorist Violence’, *International Organization* 59, no. 1 (2005): 145–76.

⁶³ Albert J. Jongman and Alex P. Schmid, *Political Terrorism* (Transaction Publishers, NJ, 1998): 28.

⁶⁴ Minerva Nasser-Eddine et al., ‘Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Literature Review’ (Defence Science and Technology Organisation Edinburgh (Australia), 2011), 9.

⁶⁵ Alex P. Schmid, ‘Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review’ (International Centre for Counter-Terrorism - The Hague, March 2013), 10,

on to conclude that we should distinguish radicalism from extremism where the former refers to more open-minded forms of advocating reform that might or might not lead to some forms of political violence, while the latter is characterised by close-mindedness and violent tendencies that can lead to terrorism. As such, violent extremism can be viewed as a pre-portal to terrorism where violent extremist individuals and groups are close-minded and intolerant of other worldviews as well as positive towards the use of force to achieve their goals. This could lead to terrorism, but it will not necessarily result in engaging in terrorism. While the definition of terrorism provided in this thesis presumes actual engagement in action (“a method of repeated violent actions”), those individuals that become involved with terrorist groups do not necessarily always engage in violent acts themselves. A group can be labelled as terrorist because of its use of violence while not all its members or supporters actively participate in those violent acts. That is why, in this thesis, if the term terrorism is used, it is used interchangeably with violent extremism, as it encompasses both individuals and groups who are labelled as either terrorists and/or violent extremists because of their ideological commitment or group affiliation – not because of their individual actions.

1.5.2 Involvement in terrorism and radicalisation

As noted earlier, the field of terrorism studies has become particularly wedded to the notion of radicalisation to explain involvement in or engagement with terrorism. Some definitions of radicalisation have a broad focus, e.g. social psychologists McCauley and Moskaleiko define radicalisation as “the development of beliefs, feelings, and actions in support of any group or cause in a conflict.”⁶⁶ Radicalisation is then viewed as a process whereby an individual moves towards justifying violence and – in some cases – finally personally engaging in the use of violence. Most definitions agree that radicalisation is a process, however there is less consensus as to where that process leads.

In some definitions, radicalisation is inherently tied to terrorism (as the use of violence for ideological purposes) in that it is viewed as a process leading to terrorism. For example in the definition of the European Commission’s Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation, radicalisation is defined as “socialization to extremism, which manifests itself in terrorism.”⁶⁷ In a similar vein, the UK defines radicalisation as “the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism.”⁶⁸ Even though radicalisation has become a household concept in government and policy circles post 9/11,⁶⁹ it is often used without acknowledging the controversies surrounding the term. A main first issue lies in the “(often implicit) notion that the adoption of radical views necessarily leads to involvement in radical behaviour and that desistance from terrorism similarly necessitates the abandonment of such views”.⁷⁰ This idea is overly simplistic when

<https://www.icct.nl/download/file/ICCT-Schmid-Radicalisation-De-Radicalisation-Counter-Radicalisation-March-2013.pdf>.

⁶⁶ Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskaleiko, ‘Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways toward Terrorism’, *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, no. 3 (2008): 4.

⁶⁷ Rogelio Alonso et al., ‘Radicalisation Processes Leading to Acts of Terrorism. A Concise Report Prepared by the European Commission’s Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation’, 2008, 7.

⁶⁸ ‘CONTEST: The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering Terrorism’ (Secretary of State for the Home Department by Command of Her Majesty, July 2011), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97995/strategy-contest.pdf.

⁶⁹ Arun Kundnani, ‘Radicalisation: The Journey of a Concept’, *Race & Class* 54, no. 2 (2012): 6.

⁷⁰ See for example Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen, “Violent radicalisation in Europe: What we know and what we do not know”, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33, nr. 9 (2010): 798; Michael Genkin en Alexander Gutfraind, “How do terrorist cells self-assemble: Insights from an agent-based model of radicalisation”, 2011, 2; Lorenzo Vidino en James Brandon, “Countering radicalisation in Europe”, *ICSR, Kings College Policy Report. London: Kings College*, 2012, 9.

it comes to the complexities involved in those individuals who become radicalised, both in terms of what that means cognitively as well as how it might manifest itself in behavior. As a matter of fact, many people hold radical ideas but do not engage in any terrorist activities. In light of the (likely) millions of individuals that we might consider as having radical or even extremist views, “the percentage that goes on to become involved in terrorist activities is exceedingly small”.⁷¹ It can – in some cases – lead to engagement in terrorist activities but is not necessarily linked to the use of violence. Thus, radicalisation as a process in many cases does not lead to terrorism. Researchers have argued that engagement in terrorist activity can also precede radicalisation: individuals sometimes radicalise only after involvement in terrorism.⁷²

Second, being radical necessarily relates to what is generally viewed as the norm or as moderate in a given society. According to historian Mark Sedgwick, definitions of radicalisation, by opposing the “radical” and “moderate,” always implicate the issue of what is considered normal or moderate. What is considered moderate is dependent on the cultural context and thus, it is never “self-evident in a “with-us-or-a-against-us” sense”.⁷³ Additionally, someone can be viewed as having radical opinions on any issue ranging from political standpoints (i.e. pro- or anti-immigration) to religious themes (i.e. pro-or anti-sharia law) or any other issue (i.e. most conspiracy theorists are considered radical). That means that by nature, what is viewed as radicalisation in one country might be considered normal in another country. Third and finally, the process of radicalising or becoming more extreme usually indicates a process where individuals become less open to other interpretations or opinions.⁷⁴ For these three reasons, in this thesis, radicalisation is defined as the process of becoming more distanced from the prevailing norms on a given subject towards adopting an exclusive worldview that is viewed as the one and only truth.

Overall, as terrorism scholars Braddock and Horgan assert, “radicalization remains a poorly defined, inconsistently used term that has been used to characterize everything from acquiring extreme beliefs to actual engagement in violent activity.”⁷⁵ All in all, the above clarifies that there is a clear difference between having radical ideas and engaging in radical behaviour. Second, individuals who became involved with terrorist groups can be motivated by radical ideas but that is not a prerequisite; nor does involvement with terrorist groups necessarily translate to engagement in (violent) action. Finally, many individuals do not ‘join’ terrorist groups in the traditional sense of signing up for membership but rather, can become involved in different ways ranging from mere affiliation with a group for ideological reasons, facilitating group activities or acting in supportive capacities to engagement in (violent) action. And even the latter category can include individuals who do not do so by choice but rather because they (feel) forced to do so. For those reasons, in this thesis the term *involvement* is used to describe this broad range of options by which an individual becomes affiliated with a terrorist group – covering a range of activities from supporting the ideology and facilitating a group’s day-to-day operations to participating in the preparation and execution of violent acts.

⁷¹ James Khalil, ‘Radical Beliefs and Violent Actions Are Not Synonymous: How to Place the Key Disjuncture between Attitudes and Behaviours at the Heart of Our Research into Political Violence’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 37, no. 2 (2014): 198–211.

⁷² Randy Borum, “Radicalisation into Violent Extremism I: A Review of Social Science Theories”, *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, nr. 4 (december 2011): 7, <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.4.4.1>.

⁷³ Mark Sedgwick, ‘The Concept of Radicalization as a Source of Confusion’, *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, no. 4 (14 September 2010): 482, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2010.491009>.

⁷⁴ Sedgwick, 482.

⁷⁵ Braddock and Horgan, ‘Towards a Guide for Constructing and Disseminating Counternarratives to Reduce Support for Terrorism’.

1.6 The present study

This study aims to deconstruct the process of involvement in terrorism in Mali through empirically investigating this process on the individual, group, and structural level; analysing the findings to identify the factors that play a role in becoming involved in terrorism. The decision to focus on Mali as a case study has been motivated by various considerations. Aside from constraints in terms of resources like time and costs, a sound empirical study into involvement in terrorism and the factors that play a role in that process require an in-depth explorative research based on a qualitative approach: since involvement is influenced “not only by the dynamics of political contention but also [by] historical precedents and processes”.⁷⁶ To facilitate this in-depth research, it was decided to narrow the scope of this project to one specific country.

The setting of Mali has been selected because access to primary sources was facilitated through the researcher’s participation in a four-year long training program focused on countering and preventing violent extremism in the prison context in Mali, which facilitated access to individuals charged with terrorism, local, and national government actors and international institutions working in Mali. Second, as previously outlined, the Sahel-Maghreb region is of particular interest in this domain of research given its history and the current trends in terrorism. Third, among the Sahel-Maghreb countries, Mali has been experiencing a violent conflict between different terrorist groups and the national government, which has been extended to the international level with the deployment of French troops in the country and the establishment of the UN peace-keeping mission, United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (*Mission multidimensionnelle intégrée des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation du Mali*, MINUSMA) in 2013.⁷⁷

Given the multilevel approach to explaining terrorism that is employed in this study, the overarching question of this thesis is: **how can we understand involvement in terrorism in Mali?** The overall question will be answered through three subsidiary research questions. The first part of the study will provide an overview of the state of the art on the empirical and theoretical findings regarding involvement in terrorism. In the second phase of the study, empirical data will be presented based on interviews with (suspected and/or sentenced) terrorists and interviews with national and international actors active in the field of counter-terrorism in Mali. Finally, in the third phase, the outcomes of the empirical study will be critically evaluated in light of the academic literature in order to assess and answer the overall question of how we can understand involvement in terrorism in Mali. The deconstructive element in the title of this thesis pertains to the focus on identifying various factors in involvement in terrorism and doing so from the multilevel perspective (the macro-, meso- and micro level) with the aim to find vulnerabilities on those levels, rather than zooming in on individual trajectories.

1.7 Research design

The current study uses a multilevel approach, which aims to combine micro (individual), meso (group), and macro (structural) levels of analysis, thus adopting the approach promoted by Della Porta in analysing terrorism through a combination of three

⁷⁶ Donatella Della Porta en Heinz-Gerhard Haupt, “Patterns of radicalisation in political activism: An introduction”, *Social Science History* 36, nr. 3 (2012): 317.

⁷⁷ Elena Dal Santo and Elizabeth Johanna van der Heide, ‘Escalating Complexity in Regional Conflicts: Connecting Geopolitics to Individual Pathways to Terrorism in Mali’, *African Security* 11, no. 3 (2018): 274–91.

perspectives.⁷⁸ The individual (micro), organisational (meso), and structural (macro) levels will be taken into account to provide a more comprehensive explanation of involvement in terrorism in Mali. The micro level focuses on the narratives of the alleged terrorist offenders in prison and the factors that they describe as playing a role on the individual level. The meso level focuses on the organisational level, thus assessing the group level factors that explain involvement in terrorism. Finally, the macro level identifies factors on the geo-political, historical, and social contrasts level that have led individuals to becoming involved in terrorism.

1.7.1 Scientific relevance

This dissertation seeks to contribute to the academic body of literature on terrorism in four ways. First, many scholars have concluded that the current terrorism literature suffers from a Western bias. In the words of Jackson: “There is a real need to expand the study of terrorism to both address the Western-centricity prevalent in terrorism research while at the same time including the voices and perspectives of those in the global South who have been the most frequent victims of both terrorism and counter-terrorism.”⁷⁹ Thus, this study seeks to add to the current literature by analysing a non-Western sample, deepening our knowledge of and insight into involvement in terrorism that could generally add to our understanding of involvement in terrorism across other non-Western countries. A second gap that this thesis addresses is the lack of analysis of meso and macro level factors that play a role in involvement in terrorism.

A majority of studies, especially in the Western academic sphere, has a dominant focus on understanding terrorism taking the individual as the unit of analysis. As Ekaterina Stepanova notes in Schmid: “at least equal attention should be paid to the social group level at the national and inter- (trans)national / systemic level.”⁸⁰ This study seeks to tackle this issue by taking a multilevel approach to terrorism, aiming to better understand the interplay between the micro, meso, and macro factors that play a role in individuals’ involvement in and desistance from terrorism in Mali. Third, while several studies have been conducted detailing the overall situation in Mali vis-à-vis the different terrorist groups, an empirically sound analysis explaining involvement in and desistance from violent extremism and the role of prison in that process in the country is lacking. This study seeks to fill this knowledge gap. Fourth and finally, the unique access in this study to primary sources through conducting interviews with inmates incarcerated for terrorist-related offences as well as the professionals working with them or on countering terrorism in Mali will ensure a contribution to the empirically scarce basis of terrorism research in general.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction* (John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 10–11.

⁷⁹ Jackson, ‘Critical Terrorism Studies: An Explanation, a Defence and a Way Forward’, 18; see also Matt McDonald, ‘Emancipation and Critical Terrorism Studies’, in *Critical Terrorism Studies* (Routledge, 2009), 123–37.

⁸⁰ Alex P. Schmid, ‘The Literature on Terrorism’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (Routledge, 2011), 469.

⁸¹ John Horgan, ‘Interviewing Terrorists: A Case for Primary Research’, in *Terrorism Informatics*, ed. Hsinchun Chen et al., vol. 18, Integrated Series In Information Systems (Boston, MA: Springer US, 2008), 73–99, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-71613-8_4. ; Todd C. Helmus, ‘Why and How Some People Become Terrorists’, in *Social Science for Counterterrorism: Putting the Pieces Together*, ed. Paul K. Davis and Kim Cragin (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2009).

1.7.2 Societal relevance

The collapse of security in Mali, which used to be described as “the poster child for democracy”,⁸² begs solutions to the on-going security crisis that are based on an in-depth and contextualised understanding of how individuals became engaged with terrorism in the country. To inform both national policies aiming to demobilise, disarm, and reintegrate (DDR) former combatants, including terrorists, as well as international policy ranging from counterterrorism to stabilisation and peacekeeping operations, it is necessary to understand *the enemy*. Having knowledge of the factors that play a role in the process of involvement in terrorism is clearly critical in enabling us to understand how and why individuals come to change their behaviour. Developing a better knowledge base and increasing our insights in the individual processes and social circumstances in and through which involvement in terrorism takes place is an indispensable precursor for building practice models. In other words: practitioner paradigms need to be embedded in a sound understanding of the process of involvement. At the same time, many studies have shown that there is a tendency in terrorism studies to perceive of terrorist offenders as mainly religiously motivated individuals,⁸³ despite the evidence that underlines the importance of other factors on the social and individual level that might play a role in their radicalisation process. This study seeks to develop a more nuanced understanding of the individual and the context within which involvement in terrorism takes place in Mali, thereby also addressing factors such as perceived injustice and altruism that drives some of these individuals.

1.8 Methods

The analysis of involvement in terrorism is addressed using a twofold methodological approach. First, an in-depth analysis of the available literature was conducted to provide a solid framework of theoretical elements and empirical findings that can explain involvement in terrorism on a macro, meso, and micro level. This part includes an extensive review of the literature from a range of disciplines that are relevant to this research, primarily findings from terrorism studies, criminology, sociology, and psychology – as these disciplines have all contributed to theories of involvement in terrorism. Second, through fieldwork in Mali, a total of 105 respondents were interviewed to gather their perspectives on involvement in terrorism in Mali. This includes narrative interviews with Malian inmates that have been incarcerated in Bamako’s central prison based on terrorist charges. Between December 2016 and June 2018, a total of 36 semi-structured interviews have been conducted with 30 inmates charged with and/or sentenced for terrorism-related offenses in Mali.

Additionally, qualitative interviews were conducted with prison staff, local and national government actors, and international actors that are active in the field of countering violent extremism in Mali. In total, 75 professionals were interviewed through focus group and individual interviews, including organisations dealing with terrorist offenders in Mali, such as the National Directorate of the Penitentiary Administration (*Direction Nationale de l'Administration Pénitentiaire et de l'Education Surveillée*, DNAPES), the prison director of Bamako Central Prison, a number of prison staff, a psychiatrist working in the prison setting, several MINUSMA agencies, including the Justice and Corrections sector, the Joint Mission Analysis Centre (JMAC), the Human Rights section, and the UN Department of Safety and

⁸² Sergei Boeke and Giliam de Valk, ‘The Unforeseen 2012 Crisis in Mali: The Diverging Outcomes of Risk and Threat Analyses’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 29 March 2019, 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2019.1592356>.

⁸³ Liam Stephens and Stijn Sieckelinck, ‘Radicalization and Religion’, in *Religion and European Society* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2019), 159–70, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119162766.ch10>.

Security (UNDSS), the mission's All Sources Information Fusion Unit (ASIFU), and a number of embassies. The empirical data was analysed using an inductive approach: the raw data was classified according to a framework of coding key themes. The methodological approach is presented in more detail in Chapter three.

1.9 Outline

The thesis consists of eight chapters. Chapter two presents an overview of research on involvement in terrorism, both from an empirical as well as a theoretical perspective. It underlines the need for both an empirical and multilevel analysis approach to study involvement and desistance from terrorism in Mali. Chapter three provides the methodological framework. Chapter four provides the necessary Malian context, starting with a historical and geographical overview and providing a timeline of terrorism-related events in Mali to familiarise readers with the context.

The empirical analysis is presented in chapters five through seven. Chapter five presents an overview of the respondents that were interviewed in prison, providing a summary of their demographic characteristics and group affiliations. Chapter six presents an analysis of the factors that played a role in their process of becoming involved in terrorism, based on the narrative interviews with these 30 suspected terrorists. Chapter seven presents the empirical data from the 75 interviews with professionals that play a role in the Malian context, with a focus on what they view as factors that play a role in (becoming involved in) terrorism in Mali. Chapter eight provides an in-depth analysis of the empirical data, including a comparison between the empirical findings from both the inmate and the professional perspective with the micro or individual level of analysis, the meso or group level of analysis, and the macro or structural factors that played a role in the process of involvement in terrorism in Mali. Chapter eight also provides a conclusion and discusses the main findings, evaluates the academic and policy implications, and provides some suggestions for future research.