

## Cabo Delgado: ‘Al Shabaab/ISIS’ and the Crisis in Southern Africa

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### Abstract

This paper argues that the crisis in Cabo Delgado, while cast in terms of the incendiary rhetoric of armed religious extremism, in actual fact has its origins in systemic neglect and regional inequalities that plague this ‘forgotten’ northern portion of Mozambique. The onset of a resource scramble has introduced an influx of economic migrants, spurred on elite rent-seeking with multinationals and as a consequence further marginalized local communities. In this context, Mozambique’s own self-styled ‘Al Shabaab’, as it was initially called, and the government’s inept security crackdown, have further prepared the ground for localized grievances to deepen into longstanding structural problems. Without a strong coordinated national, regional, and international response, this crisis is continue to threaten stability in Mozambique and is likely to spill over into neighboring countries.

### INTRODUCTION

On October 5, 2017, an armed group attacked three police stations in the border town of Mocímboa da Praia in the remote Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado. During the following year, there were fifty more attacks aimed at police stations and other government offices in northern districts. On February 22, 2019, religious extremist insurgents opened up a new front when they attacked a convoy of employees from Anadarko near the northern town of Palma, the headquarters of the offshore natural gas project. And, after a hiatus from the end

of 2020 up to the first two months of 2021, insurgents launched another brutal attack on Palma on March 24, 2021, besieging the town for two days and killing a still unconfirmed number of locals and foreigners. All in all, more than 2000 deaths have been attributed to the onset of insurgency since October 2017, with many of them civilians caught up in the crossfire<sup>2</sup>.

2. ‘Lisa Schlein, 2021, Mozambique’s Humanitarian Crisis in Cabo Delgado Has Displaced 700,000, DW, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/mozambiques-humanitarian-crisis-cabo-delgado-has-displaced-700000#:~:text=More%20than%202%2C000%20people%20have,inclusing%20children%2C%22%20she%20said>; Declan Walsh and Eric Schmitt, 2021, ‘American soldiers help Mozambique battle an expanding ISIS affiliate’, New York Times 15 March, [www.nytimes.com/2021/03/15/world/africa/mozambique-american-troops-isis-insurgency.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/15/world/africa/mozambique-american-troops-isis-insurgency.html)

1. This article draws on an earlier policy brief published by the South African Institute of International Affairs in October 2020.

This outbreak of unrest in Cabo Delgado captured media attention when perpetrators began to claim links with the Islamic State (ISIS) a year later, ties that were publically acknowledged by ISIS in mid-2019. The Mozambican government's assertion that these scattered acts of violence were evidence of extremism temporarily whipped up international fears of a new ISIS-like front in Africa. Closer examination cast doubt on this initial interpretation of the 'insurgency', but the sheer tenacity of the young men wreaking violence in small provincial towns and their apparent brandishing of the symbols of Islamist radicalism suggests otherwise.

To many observers, the insurgency seems to have sprung out of nowhere. In fact the conditions of rebellion have been present for some time. Endemic poverty and neglect by the central government has fostered discontent, while the discovery of precious gemstones and natural gas deposits, followed by a scramble by elites and foreign nationals to entrench their interests, have further marginalized the local population. In short, not only is there little tangible evidence of the positive impact of resource-led growth on livelihoods of local communities, when coupled to the destruction wrought by religiously-inspired insurgents, the situation threatens the viability of those same communities, broader commercial interests and ultimately political stability in that region. These conditions, similar to those found in West African states like Nigeria—including endemic poverty, regional or ethnic marginalization and ineffective or corrupt governance—have ultimately served as fertile ground for recruitment to the militant cause<sup>3</sup>.

This paper argues that the crisis in Cabo Delgado, while cast in terms of the incendiary rhetoric of armed religious extremism, in actual fact has its origins in systemic neglect and regional inequalities that plague this 'forgotten' northern portion of Mozambique. The onset of a resource scramble has introduced an influx of economic migrants, spurred on elite rent-seeking with multinationals and as a consequence further marginalized local communities. In this context, Mozambique's own self-styled 'Al Shabaab', as it was initially called, and the government's inept security crackdown, have further prepared the ground

3. Freedom Onuoha (2014) 'Why do youth join Boko Haram?' Special Report, Washington DC: US Institute of Peace, pp. 1-12; Olalekan Babatunde (2018) 'The Recruitment Mode of the Boko Haram Terrorist Group in Nigeria', *Peace Review* 30:3, pp. 382-389; Suranjan Weeraratne (2017) 'Theorising the Expansion of the Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria', *Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence* 29:4, pp. 610-634.

for localized grievances to deepen into longstanding structural problems. It is only in the last few months that we have seen the beginning of a coordinated national, regional, and international response to the crisis.

## Cabo Delgado and the Seeds of the Crisis

Situated on the northernmost portion of Mozambique's long coastline, the province of Cabo Delgado has been shaped by Indian Ocean trading networks dating back to the ninth century and, with these, the spread of Islam along what became known as the Swahili coast<sup>4</sup>. Under Portuguese suzerainty from the sixteenth century, Cabo Delgado earned an iconic role in the anti-colonial struggle as the Makonde people in the province's Mueda plateau formed the backbone of Frelimo's guerrillas in the 1960s<sup>5</sup>. Independence for Mozambique in 1975 did not however bring expected economic improvements and Cabo Delgado's overwhelmingly rural population became caught up in the civil war between the Frelimo government and Renamo insurgents, until the peace settlement of 1992. Despite turning out regular support for Frelimo in national elections from 1994 onwards, the province also did not experience the economic growth, per-capita income surge and investment boom felt in Maputo and its surrounding regions in the southern part of the country<sup>6</sup>. Even the election of the country's first president of Makonde origin, Filipe Nyusi, in 2014 did not bring any visible change.

Poverty is rife among the residents, with Cabo Delgado being the second poorest of all Mozambique's provinces<sup>7</sup>. With subsistence agriculture as the primary source of income for the vast majority of the population, and few opportunities outside of that sector, non-farming activity tends to center on resource exploitation. Export of forestry products, including legal and illegal logging, is pursued with the collusion of local Frelimo party

4. See Edward Alpers (2009) *East Africa and the Indian Ocean* (Princeton: Markus Wiener).

5. See Martin Newitt (1995) *A History of Mozambique* (London: Hurst).

6. UNDP 2013. *Gender, women and HD: an agenda for the future*, [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/mozambique\\_2001\\_en.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/mozambique_2001_en.pdf)

7. Jerry Maquenzi and João Feijó (2019) 'Pobreza, desigualdades e Conflitos no Norte de Cabo Delgado', *Observador Rural – Documento de Trabalho* 76, Julho, pp. 4-6, <https://clubofmozambique.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/OR-76-Conflitualidade-em-Cabo-Delgado.pdf>

officials<sup>8</sup>. Precious gems, particularly high quality rubies, have been mined in the Montepuez district by artisanal miners or *garimpeiros* since being discovered in 2009. Their gradual sidelining by a joint venture between the mining company of the former Frelimo governor of Cabo Delgado and a subsidiary of Gemfields in 2012 led to the dislocation of hundreds of local families from their land and the ejection of foreign *garimpeiros* (many of whom are Tanzanians)<sup>9</sup>. From 2017, a few short months before the attack in Mocímboa da Praia, a brutal campaign perpetrated by a machete-wielding militia began against those local people who refused to leave the land claimed by the mining company. Adding to the woes of *garimpeiros* who were ousted from the area were corrupt police, who regularly robbed the *garimpeiros* of their gems<sup>10</sup>.

Alongside this activity was a growing trade in wildlife products, particularly ivory, pangolin and, on the coast itself, marine life. Benefiting from the redeployment to the protection of ruby mining of provincial police tasked to stop illegal logging and poaching, a small but growing contingent of locals began working together with criminal networks to exploit resources for export to Asian markets. Linked to some of these trading networks are coastal dhows transporting heroin from Pakistan and Afghanistan via Mozambique and onward to European markets<sup>11</sup>.

Natural disasters have added to the province's woes, with successive cyclones in 2019 bringing destruction to towns and villages in Cabo Delgado well into the interior<sup>12</sup>. Displaced people, numbering over 100,000, found themselves without even the means for a subsistence existence.

8. Environmental Investigation Agency (2013) *First Class Connections: log smuggling, illegal logging and corruption in Mozambique* (London: EIA), pp. 1-16.

9. Estácio Valoi (2016) 'The Blood Rubies of Montepuez', *Foreign Policy*, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/05/03/the-blood-rubies-of-montepuez-mozambique-gemfields-illegal-mining/>

10. Sérgio Chichava, Who's the enemy behind the attacks to Cabo Delgado? Some hypothesis of the Mozambican government, [https://www.iese.ac.mz/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ideias-127e\\_SC.pdf](https://www.iese.ac.mz/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ideias-127e_SC.pdf); Sérgio Chichava, Did Frelimo create "Al Shabaab"? An analysis of the 15 October 2019 elections from Cabo Delgado (forthcoming).

11. Simone Haysom, Peter Gastrow and Mark Shaw (2018) 'The Heroin Coast: a political economy along the eastern African seaboard', Issue 4, June, *Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime*, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2018-06-27-research-paper-heroin-coast-pdf.pdf>.

12. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs website, <https://www.unocha.org/southern-and-eastern-africa-rosea/cyclones-idai-and-kenneth>

Beyond all of these factors, discovery of offshore natural gas deposits in 2010 offered a promise of unprecedented prosperity to the neglected region, and significant revenues to national government. While local expectations ran high, the realities of exploitation and the surge in internal migrants hoping to benefit in the immediate term from the hydrocarbon boom were different<sup>13</sup>. Local communities were, as in the case of the ruby mines, ignored; this was particularly so for the already marginalized Mwani, a coastal Muslim population whose historical antagonism towards the predominantly Christian Makonde was said to be reinforcing divisions, as was made clear in the destruction of the Nangololo Christian Mission in November 2020. And, although people of Mwani background are part of the insurgency, there is evidence of younger Makonde joining up as well, casting doubt on interpretations of the relevance of ethnicity as a source of conflict. Suspicions of corruption on the part of top officials in the ruling party have also fueled local discontent, at a time when incomes in northern Mozambique were systematically falling<sup>14</sup>. Multinational companies, including Anadarko and ENI, introduced employment opportunities as part of their infrastructure projects, but these fell far short of the needs and expectations of local communities.

## From 'Al Shabaab' to 'ISIS'

Conceptions of modernity, Arab nationalism, and traditionalism have historically all jostled for positions in these syncretic trading societies on the Swahili coast of Eastern and Southern Africa<sup>15</sup>. It was into this fertile milieu that Mozambique's 'Al Shabaab' emerged, linked to a radical Kenyan cleric Aboud Rogo Mohammed and his followers. His assassination on August 27, 2012, inspired days of rioting in Mombasa.

Ansar al-Sunna or Ahlu Sunna Wal Jammaa (loosely translated as 'people of the Sunna community') is the name formally used by Islamist militants operating in northern Mozambique. Their origins are tied to what some

13. Interview with João Feijó, 26 July 2019, in Club of Mozambique, <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/cabo-delgado-study-points-to-poverty-as-cause-of-armed-attacks-137869/>

14. Jerry Maquenzi and João Feijó (2019) 'Pobreza, desigualdades e conflitos no Norte de Cabo Delgado', *Observatório Rural - Documento do Trabalho* 76, Julho, <https://clubofmozambique.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/OR-76-Conflitualidade-em-Cabo-Delgado.pdf>

15. See, for example, Nathaniel Mathews (2013) 'Imagining Arab Communities: colonialism, Islamic reform and Arab identity in Mombasa, Kenya, 1897-1933', *Islamic Africa* 4:2, pp. 135-163.

locals thought was a sect operating in Cabo Delgado since 2015 if not earlier, also said to be influenced by Aboud Rogo Mohammed<sup>16</sup>. Within Cabo Delgado, disputes with local Muslim bodies and law officials, which opposed the sect's efforts to impose strict interpretations of sharia law in towns, resulted in increasingly violent clashes and the arrest of members of the sect<sup>17</sup>.

**Table 1: Some principles defended by 'Al Shabaab'**

**Rejection of lay education in favor of Islamic religious education**

**Obligatory use of the Islamic veil, covering the face, leaving only the eyes visible**

**Ban on the use and possession of civil identification documents**

**Do not greet state leaders**

**Do not take part in national events**

**Reject the national flag**

**Amputate the limbs of adulterers and thieves**

**Do not collaborate with or form part of the government or of state institutions**

**Reject the state's courts in favor of Islamic courts**

**Ban on the sale and consumption of alcohol**

Source: Sérgio Chichava, The first signs of Al Shabaab in Cabo Delgado: Some Stories from Macomia and Ancuabe, IDEIAS 129e, [https://www.iese.ac.mz/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/ideias-129e\\_SC.pdf](https://www.iese.ac.mz/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/ideias-129e_SC.pdf)

Though it is a matter of dispute, the crackdown by Tanzanian police against Aboud Rogo Mohammed's followers in Mtwara (just north of the Mozambican border) in early 2017 generated over one hundred arrests<sup>18</sup>. It is believed that some of the Tanzanians who escaped arrest by crossing into Mozambique joined up

16. Sérgio Chichava (2020) 'The First Signs of "Al Shabaab" in Cabo Delgado: some stories from Macomia and Ancuabe', IESE, Maputo, [https://www.iese.ac.mz/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/ideias-129e\\_SC.pdf](https://www.iese.ac.mz/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/ideias-129e_SC.pdf); Eric Morier-Genoud (2020) 'The Jihadi Insurgency in Mozambique: origins, nature and beginning' *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 14:3, pp. 396-412.

17. Eric Morier-Genoud (2020) 'The Jihadi Insurgency in Mozambique: origins, nature and beginning' *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 14:3, pp. 404-405.

18. Jules Duhamel on Twitter, @julesdhl 3 March 2019; also available on <https://www.acaps.org/country/mozambique/crisis/violent-insurgency-in-cabo-delgado>

with 'Al Shabaab', as did Ugandans from a similar police operation targeting the Usafi Mosque in Kampala<sup>19</sup>. Former garimpeiros from Tanzania were also found to be among the 'Al Shabaab' adherents.

The pattern of destruction by the Islamist extremist insurgents since the outbreak of violence in October 2017 has focused on government buildings including district offices, schools, and health clinics. For instance, the targeting of government health clinics in the province has forced 37 out of 130 to close (or be abandoned) in the districts of Mocímboa da Praia, Quissanga, Meluco, and Macomia, leaving three quarters of a million Mozambicans without access to public health facilities<sup>20</sup>. During the 2019 elections, attacks disrupted voter registration and voting in Cabo Delgado province, particularly in parts of Mocímboa da Praia, Palma, Macomia, and Meluco districts. According to Mozambique's National Election Commission, 10 polling stations were unable to open because of the conflict, preventing 5,400 people from voting in in Macomia, Mocímboa da Praia, and Muidumbe districts out of a total of 1,185,024 registered voters in the province. Similarly, the election campaigns of political parties were concentrated in district capitals and carried out under military escort<sup>21</sup>.

Estimates of the number of insurgents vary considerably, with some suggesting that there is a core of 200 members while others believe it to be four times that number<sup>22</sup>. Evidence suggests that members are partially recruited through offers of money and credit, with those who default being executed by beheading<sup>23</sup>. To date, 'Al-Shabaab' has refrained from the usual publicity of issuing statements after violent attacks, lending an air of mystery and even confusion as to their purpose. However, social media

19. A Bagala, (2019) 'Police want Usafi mosque imam, five others extradited'. Daily Monitor. [Online] Available at: <https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Police-Usafi-mosque-imam-five-extradited-Mozambique/688334-4957372-sb7ajhz/index.html> [consultado a 16 de Junho de 2020]. See Sérgio Chichava: Ugandenses e Tanzanianos do "Al Shabaab": um olhar à dimensão internacional do conflito em Cabo Delgado, in Salvador Forquilha (Ed), *Desafios Para Mocambique 2020*, IESE, Maputo (forthcoming).

20. ACAPS (2020) 'Violent Insurgency in Cabo Delgado', 16 July, <https://www.acaps.org/country/mozambique/crisis/violent-insurgency-in-cabo-delgado>

21. Sérgio Chichava, Did Frelimo create Al Shabaab. An analysis of the 15 October 2019 elections from Cabo Delgado (Forthcoming).

22. Yonas Demebe (2020) Mozambique: Islamic Insurgency: in-depth analysis of Ahl Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah (ASWJ), World Watch Research, July, p. 7.

23. Joseph Hanlon (2018) 'Islamists recruited by filling the development gap with jobs and loans – but some beheaded for defaulting', Mozambique News, 10 December.

sources in ‘Al-Shabaab’ claimed that these actions were done as part of their operations, a point vividly made during the temporary occupation of Mocímboa da Praia and Quissanga on March 23-24, 2020, when insurgents hoisted the black ISIS flag<sup>24</sup>. Bolstering this claim is ISIS’s recognition of the Mozambican Al-Shabaab group, which it calls their ‘Caliphate soldiers’ of the Islamic State of the Central African Province (ISCAP or Wilayat Wasat Ifriqiya), a region encompassing Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Congo. All this contributed to the U.S. government’s decision to list Al-Shabaab as an ISIS affiliate in March 2021<sup>25</sup>. Paradoxically, this official placement on Washington’s terrorism watch list may have inadvertently raised the group’s international profile further and even facilitated recruitment.

Police and government security forces, already present in Montepuez and engaged in protection of commercial interests, and forcible removals of local farmers and artisanal miners, moved into the area<sup>26</sup>. The militants’ sources of income are unclear, though it is possible they have benefited from the exploitation of natural resources such as illegal mining, the ivory trade, and even drug smuggling. Despite numerous skirmishes with militants, these security forces have not been able to stamp out the mobile insurgency. Legal and quasi-legal tools have been applied, including detentions and disappearances, as security forces have swept across the coastal region<sup>27</sup>. Decades of neglect and lack of investment in the armed forces since the end of civil war with Renamo in 1992 have left it lacking in the capacity to conduct relatively complex operations<sup>28</sup>. In addition, Mozambique’s armed forces suffer from a persistent leakage of information by unmotivated soldiers, in terms of logistical conditions on the ground and wages, and it is believed they have even been infiltrated by

radical elements cooperating with the insurgency.

Beyond government forces, after the attack on Anadarko in February 2019, private security firms were contracted by multinational firms to protect their employees and interests. However, Russian security firm the Wagner Group fled after an attack in March 2020 and, reportedly, sustaining losses of personnel at the hands of insurgents as well as disputes with the Mozambican military.<sup>29</sup> They were replaced by a South African security firm, Dyck Advisory Group (DAG), who were able to rollback the insurgency and stabilize temporarily in early April 2020. Yet some questioned DAG’s capacity to tackle the growing resources and sophistication of the insurgents as well as their methods, which have inflicted casualties on civilian populations<sup>30</sup>. As violence continued to plague the area, causing the number of IDPs to rise from 110,400 in March 2020 to nearly 530,000 in November 2020, in pointing to the need for closer coordination with the Mozambican security forces and action from around the region.

## Crisis, Paralysis and Action: Timely Action or Too Little, Too Late?

Although the crisis in Cabo Delgado threatens to spill into neighboring provinces and states, the response across the region was surprisingly muted until very recently<sup>31</sup>. The usual architects of intervention in Mozambique in the past—Zimbabwe and South Africa—were themselves preoccupied with their own domestic political crises exacerbated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Tanzania’s own interests in the Rovuma Delta basin, both directly in the offshore hydrocarbons and through the proximity of its mobile Swahili communities, certainly argued for it to play a key role in addressing instability in neighboring Mozambique. Tanzania too, however, has been slow to act, arguably because of the violent expulsion of its citizens from Montepuez. It only

24. BBC News, ‘Mozambique: Is Cabo Delgado the latest Islamic State outpost?’ 5 May 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-52532741>

25. State Department Terrorist Designations of ISIS Affiliates and Leaders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique - United States Department of State

26. Estácio Valoi (2016) ‘The Blood Rubies of Montepuez’, Foreign Policy, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2016/05/03/the-blood-rubies-of-montepuez-mozambique-gemfields-illegal-mining/>

27. Human Rights Watch (2019) World Report, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/mozambique>

28. As Hanlon pointed out in 2010, since the end of war Mozambique “has only maintained a small and largely ineffective army and tiny military budget”. Hanlon, J. ‘Mozambique: the war ended 17 years ago, but we are still poor’, Conflict, Security & Development, 10:1, 77-102. In 2013, Defense Web stated that most of Mozambican army equipment was unserviceable and that its air Force and navy were in a poor state. miners or prohibiting their activity, the government must find a way to. The case of rubies in Montepuez shows it clearly. th

29. Pjor Sauer (2019) ‘In push for Africa, Russia’s Wagner mercenaries are out of their depth in Mozambique’ Moscow Times 19 November, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/11/19/in-push-for-africa-russias-wagner-mercenaries-are-out-of-their-depth-in-mozambique-a68220>

30. Amnesty International (2021) ‘What I Saw is Death: war crimes in Mozambique’s forgotten cape’, 2 March Mozambique: “What I saw is death: War crimes in Mozambique’s forgotten cape | Amnesty International

31. Tonderayi Mukeredzi (2020) ‘Mozambique’s Insurgency is a Regional Problem’ Foreign Policy <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/01/mozambique-islamist-insurgency-regional-problem-cabo-delgado/>

deployed its troops to the border to curb any spill over. The dangers posed to Tanzanian authority were made clear in October 2020 with the insurgent attack on the border town of Kitaya and the killing of citizens.

By June 2020, however, regional indifference seemed to be changing and there were apparently discussions of coordinated intervention by SADC<sup>32</sup>. President Nyusi's reluctance to acknowledge the crisis in Cabo Delgado, possibly because of the implications of invoking legal clauses to trigger SADC intervention, kept the issue off the agenda of SADC summits until November 2020<sup>33</sup>. SADC meetings in May and August 2020 issued statements on the insurgency which fell short of action. However, in the wake of violence against foreign firms and their employees, coupled with more attacks in southern Tanzania in October and insurgents' gains in Cabo Delgado, the situation could no longer be ignored. SADC convened an extraordinary summit in Botswana in late November 2020, attended by senior officials from Mozambique, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Malawi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo<sup>34</sup>. SADC committed to a "comprehensive regional response", which observers assumed would result in deployment of a regional force. However, in another display of ambivalence, the Mozambican president failed to participate in the summit, thus weakening perceptions of collective purpose. In fact, the summit's main contribution seems to have been to demonstrate that unified action by SADC remained off the table, though there has been closer coordination of military action by governments, and shared intelligence.

Nyusi's preference, in fact, seems to be to avoid or at least severely constrain any form of international involvement, be it SADC or other international actors. For instance, discussions with Portugal's defense minister, João Gomes Cravinho, in December 2020, resulted

only in a commitment by Lisbon to provide training to the Mozambican armed forces. The U.S. and France have both indicated their willingness to play a role in the security of the region with the French presence on the island of Mayotte offering a location for naval surveillance and patrol operations off the coast<sup>35</sup>. Total, a major stakeholder in the offshore natural gas deposits, has employed former French legionnaires to manage security at its newly constructed LGN plant on the Afungi peninsula. Worryingly for Mozambique, there was some talk of Total shifting its logistical operations, along with its employees, to Mayotte, but in February, Total recommitted to keeping the logistics base in Pemba. The violent attack on a hotel frequented by contract workers on the outskirts of Palma on March 24, 2021, however, which killed dozens of people including many foreigners, marked a reversal of this position.<sup>36</sup>

The conflict in northern Mozambique, having spilled over into the border towns of Tanzania, continues to undermine peace, stability, and development in the region. As the recent SADC summit in April demonstrates, while countries like Zimbabwe are poised to act individually, the organization's 'responsibility to help (a) member state under terrorist threat' has yet to translate into direct collective intervention.<sup>37</sup> The Mozambican government remains, for the time being, reluctant to bring in regional and international resources in a substantive way. As Mozambicans themselves know from their own history, insurgency and conflict in seemingly remote parts of the country can have unpredictable consequences. Even with prospective regional and international actions, addressing the structural inequalities in Cabo Delgado, helping damaged local communities, and transforming regional economic opportunities into improved livelihoods is the only viable long-term solution to the conflict.

32. Institute for Security Studies, 'Mozambique insurgency requires urgent response from SADC and AU', 13 August 2020, <https://issafrica.org/about-us/press-releases/mozambique-insurgency-requires-urgent-response-from-sadc-and-the-au>; Theo Neethling (2020) 'Why South Africa has a keen interest in extremist violence in northern Mozambique', The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/why-south-africa-has-a-keen-interest-in-extremist-violence-in-northern-mozambique-140745>

33. Marko Svcevic (2020) 'The Legality of a SADC Intervention in Cabo Delgado in the absence of Mozambican Consent', *OpinioJuris* 2 November, <https://opiniojuris.org/2020/11/02/the-legality-of-a-sadc-intervention-in-cabo-delgado-in-the-absence-of-mozambican-consent/>

34. Southern African Development Community (2020), 'Communique of the Extraordinary Organ Troika Summit Plus Force Intervention Brigade - Troop Contributing Countries, Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Mozambique' 27 November, <https://www.sadc.int/news-events/news/communique-extraordinary-organ-troika-summit-plus-force-intervention-brigade-troop-contributing-countries-democratic-republic-co/>

35. ACLED (2021) Cabo Ligado Weekly 25-31 January, <https://acleddata.com/2021/02/02/cabo-ligado-weekly-25-31-january-2021/>; Joseph Hanlon (2020) 'US and France look to move in', *Mozambique News Reports and Clippings*, 27 July 2020, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202007270639.html>

36. Francis Debeaupuy, Paul Burkhardt and Borges Nhamire (2021) 'Total suspends 20bn LNG project in Mozambique indefinitely', *Al Jazeera* 26 April, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2021/4/26/total-suspends-20bn-lng-project-in-mozambique-indefinitely#:~:text=Total%20suspends%20%24%20BN%20LNG%20project%20in%20Mozambique%20indefinitely,French%20energy%20giant&text=French%20energy%20giant%20Total%20SE%20suspended%20its%20%24%20%20billion%20liquefied,by%20Islamic%20State%20linked%20militants.>

37. Southern African Development Community (2021) 'SADC has responsibility to help Member State under terrorist threat', press release, 29 April, <https://www.sadc.int/news-events/news/sadc-has-responsibility-help-member-state-under-terrorist-threat/>; Own Gagare (2021) 'Zimbabwe secretly deploys combat personnel to help Mozambique fend off insurgents' *City Press* 19 April, <https://www.news24.com/citypress/news/zimbabwe-secretly-deploys-combat-personnel-to-help-mozambique-fend-off-insurgents-20210418>

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## About the Policy Center for the New South

The Policy Center for the New South: A public good for strengthening public policy. The Policy Center for the New South (PCNS) is a Moroccan think tank tasked with the mission of contributing to the improvement of international, economic and social public policies that challenge Morocco and Africa as integral parts of the Global South.

The PCNS advocates the concept of an open, responsible and proactive « new South »; a South that defines its own narratives, as well as the mental maps around the Mediterranean and South Atlantic basins, within the framework of an open relationship with the rest of the world. Through its work, the think tank aims to support the development of public policies in Africa and to give experts from the South a voice in the geopolitical developments that concern them. This positioning, based on dialogue and partnerships, consists in cultivating African expertise and excellence, capable of contributing to the diagnosis and solutions to African challenges.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author.



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