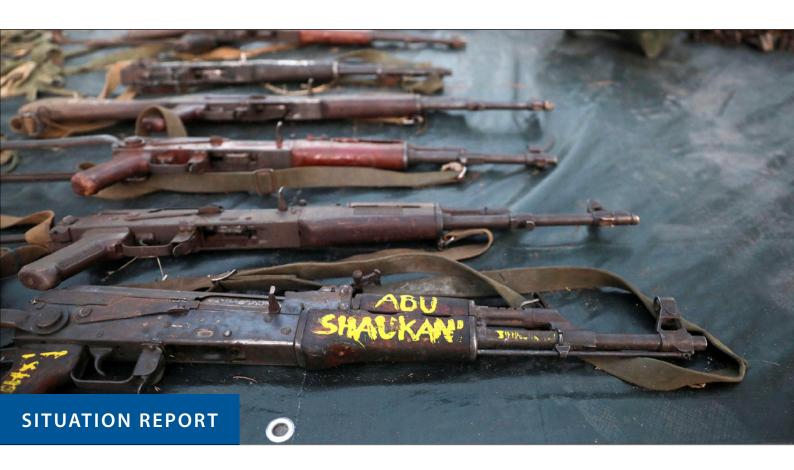# Strategic Options for Managing Violent Extremism in Southern Africa: The Case of Mozambique

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Cover: Weapons and ammunition retrieved from militants on display in the town of Mocimboa da Praia, Mozambique, 22 September 2021. REUTERS/Baz Ratner

This report is based on three workshops on Violent Extremism in Mozambique and the Southern African region, hosted by the Centre for International and Strategic Studies (CEEI) and the Southern African Defence and Security Management Network (SADSEM), and supported by the Maputo Office of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES). An inclusive workshop report titled 'Managing Violent Extremism in Africa: Lessons, Strategic Options for Mozambique and Southern Africa and Institutional Responses' (CEEI, SADSEM, FES) is available upon request.

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SUMMARY

Southern Africa is experiencing an upsurge in violent extremism (VE). The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mozambique and Tanzania have all experienced attacks by extremist groups, with events in Cabo Delgado province in Northern Mozambique in particular making international headlines in recent years. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has been called on to support the Mozambican government, and has deployed a Standby Force to the area. Although a force intervention may help to limit violent attacks, it cannot bring lasting peace. This would require addressing the complex political, economic and social factors that have created a breeding ground for VE.

The purpose of this report is to present strategic options for managing VE in Southern Africa, particularly in Cabo Delgado. The effective management of VE requires comprehensive and multifaceted analyses, an identification of the interests and concerns of the various role players, and strategic initiatives that are multi-pronged, inclusive, and address the concerns of the state, communities, and those prone to radicalisation. Cooperation and coordination among various government agencies and with other actors involved and interested in building solutions are key to preventing and countering VE.

Strategists must draw together different viewpoints, understand competitive solutions, evaluate the multiple challenges facing each approach, examine possible scenarios, and work with those who can build a coherent strategy. An effective strategy should avoid ad-hoc remedies, incorporate a multi-disciplinary approach, and capture the 'big picture'.

Although some lessons might be learnt from other regions, Southern Africa and its member states need to develop their own understandings and strategies, appropriate to their specific context. This report seeks to contribute to this process by analysing the context of VE in Southern Africa, particularly in Mozambique, before concluding with recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

IN RECENT YEARS, armed conflict in Africa has increased and armed groups have proliferated. Violent extremism, communal (non-state actor) conflicts, rebellions, insurgencies, coups (attempted and successful), and violence related to elections and service delivery all punctuate the continent's conflicted landscape. The continued fragmentation of armed groups, protracted and recurring conflicts, and repeated mediations all point to the need to revise conflict management approaches.

Over the past three decades, Southern Africa has gained a reputation for being relatively peaceful and stable. Despite localised armed conflict, piracy, transnational crime, looting, and political and service delivery protests, the region has, since the 1990s, not experienced violent extremism and armed rebellion. This situation is changing. The presence of extremist groups such as Al Sunnah Wa Jama'ah (or Al Shabaab) in Cabo Delgado, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in the

A member of the SADC Standby Force walks past a burnt-out truck outside the port of Mocimboa da Praia, Mozambique, 22 September 2021. REUTERS/Baz Ratner

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and the proclamation of the Central Africa Province of the Islamic State clearly present serious threats to the security of the region.

Since 2017, attacks in the gas-rich province of Cabo Delgado have grown more frequent, and claimed growing numbers of lives. These attacks have targeted government forces (the police and army), local communities, oil installations, transport systems, harbours, and other essential infrastructure. According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), by April 2021, organised violence in Cabo Delgado had claimed 2 743 lives (www.caboligado.com). The situation in Mozambique is therefore very serious, with direct security implications for the SADC region as a whole.

On 23 June 2021, the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation resolved to deploy a Standby Force to Mozambique. A SADC expert group recommended the deployment of 3 000 troops comprising three battalions of infantry and two special force squadrons armed with attack helicopters and warships to 'combat and neutralise' the insurgents (Fabricius 2021). The mission was launched in early August, comprising troops from Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa and Tanzania. The commander of the Standby Force is Major-General Xolani Mankayi, an officer in the South African Defence Force. A separate force of about 1 000 Rwandan soldiers are also assisting the Mozambican government. This report provides an in-depth analysis of the setting in which the SADC force will be deployed, and concludes by setting out some options for a comprehensive anti-VE strategy.

In 2020/21, the Centre for International and Strategic Studies (CEEI) and the Southern African Defence and Security Management Network (SADSEM), supported by the Maputo Office of the

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), hosted a series of workshops on the security situation in Mozambique. Three virtual engagements were held which provided policy-makers, researchers and practitioners with an opportunity for in-depth discussions.

The first workshop, on 'Managing Violent Extremism in Africa: Lessons Learnt', took place on 25 November 2020. The second, on 'Strategic Options for Managing Violent Extremism in Mozambique and Southern Africa', took place on 11 December 2020, and the third, on 'Institutional Responses to Violent Extremism: Recommendations and Policy Options for Regional Organisations', on 10 February 2021. This report draws on these discussions, augmented by further research and analysis.

VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN AFRICA

Violent extremism (VE) is a complex phenomenon that disrupts and undermines peace, development and security. Most of the current forms of extremism in Africa are driven by religious and/or ethnic fundamentalism. According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), there were 381 attacks targeting civilians in Africa in 2015, resulting in 1 394 fatalities. This number rose sharply in ensuing years, and by 2020 there were 7 180 attacks targeting civilians resulting in 12 519 fatalities (see unhcr.org).

VE is observable from the African West Coast through the Sahel to the Horn and East Coast, and from the North down to the Great Lakes Region in Central Africa. It has also spread to Southern Africa, most notably to the northern Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado. A quick glance at some the grouping across the continent points to the widespread nature of this threat:

- Al Shabaab in Somalia and Kenya, and the Islamic State of Somalia;
- The Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP), or ISIS West Africa;
- Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin (Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger);
- Jamaat Nasr al Islaam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) and the Islamic State of the Greater Sahara (ISGS) in the Sahel region (Mali and Burkina Faso);
- The Islamic State of Algeria and Al-Qaida in the Islamic Magreb;
- The Islamic State of Libya and Islamic State of Sinai;
- The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and/or Islamic State of Central Africa (ISCAP) in the DRC.

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), or just Islamic State (IS), which emerged during the civil war in Iraq, is said to be growing its 'provinces' in Africa, while Al Qaida has been active on the continent since the 1990s.

Somalia has been prone to violent extremist attacks since the early 1990s. Prior to the deployment of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in 2007, Al Shabaab controlled large parts of the country and carried out incursions into neighbouring countries, notably Kenya. Al Shabaab means 'youth', and young people make up most of the VE group in Somalia. One needs to recall that 70% of its citizens are younger than 30, and the mean age is 18 (wordpopulationreview.com). Fragile state institutions, high levels of poverty and unemployment, violence perpetrated by security personnel, intra-clan conflicts, and a perceived lack of justice are among the reasons why Somali youths join Al Shabaab.

It is clear that the rise in VE in Mozambique cannot be ascribed to a single cause. The drivers are multifaceted, and any sustainable solution must begin to address local grievances, the lack of security, the weak state presence, the marginalisation of local people, and unequal development.

From 1991 to 2012, the dominant response to the challenge of extremism in Somalia was coercive. In 2016 it adopted a National Strategy and Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism. Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) strategies, which are becoming common practice across Africa, shifts the emphasis away from armed responses to dealing with some of the social concerns underlying VE. However, they are not a panacea for the multiple and complex 'push factors' driving VE.

Over the past decade, the Sahel has seen an exponential growth in the number of VE attacks. Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Nigeria and Chad have responded to these episodes by forming regional security mechanisms such as the G5 and the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), and making use of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) support from France, the European Union, and other international actors. These predominantly militarised responses have not yielded sustainable peace, and groups such as ISGS and JNIM appear to be expanding their influence.

In this region as well, state fragility and a consequent lack of security and essential services create enabling conditions for violent extremists. Furthermore, perceptions of marginalisation and exclusion push local people towards groups providing alternative spaces which give them a sense of belonging. Intimidation by VE groups, violence at the hands of security personnel, and the provision of basic services and economic gain by VE groups are among the factors driving the rise in extremism. Besides physical security, sustainable conflict management in these environments also require dealing with the structural, social, and psychological factors driving VE. This requires various short-term interventions, including stabilisation and mediation, as well as medium to longer-term interventions that deal with justice, trauma, economic development, and state-society relations.

VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN MOZAMBIQUE

Recent statistics suggest that VE in Mozambique is a growing threat. Since October 2017, the country has experienced 858 incidents of organised violence, claiming 2 811 lives, and more than 750 000 citizens have been forcibly displaced (see unhr.org). Mozambique was ranked 15th on the 2020 Global Terrorism Index (GTI), which measures the impact of terrorism on 135 countries, and eighth in Africa. Nigeria was ranked third on the GTI, Somalia fifth and the DRC ninth (IEP Online).

It is widely accepted that VE and terrorism have domestic and external causes. In line with this, there are no simple explanations of recent events in Cabo Delgado. Multiple players, multiple issues, multiple grievances and multiple dimensions must be analysed to develop an appropriate understanding of this phenomenon. The Cabo Delgado insurgency and counter-insurgency is

still in its infancy, and is very diffuse. Analysts need to study local, national and international factors and dynamics in order to reach a comprehensive understanding. The complex nature of the problem does not lend itself to simple solutions which national policy-makers could easily adopt. Conventional approaches to countering VE are also too limited to effectively address the problem at hand.

The origins of VE in Mozambique

Islam has a long-standing presence in Mozambique, predating colonial rule, and about 19% of its citizens are Muslim. The violence in Cabo Delgado is being perpetrated by Al Sunnah wa Jama'ah (ASWJ), a jihadist group advocating the formation of an Islamic State. While the ASWJ staged its first violent attack on a police station in 2017, its origins can be traced back to 1998 when divergences between different practices of Islam in Mozambique led to its breakaway. It has particularly concentrated on recruiting disaffected youths.

The growing radicalisation of young people in Northern Mozambique has been traced to the penetration of radical clerics from nearby countries such as Tanzania and Kenya, as well as those sent to study at madrassas in countries such as Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. In this way, madrassas and mosques became a recruiting ground for extremists in the region (Habibe et al 2019). The extremists began to challenge local leaders and enforce traditional Islamic practices passed on by the Kenyan extremist Aboud Rogo Mohammed, among others. Poverty and general social alienation pushed young people into joining ASWJ. Cabo Delgado is one of the poorest provinces of Mozambique. Youths were first recruited into VE groups with promises of scholarships, jobs, and/or money. Today, extremists use a combination of material benefits, persuasion, abductions and threats to grow their support base.

Violent attacks by the ASWJ have escalated since 2017. These include random attacks on villages and towns; the destruction of farmland, shops and markets; attacks on cargo and passenger transport; attacks on military targets; and the destruction of public and private infrastructure. The attacks have featured random killings, mutilation, torture, beheadings, the murder of children, and mass kidnappings, including the kidnapping of women and children.

The patterns of violence have changed over time. At first, attacks were concentrated in the coastal areas. As the group gained armed capacity, it sought to extend its reach to the Makonde Plateau, but found it difficult to gain support in that area (Devermont 2019). Its main targets are police stations, military camps and bases, government / administrative buildings, hospitals and educational institutions, private companies, cargo and passenger vehicles, banks, private property and markets. Most of the attacks have been on isolated villages, but the group has also demonstrated its capacity to attack heavily guarded towns such as Mocimboa da Praia, Quissanga and Palma. (In one recent widely publicised incident, the ASWJ seized the city of Mocimboa da Praia in August 2020.)

Initially the group was financed via a loan and loan sharking system for young people interested in doing business in Cabo Delgado. This was meant to compensate for the near total lack of access to credit from formal financial institutions. Income was also derived from illicit businesses such as trafficking in precious stones, drug trafficking, and the sale of ivory. Money transfers from individuals using Mpesa, Mcash, and Conta Movel were also utilised. The group has also received some logistical support from local communities and from outside sources.

Rwandan soldiers at Kigali International Airport, Rwanda, en route to joining the SADC Standby Force in Mozambique, 10 July 2021. REUTERS/Jean Bizimana.

Drivers of VE in Cabo Delgado

The Cabo Delgado region has historical religious and trade ties with Islamic communities in East Africa, mainly those in the coastal region of Tanzania. Porous borders with Tanzania allow easy movement and the cross-pollination of VE ideas and processes.

There are various explanations of the rise of VE in Northern Mozambique. Some analysts explain this in largely ethnic terms. According to Santos, the Makonde and Mwani identities differ in a number of ways, involving religious affiliations, socio-economic activities, economic power, and political links. In this view, the strong links between the Makonde and FRELIMO, the Mozambican ruling party, have alienated other ethnic groups that have felt discriminated against since independence (Santos 2010:3). According to Hill and Nhamire (2018), the 'terrorist' targets reveal an ethnic dimension to the conflict, because the houses they have torched all belong to predominantly Christian members of the Makonde ethnic group, while they have spared the homes of the Kimwani, a mainly Muslim community.

Building on Eric Morier-Genoud's assertions that terrorists have been recruited mainly from the Mwani ethnic group who have felt marginalised, Devermont (2019) shows that ASWJ struggles to operate outside the predominately ethnic Mwani coastline. The idea of an ethnic component is also shared by Habibe, Forquilha and Pereira (2019).

Unemployment

High levels of unemployment are also noted as creating an enabling environment for radicalisation and violent extremism. Maquenzi and Feijo (2019) and Habibe et al (2019) cite the lack of job

opportunities in the formal economy as a major grievance of local youths. According to USAID's Mozambique Fact Sheet, despite strong and sustained economic growth over the past decade, the Mozambican economy has not been structurally transformed – specifically, economic growth has not been translated into increased employment opportunities. While unemployment stands at about 23%, more than a third of youths aged 20-25 are jobless. This is most acute in regions further away from Maputo province, particularly in rural areas such as the coastal region of Cabo Delgado (USAID online).

The demographic boom ('youth bulge') affords the basis for yet another explanation. According to the World Bank Group (2018), the population of Mozambique increased from 18 million in 2000 to a projected 28.8 million in 2017, an annual average growth rate of 3 percent.

Gas discoveries

The discovery of offshore gas in Cabo Delgado is also cited as a causal factor. This made global news, including speculation that Mozambique could become the world's third largest exporter of liquefied natural gas (Boman 2012). The discoveries attracted many multinational companies interested in investing in the region, and Cabo Delgado became a 'gold rush site'. This booming extractive industry created a sense of relief and hope among local communities. However, few local people benefited from these finds. Moreover, most people recruited for work on the gas fields were from outside the region. Locals therefore felt deprived and marginalised, another grievance that could be exploited for jihadist radicalisation.

According to Haysom (2018), illicit activities in Cabo Delgado have been rife since the 1990s. This is because of a power vacuum caused by a weak state. Weak public institutions and high levels of poverty in the area provided room for illicit activities such as poaching, illegal mining, illegal logging, illegal timber trafficking, wildlife trafficking, human trafficking, the illegal trafficking and sale of precious stones (gemstone smuggling), and drug trafficking. Following a clampdown in Tanzania and Kenya, Cabo Delgado became an even more important East African drug corridor (Beula 2020). These activities are an important financial resource for insurgents. They are linked to a labyrinth of illicit networks that extend horizontally, vertically and regionally, have become the dominant mode of acquiring wealth, and will therefore be difficult to root out.

The 'Forgotten Cape'

Other reasons for VE are drawn from a depiction of Cabo Delgado as the 'Forgotten Cape'. In this view, the region has been marginalised since independence by the FRELIMO-led government, with little or no investment in basic services and amenities. Consequently, the region has high rates of illiteracy, infant mortality, unemployment, disease and crime. In response to this perceived historical contempt, the people of the coast have mostly voted for the opposition, mainly RENAMO. Communities along the coast feel that FRELIMO, which gave the Makonde an 'Antigos Combatentes' (war veteran) stipend, favoured their kinsmen from the plateau (Feido 2020). Therefore Habibe et al (2019) contend that social exclusion is a probable cause of the insurgency in Cabo Delgado.

According to Maquenzi and Feijó (2019), the advent of the extractive gas industry frustrated many young people, as – due to their poor education and lack of technical skills – they were unable to benefit from the open job opportunities. Given the lack of formal state schools or technical schools, most young people attended religious schools. Young people from Maputo had an

The booming new gas industry created a sense of relief and hope among local communities. However, few local people have benefited from these finds, and most people recruited for work on the gas fields were from outside the region.

educational advantage and were therefore hired by the gas companies, generating north–south tensions. Maquenze and Feijó also assert that the resettlement of communities to accommodate the gas plants fuelled violent extremism. Local people expected to be compensated for their displacement, but this never happened.

Land grabbing is a major issue in the region: the Mozambican government, foreign companies and local investors are aggressively competing over land for future projects. In the process, many families have sold their land and have been pushed far from the coastline, where they now find it difficult to make a living. This has created a lot of resentment, especially among youths, who feel they have lost their traditional land.

External actors

External actors with interests in the region are also held responsible for the rise in radical Islam as a means of halting gas exploration. This argument is predominantly advanced by military cadres and politicians. They claim the subversion is instigated by countries which are worried that the gas discoveries will make Mozambique a powerful competitor in the gas market. Interest groups from Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, for example, could be part of a plot against the Total project. Therefore, in their view, Mozambique is caught in a proxy war, created and financed by other gas-producing states (Feijo et al 2020).

Others believe the violence in Cabo Delgado falls within the long-held goal of the Islamic State to expand globally and to establish a caliphate in east Africa, stretching from Mozambique to Somalia, and that ISIS wants to incorporate Cabo Delgado into its Central African Province (ISCAP) (US Department of state 2021; Santos 2020). However, others contest this notion. ASWJ, they argue, is not part of the formal ISIS structure, is not closely connected with ISIS, and can therefore not be called an ISIS affiliate (Barnett 2020). They believe ISIS is using ASWJ's successful attacks to advance its own propaganda and visibility, while ASWJ is using the ISIS image to gain credibility, power and help from external ISIS affiliates.

Private military companies

There are claims that Private Military Companies (PMCs) are involved in inciting the violence. Given that they make their money from security contracts with multinational corporations, the argument goes, they have an interest in destabilising the region and creating a need for their services. Many accuse those companies of having played some part in the uprising (UNODC 2019).

PMCs active in the area include Erik Prince's Frontier Services Group (FSG), the first to sell its services to the oil companies and the Mozambican government; the South African Dyck Advisory Group (DAG); the Russian Wagner Group; Arkhe Risk Solutions, a local subsidiary of the South African company Omega which is domiciled in Mauritius; and GardaWorld, a Canadian company contracted by

Total and ExxonMobil. Many other companies, including the British company G4S and the Welsh company Blue Mountain, are now active in the area (Feller 2021).

Organised crime

Other analysts (including Haysom, Mapfumo and Hosken) highlight the role of organised crime syndicates. The insurgents, they argue, are themselves exploiting links with other African crime syndicates to gain access to weapons and sell their bounty. Vessels carrying huge amounts of drugs have been intercepted in the area.

Yet others point out that the oil companies acted with a complete disregard for local needs and interests. They engaged in aggressive land grabs, provided little support for local communities, financed poorly planned and poorly designed resettlement projects, failed to build key infrastructure, and failed to invest in social responsibility activities or training schemes (Mukpo 2021). The outsiders whom they hired received better salaries, better working conditions such as housing and transportation, and additional stipends. The unequal treatment of outsiders and local people further created a sense of marginalisation. The best jobs, these analysts point out, are being filled from abroad or from the south of the country. A small group of local people have access to lower-level jobs at lower rates of pay, such as security guards and cleaners, thereby accentuating social inequalities between locals and outsiders (Feijó 2021).

Therefore, it is clear that the rise in VE in Mozambique cannot be ascribed to a single cause. The drivers are multifaceted, and any sustainable solution must begin to address local grievances, the lack of security, the weak state presence, the marginalisation of local people, and unequal development.

CONSEQUENCES OF VE AND ITS LOCAL IMPACTS

Studies of the consequences of VE have concentrated on three aspects: the socio-economic impact, the human security impact, and the impact on vulnerable people. Less attention has been given to the political impact.

Socio-economic impacts include the destruction of public and private infrastructure and property, with far-reaching consequences for business, employment, public administration, education, and other aspects of social life. Among others, the transport industry, tourism industry and gas industry have been disrupted. The conflict has worsened the deprivation of local communities, including food security. This will provide the ASWJ with even more fertile ground for recruitment.

Impacts on human security

Impacts on human security are multiple and include:

- **Personal security**: killings, mutilations, beheadings, sexual violence, the creation of internally displaced persons and refugees;
- **Economic security**: loss of jobs, loss of income, loss or disruption of subsistence activities such as farming and fishing;

Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi and Rwandan President Paul Kagame inspect Mozambican and Rwandan security forces, Pemba, Mozambique, 24 September 2021. REUTERS/Baz Ratner

- **Health security**: reduced access to health services and safe water, higher exposure to cholera, measles, malaria and COVID-19, and reduced attention to sexual and reproductive health care(see WebRelief);
- **Political security**: attacks on people supporting the government and FRELIMO, human rights violations, torture, executions, forced disappearances and restrictions on free movement);
- **Community security**: high levels of violence against traditional Islamic communities, local cultures and habits, the rise of ethnic animosity, and direct attacks on traditional and community leaders;
- **Food security:** reduced access to food, growing hunger and malnutrition; and
- **Environmental security:** loss of habitat for subsistence farming and sustainable tourism.

As in other conflict zones, VE in Cabo Delgado has had a major impact on women and vulnerable groups. Many internally displaced persons are women, children and the elderly. It is women who assume the responsibility of caring for their families in the IDP centres. Women have been abducted, taken as wives, raped, and forced to perform reproductive-related work for the ASWJ. The second most affected group are children who are orphaned and abandoned, lose access to schooling, and are forced into marriage and prostitution. Moreover, ASWJ is reportedly using child soldiers (Cunha 2021).

Political impacts

The political impacts of the violence are both internal and external. Opposition parties, civil society organisations, the media and other influential role players have pressured the government into asking for and accepting outside assistance, since it could not deal with the problem on its own. The demands for more securitised interventions grew, and there were calls for the president to address corruption in the Mozambique Defence Force (FADM).

External pressure came from the United States and France, which wanted to support the fight against ASWJ. The UN and EU demanded that the Mozambican government avoid human rights abuses, and provide humanitarian assistance. SADC also called on the government to accept its support in the fight against ASWJ. The Mozambican government has had to respond to these demands and to accept assistance, contradicting its previous standpoint that it had enough capacity to deal with the challenge on its own, thereby retaining its sovereignty.

Currently, Mozambique is '*entre a espada e a parede*' (between the sword and the wall). It wants foreign help, but fears that 'boots on the ground' will fuel rather than quell the conflict. Besides fearing a vertical escalation, in the form of increasing terrorist attacks, greater violence, and the use of new weapons or suicide bombers, the government also fears its horizontal spread to other provinces, such as Nampula and Niassa. This could trap the government in a dependence on foreign troops.

THE MOZAMBICAN GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE

Against this background, the Mozambican government has adopted a dual approach to the insurgency in Cabo Delgado: a military response, involving the deployment of the army, police and intelligence services; and a non-military response. At first, the ruling narrative in government circles was that the violence was largely perpetrated by criminals, and therefore a policing matter. As attacks against the police escalated, special forces and riot police were sent in. When they too could not quell the violence, the military was sent in. However, operational command remained with the police. The initial tactic was to increase surveillance and mount roadblocks in the most problematic areas and villages. When the insurgents acquired more weapons and began to attack heavily guarded villages and towns, the Defence and Security Forces (DFS) turned to an active search-and-destroy strategy. To bolster this effort, the government signed contracts with private military companies such as the Wagner Group and Dyck Advisory Group. The military offensive involved a clear-and-hold strategy, including searching houses for extremists, and searching for weapons caches in the so-called '*operações de limpeza*'.

This achieved mixed results. Many extremists were killed, and the security forces regained lost territory. Extremists were pushed into defensive mode, and the spread of terrorism was limited to the coastline. Weapons caches were also found. Although ASWJ still has the capacity to seize towns and villages, it has been significantly weakened. The DFS say they cannot eliminate the ASWJ because the state is unable to purchase the necessary arms and equipment. If they had the means, they could do so successfully. For this reason, the government has turned away offers of external military support and instead asked donors for support in the form of logistics, communications, training, and so on.

It is clear that the Mozambican government should develop and refine a comprehensive strategy for combating VE. The UN, AU and SADC counter-terrorism policy frameworks should be used as a starting point. However, they need to be adapted to local contexts, and take account of national capacities.

Captured extremists were processed in terms of the country's criminal justice system. But the system is outdated, and many were freed because of the limitations of the law, a lack of evidence, and poorly processed prosecutions. New legislation to combat terrorism has been passed, and the penal code has been reviewed.

Other non-military approaches to terrorism include anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing (AML/CFT) measures as recommended by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG). Although the Mozambican government is unable to implement all the recommended measures, it has implemented some.

The government has also developed a communication strategy aimed at winning the hearts and minds of local people. The president and other high-level figures, notably the ministers of defence and home affairs, have appealed to communities to collaborate, and to raise awareness against cooperating with the extremists. Community policing groups, local defence forces and militias have been established in the plateau regions.

Development agency

In a potentially significant move, the government has created a development agency, Agência de Desenvolvimento Integrado do Norte (ADIN), tasking with addressing poverty, social and economic inequalities, economic exclusion, and unequal development in the northern region. It has, however, been heavily criticised, It is still in its infancy, and is struggling to raise funds for its programmes and projects. One negative aspect of the agency is that it is heavily dependent on external aid. A grant of $700 million from the World Bank has been welcomed, but is not nearly enough to meet local needs (Pswarayi-Riddihough 2020). CSOs, NGOs, and Inter-Governmental Organisations (including the EU, UN, UNICEF, IOM and UNHCR) have provided humanitarian assistance, and religious and community leaders have been involved in preventive and counter-terrorism measures.

From 15 March 2021 onwards, US Special Operations Forces held a two-month Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) exercise with Mozambican forces. France is also considering a maritime cooperation agreement with Mozambique at the request of the latter's minister of defence, Jaime Neto. The French Armed Forces in the Indian Ocean (FAZSOI) have already conducted joint training exercises with Mozambican forces. In October 2020, the EU confirmed that it would assist the Mozambican government to re-establish security in Cabo Delgado. It will provide training, logistics and medical services to support the Mozambique military, but the EU ambassador, Antonio Sanchez-Benedito Gaspar, has made it clear that bringing in EU forces is not on the agenda.

In March 2021, Portugal announced it would send 60 soldiers to train Mozambican soldiers. The UK signed an MoU with Mozambique in May 2019, committing to tackling the insurgency in Cabo Delgado through defence cooperation and 'tackling the underlying issues' (Feller 2021). As noted earlier, SADC has also sent a support mission to Cabo Delgado. Prof Mpho Molomo has been appointed as the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, and Head of the SADC Mission.

Mozambique has been adopting inadequate solutions for a complex problem that involves many causes, players, issues and interests. These approaches have failed to stop the insurgency, and in some ways helped to fuel the conflict instead. Strategically, Mozambique should learn from the attempts by other counties and role players on the continent to combat VE, in terms of garnering what works and what doesn't (in other words, a sharing of experiences and lessons learnt workshop should be held with the relevant stakeholders). A multidisciplinary approach to understanding the underlying causes of VE, the interests at play, and garnering endogenous knowledge towards sustainable solutions would produce a more viable, holistic and home-grown perspective.

BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNT

It is clear that the Mozambican government should develop and refine a comprehensive strategy for combating VE. The UN, AU and SADC counter-terrorism policy frameworks should be used as a starting point. However, they need to be adapted to local contexts, and take account of national capacities.

According to Philip Obaji Jr (2021), Mozambique and SADC must learn some lessons from other negative regional experiences in Africa: 'Mozambique and the entire SADC must draw on the lessons from responding to Boko Haram, which was a less dangerous group until a very poor response by the Nigerian government to its movement encouraged the sect to extend its operations to Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. Similarly, the handling of the insurgency in Mali enabled jihadists to spread their activities to Burkina Faso and western Niger, contributing to the instability in the Sahel.' He emphasises the need to address the grievances of local people and improve their circumstances, in parallel with a military response.

The fight against Boko Haram

Nigeria has fought Boko Haram for more than a decade. It has relied heavily on a military response that has not yielded sustainable peace. Some analysts have pointed out that the military are fighting against an organisation that thrives on the poor conditions in the north east. According to Okunade (2021): 'The Nigerian state has received support from a range of external actors, both within the West African subregion and outside the continent. A Multinational Joint Task Force was formed in 1998 by Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad, and joined in the fight against Boko Haram in 2012. Benin Republic joined in 2014. The multinational troops also received support from the African Union and the Lake Chad Basin Commission. But their activities triggered attacks by the Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region, causing the security situation to deteriorate further. Countries outside Africa provided training, technical and intelligence support and arms. Some sent troops to assist in the fight, but were frustrated with the way the Nigerian military handled the intelligence they supplied.'

Two women walk past a Mozambican soldier inside a camp for internally displaced people in the town of Quitunda, Mozambique, 22 September 2021. REUTERS/Baz Ratner

Similarly, the Joint Force of the Group of 5 (G5) of the Sahel in West Africa (Mali, Burkino Faso, Niger, Mauritania and Chad) has not been able to militarily defeat the VE groups in the region. According to Rupesinghe (2018), the G5, created in 2017 with extensive political support from France and a budget of millions of euros, has a narrow understanding of the challenge, and is offering a limited response to problems that are fundamentally related to the quality of governance and state-society relations. Using violence to counter violence, he notes, has produced mixed results at best, and been counterproductive at worst.

Since 2007, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has conducted successful military operations against Al-Shabaab, and significantly weakened this jihadist organisation. However, it remains a threat to national and regional security (Bugabi 2021). An unsuccessful peace-building strategy followed by poor post-conflict reconstruction has meant that many of the underlying social issues fuelling the insurgency have remained unresolved. AMISOM wasn't meant to deal with issues such as poor development, high levels of poverty and unemployment, poor education and poor or absent public services. All those issues have profound implications for the survivability of the insurgency.

The Kenyan experience

Kamau (2021) provides an interesting lesson from Kenyan experience. Kenya, he notes, has adopted a range of measures for countering terrorism, including improving its legal system, establishing

specialised security agencies such as the Anti-Terror Police Unit (ATPU) and the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC), building a border wall between Kenya and Somalia, attempts to repeal the 2006 Refugee Act and close refugee camps, efforts to prevent and counter VE with a series of programmes for preventing and countering violent extremism under the aegis of the National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism (NSCVE 2016), and community policing. However, despite these activities, acts of terror and VE continue to pose a threat to Kenya's national security. The author believes that perceived and real grievances and unaddressed historical injustices have provided a fertile ground for radicalisation, and are built into al-Shabaab's recruitment propaganda (Kamau 2021).

These militarised responses have achieved mixed results, and key role players are acutely aware of the need to improve human security and use political means to achieve lasting peace. These interventions also tend to be long term, with the recent chaotic withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan after a presence of two decades a case in point. In the process, actors – typically national governments – tend to be caught in a contradictory dynamic which is difficult to resolve. As de Coning (ibid) has noted: 'If counter-insurgency is your primary aim, you are likely to neglect addressing the underlying causes of the instability, and if you do, the "security first" effort may actually contribute to perpetuating the very problem it is trying to solve.'

SADC's counter-terrorism strategy

SADC developed a counter-terrorism strategy in 2015. In March 2017, SADC member states listed factors impeding effective counter-terrorism as inadequate legislation, weak institutions responsible for addressing terrorism, perceptions of social exclusion and corruption, a lack of information-sharing, inadequate cooperation between civil society and government, porous borders, rampant illegal migration, use of the region for training and mobilising terrorist groups, and a failure to harmonise legislation. These factors are fairly common in countries experiencing VE.

Usually, CVE strategies combine hard measures (the use of force to restore law and order) with soft measures (deradicalisation and reintegration, social and economic reconstruction and development). However, the latter require expertise, capacity and infrastructure (which most countries in the region lack), and the former, if used indiscriminately, leads to yet more anger, increased radicalisation, recruitment and territorial gains. These interventions should therefore be balanced, appropriate to their specific context, and properly planned and executed.

There is a growing shift away from simply combating terrorism, focusing on the extremists themselves, to preventing violent extremism, which seeks to prevent radicalisation via appropriate and inclusive developmental and political interventions. This requires identification of the problem, a situational analysis, the engagement of multiple stakeholders in processes of consultation, and the development of a PVE strategy or plan of action, plus a mechanism for coordinating its implementation. A crude 'winning hearts and minds' approach does not work. Instead, underlying structural social conditions need to be addressed, and a key part of this is about recognising people's needs for recognition, belonging, and a sense of dignity. It is also about strengthening local government systems, law enforcement, state presence, drawing on solutions generated by communities themselves, and their capacities for resilience.

To summarise, the crisis in Cabo Delgado requires a co-ordinated multisectoral, multilevelled and multi-disciplinary approach for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) conducive to terrorism. To this end, Mozambique should create a P/CVE Centre combining a wide range of

The crisis in Cabo Delgado requires a co-ordinated multisectoral, multilevelled and multi-disciplinary approach for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) conducive to terrorism.

public sector, civil society and private sector stakeholders, with a strong research base, and capable of developing a comprehensive PVE strategy or action plan.

The government and broader Mozambican society should consider interventions that meet social and humanitarian and social needs; centre on political, economic and social inclusion; address governance and development challenges; strengthen community resilience; empower and include women and youths; and empower the security sector as well as local government. To this end, the government should, among others, stage national interfaith and communal dialogues to address VE; adopt a regional approach; and coordinate international support for managing VE in Mozambique and the region as a whole.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA

If VE takes further root in Mozambique, it would have disastrous consequences for the region as a whole. It would threaten regional security in some or all of the following ways:

It could provide a springboard for establishing terrorist groups throughout the region; broaden the financing of VE; foster online terrorist propaganda, recruitment and radicalisation; and promote arms trafficking, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and other criminal activities. Cabo Delgado is a major conduit for smuggling drugs and other contraband. Among others, the volume of heroin shipped from Afghanistan has increased considerably in recent years.

The complexity of VE requires an adequate understanding of its tentacles. Regional security services have identified the presence of South African, Tanzanian and Congolese and Malawian nationals in Al Sunnah Wa Jama'ah. This suggests that radical organisations and recruitment networks are already operating at the regional level. The geographic dispersion of VE sleeper cells is still underestimated and unrecognised in Mozambique and other SADC countries. One needs to recall that ISIS has warned South Africa not to get involved in Mozambique, saying it would retaliate. This means the group may already have the capacity to mount attacks in South Africa (Fabricius 2020).

VE in Mozambique may eventually affect economic sectors in Mozambique and the region, and impede the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement. Mozambique borders on Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa and eSwatini. Four of these six countries are landlocked, and depend on Mozambique as a gateway to global markets (Neethling 2020). The possibility of the VE group expanding its activities to the transport corridors that link the Mozambican ports to the hinterland is cause for concern. Transaction costs will increase if key infrastructure such as bridges, and power lines are destroyed. Security concerns will drive up the costs of insurance premiums.

According to Neethling (2020), South Africa has strong ties with Mozambique, and is therefore worried by events in the latter country. The spread of VE to South Africa is a plausible scenario. South Africa has experienced an influx of Mozambicans as well as other nationalities who use the Mozambican route to reach the country, ranging from Somalians to Ethiopians, Kenyans and Tanzanians. All of these countries have experienced terrorist unrest, and VE organisations are well entrenched in their societies.

SADC's response to VE in Mozambique

SADC's decision-making about VE in Mozambique has been hesitant and tentative. It organised several meetings to deal with the matter. In November 2020, it hosted an extraordinary Organ Troika Summit about addressing terrorism in the region, particularly in Cabo Delgado, preceded by a preparatory meeting with senior officials. Seven heads of state attended, but no clear decisions were taken or action contemplated. Instead, the Summit 'directed the finalisation of a comprehensive regional response' to be considered by yet another summit. In April 2021, SADC convened a Double Troika Summit in Maputo to discuss measures for addressing terrorism in Mozambique. The Summit, attended by six presidents, decided to deploy a fact-finding mission to Mozambique in preparation for yet another SADC Summit meeting, scheduled for late April 2021. This was postponed, ostensibly due to the non-availability of two presidents.

Following these delays, analysts observed that SADC's slow response was enabling the ASWJ to place more territory under its control. Philip Obaji Jr (2021) stated that if Mozambique and the rest of SADC failed to act quickly and convincingly, the activities of ASWJ would have far-reaching consequences for the entire region. He added that Mozambique desperately needed the support of other Southern African countries to fight the growing insurgency before its spilled over its borders. Many of those calling for intervention only concentrated on the military aspects, and had not considered all the others needed for effective PCVE.

After months of deliberations and disagreements, a SADC Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Maputo on 23 June 2021 finally decided to deploy a standby force to Mozambique. It falls under a regional defence pact that allows military intervention to prevent the spread of conflict (Bolani 2021). SADC approved a budget of US$12 million, which hardly seems adequate. SADC leaders also agreed to respond with military force without taking the full range of PCVE into account. After some delays, the standby force began arriving in Mozambique in late July and was formally deployed in August.

This train of events raised several urgent questions. Was the SADF force big enough? Was it adequately prepared? Was it equipped to deal with aspects of PCVE other than hard force? What can SADC learn from coalition efforts in other African regions, and what are its options in the short and longer term?

The feasibility of the SADC mission to Mozambique

The size and preparedness of the defence and security sectors of SADC member states are uneven. Two member states – Angola and South Africa – maintain sizeable defence forces and budgets. On paper, the DRC has a large defence force, but is unable to restore or maintain domestic law and order. Several other member states – Lesotho, eSwatini, Comoros and Seychelles – have very small security forces and budgets. Many member states with small defence and security sectors

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa arrives at the Extraordinary Summit in Maputo on 23 June 2021 where a decision was taken to deploy a standby force to Mozambique. Picture: GCIS

rely for protection on bilateral arrangements – mostly with India and some with North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries. Island states focus on maritime security issues, and maintain coast guards. Except for South Africa, no member state has a defence industry. Military equipment is increasingly obsolete and/or poorly maintained.

All this points to the conclusion that SADC's ability to respond to large-scale crises – either natural calamities (floods, cyclones, pandemics) or widespread violence (civil wars, cross-border attacks, violent extremism) – remains limited (Van Nieuwkerk 2021). As a result, after approval of the Mission to Mozambique and a budget of US$12 million, the SADC countries took a month to send their contingents to Mozambique. Logistical, organisational, and mobility issues confirmed that the region faces serious deficits in the defence sector. The Rwandan contingent of about 1 000 soldiers reached Mozambique far faster and is already integrated into counterterrorism operations in Cabo Delgado.

SADC troops started arriving in Mozambique from 26 July. The first country to send troops was South Africa – some 1 495 soldiers (AllAfrica 2021). An advance group of South African Special Forces arrived on 21 July. General Xolani Mankayi, commander of the SADC Force, also commands 43 South African Brigade, a rapid intervention unit in the South African Army (DefenceWeb 2021). Botswana was the second SADC country to respond, and sent 296 troops (Dube 2021). On 30 July, Zimbabwe announced it was sending 304 soldiers, while Angola pledged 20 military advisors.

SADC'S OPTIONS FOR ASSISTING MOZAMBIQUE

The SADC Mission in Mozambique embodies a 'hard' approach, focused on security issues. Given that SADC's leaders have recognised that VE must be combated on several fronts, the option to send the standby force only is reductionist. The three-month period established for the intervention also seems inadequate. This demonstrates that the region's only concern is to restore law and order – it is safe to say that the underlying factors which gave rise to the conflict cannot be addressed in a three-month time frame.

Against this background, some recommendations follow for a more comprehensive SADC strategy for assisting Mozambique:

> Recognise the obstacles to developing a feasible regional strategy

Among others, recognise the following:

- The transnational character of violent extremism and terrorism;
- A lack of funding for preventive approaches;
- A lack of political will on the part of states in the region;
- A lack of material support from states in the region;
- The prevalence of narrow nationalist sentiments; and
- Putting national interests ahead of regional ones.

> Identify the building blocks of an effective regional strategy

In the short term, the Mozambican government, in partnership with the region and with donor support, should:

- Implement a counter-terrorism (CT) operation aimed at disrupting the ability of insurgents in Cabo Delgado and surrounding areas to amass resources and stage attacks.
- Provide human rights training for the FDS.
- Deal sensitively and with gender sensitivity with immediate humanitarian needs.
- Be more transparent in dealing with the challenge – draw in available peace-building expertise, including women; commission regional experts, and explore various options.

> SADC, with donor assistance, should:

- Work with the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) and the UN to establish a regional CT centre.
- Consider expanding it into a fully fledged Countering and Preventing Violent Extremism (C/PVE) Unit.
- Update regional CT policies and strategies.
- Develop an effective, credible, and context- and gender-sensitive regional strategy for C/PVE.
- Undertake national and regional threat assessments, including the mapping of causes and triggers of conflict.
- List vital infrastructure that could be targeted.
- Identify entities that could provide technical capacity, including mediation and reconciliation.

> Security sector support

In the medium term, the Mozambican government, in partnership with SADC and donors, should ensure security sector support and capacity-building on a national, provincial and local level. It should:

- Cooperate with various role players to combat the financing of terrorism (strengthen communication between the financial institutions of countries in the region: banks, insurance companies, financial intelligence units, etc.)
- Strengthen regional legal instruments to combat terrorism (create more robust legislation at the regional and national level);
- Provide technical training (to police, judges, prosecutors, and IT personnel);
- Help train the SDS, and provide equipment and logistical support;
- Work towards collaborative intelligence (police, military, financial sector, etc); and
- Work towards joint control and inspection of border movements (people and goods).

> Development initiatives

The Mozambican government should regard regional military intervention as a last resort. Besides utilising the SADC standby force for a defined period, it should pursue development initiatives along the following lines:

- Involve the private sector in initiatives to improve services and launch awareness and information campaigns.
- Include and empower civil society and women's organisations.
- Stage dialogues with local communities to find sustainable ways of dealing with the underlying causes of VE.
- Review dated discourses on and approaches to peace and security. Specifically, the government cannot say, 'We will not speak to terrorists'. They are also Mozambican citizens. Put differently, the government should abandon outdated talk and methods of 'neutralising the enemy'.
- Build inter-faith platforms; mobilise civil society peace builders and empowerment programmes for women and youths.

> Longer-term goals

In the longer term, the Mozambican government should, in partnership with the region and international donors, ensure that dividends from the gas sector in Northern Mozambique accrue to the region's people. It should also address the governance challenges affecting the region – including corruption, representation, and issues of belonging and inclusion – and provide people with a new sense of hope.

There are no easy solutions to this challenge, which has plagued the continent from the early 1990s. It requires global, continental, regional and national strategizing, support and recalibration. The sooner this happens, the better it will be for Mozambique as well as Southern Africa.

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