

CHAPTER 5

The Nexus Between Violent Extremism and the Illicit Economy in Northern Mozambique: Is Mozambique Under Siege from International Organised Crime?

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Introduction

Since October 2017, Mozambique's northernmost province of Cabo Delgado has been under sustained militant attack from the Islamist extremist group Alu Sunna Wa-Jama (ASWJ), resulting in thousands of people being either killed, kidnapped or displaced, while their properties have been destroyed. These incidents have reportedly escalated every year, with the group changing tactics from night-time attacks on isolated targets to more nuanced and well-coordinated daylight attacks. These attacks have targeted mainly installations and employees of multinational companies such as the American oil company Anadarko Petroleum Corporation (now Total) and government security departments such as the Polícia da República de Moçambique (PRM).

The growing popularity of ASWJ among the people of Cabo Delgado indicates worrying social cleavages and the growing rift between the general populace and the ruling elite. This social alienation and disillusionment are happening at the same time that northern Mozambique is quickly emerging as a hub and transit route for an illicit economy dominated by drug trafficking, poaching and illegal trading in timber, rubies and ivory. In fact, the towns and ports of Pemba, Nacala, Mocímboa da Praia and their surrounding environs have become nerve centres of illicit trading, organised crime and transit points for illicit consignments into southern Africa and beyond. The same ports and towns are also used to export illicit timber and wildlife products such as ivory to Asia. Indications are

that ASWJ is financing its operations through proceeds derived from this illicit trade. As a result, the Cabo Delgado province has now evolved into a melting pot for violent extremism, and a major illicit trading and transit hub, due to its neglect by the central government.

A general assessment of the conflict situation within the province shows that grievances are driven primarily by feelings of exclusion among the local population in the exploitation of the state's natural resources. Despite its resource abundance, Cabo Delgado is the least developed province in Mozambique. The province is dominated by dilapidated infrastructure, high poverty rates and a lack of access to social services. The situation is further compounded by a complicated series of underlying factors, such as conflict over land, controversy over a resettlement programme, as well as communities' distrust of their local political actors.

Moreover, while the region is awash with rich mineral resources, locals are at the economic periphery in terms of both employment opportunities and profit sharing. Instead, the process of awarding concessions is murky. For instance, in several cases where natural resources have been found, the indigenous population has been unilaterally driven off their land without fair and just compensation. Meanwhile, only a small percentage of profits from resource extraction finds its way back to the province, as successive Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO) governments have structurally weakened local governance structures. This has led to a widespread perception that the Mozambican government and multinational companies are not only exploiting the north's resource base, but are also causing insecurity within the region – as shall be highlighted later in this chapter.

The security situation in northern Mozambique suggests a need for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to intervene, in particular, and the international community, in general. This assistance would aim to arrive at speedy and extensive countermeasures that not only address the conflict situation, but also help the local populace to participate in the exploitation of natural resources.

This chapter will therefore unpack, and discuss the impact of, the intricacies of Cabo Delgado's political economy in the face of violent extremism and the illicit economy. The growing insecurity has hampered development and service delivery to the province, leading to further underdevelopment. It has

also affected food security in the province, as locals now have restricted access to their crops and livelihoods. If not well managed, the constellation of violent extremism and the illicit economy could result in regional insecurity, with serious consequences.

The Application of Collaborative Governance and ‘Absence-of-Trust’ Governance Theories in Cabo Delgado

International experiences of collaborative governance have brought about new perspectives, norms and models of governance that place citizenry inclusion at the core of governance and economic development. This chapter adopts the collaborative governance and ‘absence-of-trust’ governance theories to argue that community participation, accountability and trust in governance processes and systems are of paramount importance if society is to develop and achieve peace. These theories are particularly important within the fields of peacebuilding and development due to a greater emphasis on accountability and ‘soft’ indicators such as citizen- and user-satisfaction targets, as well as an increased demand for information on performance in relation to ‘governance’ as a whole in a bid to enhance public administration.¹

Therefore, this chapter will argue that the escalation of acts of terrorism in northern Mozambique is a result of the decreasing level of trust in government and its detrimental effects on governance, development and social cohesion. It further argues that both improving the quality of governance and enforcing transparency in the use of natural resources (resource nationalism) will result in Cabo Delgado’s residents expressing higher levels of satisfaction and trust in government.

The Emergence of ASWJ in Cabo Delgado and the Internationalisation of the Insurgency

Northern Mozambique has always been a vortex of struggle and conflict, dating back to the advent of the liberation war against Portuguese rule when FRELIMO insurgents attacked a Portuguese garrison at Chai, northern Mozambique, on 25 September 1964. The attack marked the genesis of the Mozambican war

of independence and the emancipation of the people of Mozambique from Portuguese colonial rule. Furthermore, with the formation of FRELIMO in 1962 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and due to its proximity to Tanzania, northern Mozambique became accustomed to being a trailblazer and leader in the struggle towards universal suffrage and freedom.

The majority of the founding members of FRELIMO were from the north, predominantly from the Makonde ethnic group. In fact, the war of independence between 1964 and 1974 was fought mainly in Cabo Delgado.² The first landmines were laid in 1965 at Muiderembe, Cabo Delgado,³ and in 1970 roads and bridges south of Rio Messalo were mined with FRELIMO's launch of Operation Estrada.⁴ The province battled to recover from the impact of the war, which was one of the reasons it began to lag developmentally when compared to other provinces.

Inspired by the teachings of the late radical Kenyan preacher, Sheikh Aboud Rogo Mohammed, and a Tanzanian cleric, Abdul Chacur, ASWJ emerged in 2015 as a fundamentalist religious movement.⁵ The group continued to follow Rogo's radical teachings even after he was killed in 2012 in Mombasa by unknown assailants.

The origins of ASWJ can be traced to Kibiti, Tanzania, where its followers were initially based. These followers would later trek south, where they finally settled in Cabo Delgado. Once firmly established in northern Mozambique, and using two mosques in Cabo Delgado, ASWJ began to spread its brand of Islam, which was shaped by the radical views of Rogo and Chacur.⁶ Their teachings were predicated on Wahhabism and the assumption that the Islam propagated in Mozambique was corrupted and not in line with the dictates of Prophet Muhammad.

Consequently, Rogo followers began attacking traditional mosques, with the aim of forcing other Muslims to follow their radical Wahhabist beliefs, while at the same time preventing them from going to hospitals or attending schools. They considered these hospitals and schools as 'anti-Islamic' and secular in nature. ASWJ proponents also convinced local communities not to recognise the authority of the Mozambican government. Instead, they encouraged them to implement sharia law and to strive for the creation of an Islamic caliphate within Mozambique. To achieve this, Rogo's followers began to organise themselves into

armed groups, and formed secret camps in the districts of Macomia, Mocímboa da Praia and Montepuez.

Kibiti, Tanzania, has also featured prominently in the radicalisation of northern Mozambique. Several extremists from the region have used marriage to entrench themselves across the border in northern Mozambique. Once entrenched, locals have been encouraged to join the jihad, train for military operations, and listen to sermons by Rogo and other radical religious figures.⁷

The spread of external Wahhabism also coincided with the emergence of opportunistic criminals and army defectors, who helped swell the ASWJ ranks. It is likely that this religious ideology is providing the organisation with a justification to take up arms and recruit new members. Wahhabism was introduced in Mozambique in the 1960s by graduates from Saudi Arabia and religious schools in other Gulf states, who began challenging the country's traditional and more tolerant Sufi customs.⁸ The status quo was destabilised in the 2000s when the Islamic Council tapped Gulf non-governmental organisations to provide scholarships for students to study abroad, particularly in Qatar and Saudi Arabia. Upon return, these graduates joined the ASWJ ranks and began challenging local Sufi customs.⁹

ASWJ first gained notoriety when it attacked a police station in Mocímboa da Praia on 5 October 2017, which resulted in the police temporarily losing control of the town. The raid was led by 30 armed insurgents who managed to kill 17 people. Among the dead were two police officers and a community leader. During the raid, ASWJ stole arms and ammunition, and incited local residents to not pay taxes to the Mozambican government. ASWJ terrorists used the stolen weapons in Maluku, Columbe, Pemba, Mutumbate and Maculo a few weeks later.¹⁰ Cumulatively, these attacks left more than 60 people dead, including women and children, while hundreds were injured.

In 2018 there was an escalation in the number of attacks within Cabo Delgado province. The first occurred on 13 January when, in an evening raid, ASWJ militants stormed the town of Olumbi in Palma district.¹¹ The attack targeted a market and a government administrative building, and left five people dead. More incidents were to follow in Chitolo, Manilha, Diaca Velha and Mangwaza, which suffered three successive attacks. In all these incidents, houses were looted and burned, and it is estimated that hundreds of civilians lost their lives.¹²

Little progress was made against the group in 2019, and Cabo Delgado recorded more than 55 attacks across several villages and towns. Meanwhile, at the time of publication, 33 attacks had been recorded in nine out of Cabo Delgado's 16 districts in 2020, one of which was the 22 March storming of the strategic town of Mocímboa da Praia. The attack resulted in the insurgents seizing control of the small but strategic town's air base, port and police stations, with ASWJ raising its flag at all these key points.

To date, more than 100,000 people have been displaced due to ASWJ attacks. Killings and displacements are projected to increase, since ASWJ has officially been accepted as a member of the Islamic State in Puntland, an affiliate of Islamic State (IS). In fact, the United Nations Security Council notes that the Islamic State in Puntland now operates as a command centre for IS affiliates in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Mozambique. The aim of the Islamic State in Puntland is to consolidate a triad connection of IS affiliates in East Africa, central Africa and southern Africa.¹³

Early on, ASWJ attacks targeted mainly security forces. However, this has changed within a relatively short period of time, as evidenced by multiple attacks on civilians within the province as early as 2018. The strategy was to attack villages or isolated homes, which were either partially or completely burnt down. From 27 May 2018 onwards, the group's *modus operandi* began to include extreme acts of violence – methods such as beheading, kidnapping for ransom and, at times, rape. The beheadings were accompanied by the burning down of hundreds of houses.¹⁴

The group also changed from night-time attacks to coordinated daylight attacks against specific high-profile targets, such as foreigners employed by Anadarko, the American oil company, which was leading a \$20 billion liquefied natural gas (LNG) project before it was bought out by Total. Areas that have experienced serious attacks thus far include the villages of Monjan in the Palma district, Rueia in Macomia, and Namaluco in the Quissanga district. In 2019, the scorched-earth policy, accompanied by beheadings, continued unabated, with multiple attacks and beheadings recorded in Piqueue, Nacate, Ntapuala, Banga-Vieja, Ida, Ipho, Nangade and Mitopy.¹⁵ The attack at Mitopy was a defining moment in the history of ASWJ, as this marked the first time that IS claimed responsibility.

The Spread of Islamist Ideology in the North

In recent years, Cabo Delgado has seen a rapid increase in the number of radical Islamist preachers, and a spread in the popularity of their teachings, especially among young men from the largely disenfranchised Mwani ethnic group. The attraction of this new brand of Islamic teaching, and the rejection of established Islamic scholars in the region, points to a generational conflict led by younger, more radical religious actors against the older, more established Muslim Council in Cabo Delgado.

Certain clerics have played an important role in the growing influence of ASWJ in the province. One of these clerics (and a recruiter) was Nuro Adremane, who received his religious education in Somalia after travelling by road through Tanzania and Kenya. Adremane actively sought out recruits in the Montepuez and Mocímboa da Praia districts – areas deeply aggrieved by the activities of international mining companies and the Mozambican government. As a result, he managed to transform local grievances into narratives of conflict and revenge. Some young men from the region have been recruited through the promise of loans, given scholarships to study at Qur'an schools in East Africa and the Middle East, or sent for military training in East African countries such as Tanzania and Somalia.¹⁶

Adremane and other clerics have reinforced ideology introduced into Cabo Delgado in recent years by those who received scholarships from Saudi Arabia, Sudan and other Gulf states, and have stressed the need for violent jihad among their recruits. These teachings are completely at odds with the Sufi-inspired religious practices which have long been seen in Mozambique. Adremane and other radical preachers have operated largely from two mosques in Mocímboa da Praia (closed in October 2017 after the police station attack) from where they managed to spread their brand of Islam across the province.

Ethnic and Political Divisions

The actions of the post-independence ruling party, FRELIMO, have exacerbated ethnic tensions in the north, which has also helped radical actors gain traction in the region – especially among the Mwani ethnic group, who have helped to swell ASWJ's ranks. In Cabo Delgado, the Mwani are still the largest ethnic group in terms of population size, followed by the Makonde. While the Mwani

are the original inhabitants of the province, they are economically, politically and socially marginalised by the Makonde. The Makonde dominate the Mozambican political space and have benefited the most since independence, often at the expense of the Mwani. To make matters worse, the Makonde are Christian, while the Mwani are predominantly Muslim. This has added a further ethno-religious dimension to the challenges facing the province.

The marginalisation of the province's Mwani ethnic group has historical roots. As initially highlighted, the most prominent operational theatre of the 1964-74 war of independence was Cabo Delgado. The largely Christian Makonde aligned themselves with FRELIMO, while the Muslim Mwani sided with their Portuguese colonial masters. This explains why the Makonde continue to receive preferential treatment from the Mozambican government; they have even been rewarded with pensions and political concessions. The Mwani, on the other hand, fought on the side of the Portuguese and even remained in Portuguese camps. FRELIMO has not forgotten this, and after independence the FRELIMO government sidelined the Mwani in favour of the Makonde and other ethnic groups. Even today, the Mwani are treated with disdain and are commonly considered to be uneducated criminals, spurned for their prior support for the Portuguese and, later, the *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana* (RENAMO).

While the Mwani dialect is a mixture of Swahili and a local Makhuwa language, it is considered 'foreign' and the result of having been 'Swahilised'. These longstanding ethnic tensions meant that when Wahhabism was introduced to the province by outside actors, it found fertile ground among the Mwani, who had long felt alienated and discriminated against by the Makonde. Furthermore, the province has a sizeable population of people who came from neighbouring Tanzania and other East African states. As a result, a large segment of the population often feels a stronger connection to southern Tanzania and East Africa than to regions within Mozambique. This is further compounded by the fact that the province is located far from the capital, Maputo, and has largely been neglected by the central government, the net effect of which has been extraordinarily high poverty rates, pitiable infrastructure and a lack of access to social services. While the province's residents have tried to elevate these concerns, they are rebuffed by the central government, which accuses the local population of pushing a RENAMO agenda.

Coincidentally, the underdevelopment of Cabo Delgado coincided with a decline in support for FRELIMO. However, the loss of support for FRELIMO did not translate into increased support for RENAMO, which is not regarded as an alternative. Instead, support has gone to ASWJ. Thus, it is clear that both local and regional factors have contributed to the expansion of the group. The support for ASWJ is an expression of historical tensions between the north and south, while active recruitment among the Mwani is ASWJ's instrumentalisation of more local ethnic divides.¹⁷

The political dynamics within FRELIMO do not help matters, and in many cases simply serve to entrench ethnic divides. For example, during his tenure as president of Mozambique and leader of FRELIMO, Armando Guebuza, who is from Cabo Delgado and a Makonde, spearheaded many development projects within the province as a strategy to win the hearts and minds of the people, enabling him to retain leadership of the party. However, the projects only benefited the Makonde, to the total exclusion of the Mwani. This affirmative action also saw the Makonde appointed to influential positions, such as board membership and chief executives of large corporations. Makonde-owned companies were also given lucrative mining concessions. Little has changed under the current president, Felipe Nyusi, who is also a Makonde from Cabo Delgado. Rather, his presidency has only served to fuel resentment among the Mwani, who feel continually marginalised.

Economic Marginalisation and the Role of the Extractive Industries

Many analysts maintain that there is a direct link between the surge in violent attacks in the region and the exploitation of minerals, oil and gas. Cabo Delgado is endowed with abundant natural resources, especially petroleum and natural gas, as well as the world's largest ruby and pink-sapphire deposits. Regrettably, these discoveries have not translated into a marked improvement in the living standards of the local population, as all the concessions have been awarded to foreigners and people from outside the province. The exploitation of natural resources has in fact led to further underdevelopment and the widespread eviction of locals, as they have been driven off their land with little to no compensation. In addition, only a very small proportion of the profits have found their way back to the province, in part due to the central government's many years of neglect,

resulting in weak local administrative and governance structures.

Mozambique's northernmost province can aptly be described as the country's forgotten province – where little government support has led to wide-scale poverty, dilapidated infrastructure and a lack of social delivery. In a September 2019 publication by the Mozambican Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Económicos (Institute of Social and Economic Studies), the triple challenges of poverty, unemployment and lack of education were identified as the primary push factors that helped ASWJ attract recruits.¹⁸ Local male youth are totally emasculated, unable to afford to marry, and see little or no employment opportunities. Although the province has, in the past few years, received considerable investments in infrastructure to support the extraction of natural resources, it has not resolved unemployment challenges, since most of the jobs available have been given to foreigners, mainly Zimbabweans. Investment has also seen the expropriation of land without proper compensation, and foreign companies have generated further tensions by committing human rights abuses. For example, the United Kingdom-based company Gemfields has been accused of forcibly expropriating land without proper compensation, and its security personnel have been accused of using violent force when dealing with locals.

Unsurprisingly, ASWJ has been immensely successful in recruiting youths in the Montepuez district, where the Gemfields Montepuez Ruby Mining Limitada is domiciled. In fact, some scholars¹⁹ have argued that the human rights violations by the private security companies hired by Gemfields were the triggers that fuelled ASWJ's first attacks in Mocímboa da Praia in October 2017. These private military contractors would destroy the property of locals and artisanal miners, torturing and killing some to force them out of the concession areas of multinational companies.

In addition, there has been anger among the local populace over the manner in which their land was expropriated to make way for multinational companies such as Anadarko (now Total) and the Canadian-based petroleum company Wentworth. Residents were violently uprooted by the development plans. Moreover, they have lamented the rushed legal processes and their compensation, which has been below market value. Livelihoods were also disturbed, especially within farming and fishing communities, and locals felt either cheated or abandoned as Mozambican government officials tended to side with multinational

companies. For example, in February 2018, while aggrieved residents were feeling economically marginalised, the country's labour minister travelled to Cabo Delgado to lay the groundwork for receiving 2,000 foreign workers who were earmarked to work for Anadarko after the company received authorisation to build an onshore LNG plant in Palma.

Anadarko's construction of what will be one of the world's largest LNG plants, as well as a port capable of accommodating large vessels especially designed to ferry LNG, has necessitated the resettlement of thousands of fishermen and farmers on the Afungi Peninsula in Palma. Despite companies such as Anadarko pouring billions of dollars into the region, there is a widely held perception among local communities that they have received, and will continue to receive, little benefit. Rather, negative sentiment continues to grow as complaints multiply with regard to inadequate restitution, lack of compensation for their investment in fruit-producing trees, dissatisfaction over the manner in which the resettlement programme is being implemented, and suspicions that funds intended to assist them are being diverted. Locals have been particularly irked by the resettlement programme itself, as resettled households were mixed with communities they did not know. Communities that used to rely on fishing were settled in the hinterland, resulting in the loss of their livelihood.

Collectively, the spread of Islamist ideology in the region, as well as the economic, social and political drivers outlined above, has immensely benefited ASWJ. The population in Cabo Delgado has largely lost faith in local politics, creating pools of disgruntled and unemployed youth who are easily recruited with a promise of employment opportunities and better living conditions.

The Internationalisation of the Insurgency

ASWJ's strategies and tactics, including the use of beheadings, kidnapping and rape, are largely influenced by Islamist terrorist groups such as IS. While the local presence of IS was for a time contested among analysts, in 2019 the group claimed responsibility for an attack against Mozambican security forces in Cabo Delgado, and has claimed responsibility for several attacks since. Furthermore, IS is now including ASWJ in its promotional videos, and has placed the group under the operational command of its central African Wilayat, or administrative division.

So far, a limited number of its leaders have been identified, and these have included both Mozambicans and international members.²⁰ While most Mozambican recruits are drawn mainly from the Mocímboa da Praia, Palma and Macomia districts, evidence suggests that foreign nationals come from a variety of countries, including Tanzania, Chad, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and even Russia. The presence of international members elevates the group's status and helps to generate support from both IS and other Islamist actors in Russia, Tanzania, Uganda, Sudan and Saudi Arabia. ASWJ is also receiving support from organised-crime groups, foreign sympathisers and like-minded groups in the region.

Due to its growing internationalisation, several governments have joined forces with the Mozambican government in an attempt to bring an end to the insurgency. Russian intervention, for example, is premised on the January 2017 Russia-Mozambique military and technical cooperation agreement which, among others, provides for the supply of arms and military equipment, as well as other military-oriented products, spare parts and components as part of the war on terrorism. Resultantly, on 25 September 2019, Russian military hardware in the form of Mi-17 helicopters were delivered via a Russian Air Force An-124 (registration RA-82038) transport aircraft, which landed at Nacala.

The Role of Northern Mozambique's Illicit Economy

The illicit economy in Mozambique has been growing exponentially side-by-side with the recent upsurge in terrorist activity. While the illicit economy has been thriving in Cabo Delgado for years, ASWJ has, of late, been directly profiting from the activity through taxes received from the illicit traffickers. Martin²¹ and Berry et al²² have outlined direct linkages between terrorism and organised crime in Cabo Delgado, while Haysom²³ argues that a significant local heroin-trafficking economy has developed in the region, largely off the radar, complemented by wildlife trafficking, human trafficking, illegal timber felling and gemstone smuggling. These illicit activities have flourished, particularly within the precinct of Mocímboa da Praia, due to corruption and an attitude of indifference within the political establishment, and has seen the port of Mocímboa da Praia emerge as a hotbed of criminal activity where the arms trade and human trafficking thrive.

There are well-established trafficking routes in Cabo Delgado that are used to transport drugs into Mozambique en route to South Africa and Europe. One of the most trafficked commodities is heroin, usually brought into Mozambique from Pakistan by dhows (seaworthy motorised sailing ships). Once on shore, this heroin is repackaged for onward transportation into the southern African hinterland, primarily to South Africa.²⁴

Northern Mozambique is a favoured transit route due to its largely unpatrolled and unprotected coastline, which traffickers use to move drugs into southern Africa. Drugs, such as heroin, are usually brought into Mozambique either through beaches or via container freight traffic, especially at the ports of Pemba and Nacala in neighbouring Nampula province. These ports are popular because they are virtually controlled by traffickers, who bribe port and government officials. There are also frequent allegations that traffickers have relationships with local politicians, who sustain their political careers through this illicit trade.

The ports, especially the port in Pemba, are also popular with traffickers of timber and wildlife products, such as ivory headed for Asia. ASWJ also profits from the proceeds of human and drug trafficking through the ports of Mocímboa da Praia and Pemba, and ruby and gem smuggling from Montepuez and Mueda, as well as from the general insecurity in northern Mozambique. However, while these income streams are relevant, the majority of ASWJ funding comes from donations and protection money.

With growing insecurity in the region, and the government clampdown on trafficking routes in Tanzania, northern Mozambique has become the transit route of choice. Cabo Delgado provides a unique set of environmental circumstances that allows the illicit economy to thrive. Weak law-enforcement systems are in place to deter criminal activity, and there are high levels of corruption in local government as well as a weak and compromised police force. Alleged drug kingpins such as Mohamed Bachir Suleman have corrupted state institutions and wield influence among certain political and religious elites within Cabo Delgado, further undermining public trust in government and garnering support for ASWJ.

The illicit economy in Cabo Delgado is linked to international criminal enterprises, and many of its markets in northern Mozambique are controlled by citizens from Tanzania, Mali, Ethiopia, the DRC, Rwanda, Somalia, Nigeria,

Cameroon, China, Thailand and other south Asian countries.²⁵ For example, south Asians control the heroin trade, while the Chinese control the timber and ivory market, and the Thais control the gem market.

It can be argued that the shaping and architecture of northern Mozambique's illicit economy are symptoms of the region's neglect by the state, the prevailing impunity, and the intertwined nature of the illegal and legal economies. The major beneficiaries of heroin trafficking and the illicit timber trade have often been politicians, who receive protection money from the leaders of organised crime. In her report on transnational organised crime, Haysom²⁶ refers to the numerous links between FRELIMO and drug traffickers. Politicians provide protection from checks at ports and on the road to ensure that traffickers pursue their criminal enterprises under cover of legal commercial activities. It is well known that these highly profitable and internationally linked illicit activities are protected by criminal-political connections within the Mozambican political establishment. For example, Haysom points to the existence of a protective arrangement nexus whereby criminal enterprises have paid FRELIMO officials large amounts of money in exchange for legal protection.²⁷

Similar arrangements can be seen in the illicit ivory and timber trade, where mostly Asian networks have been able to conduct their business unhindered. Evidence suggests that officially licensed Chinese companies illegally export large quantities of illicit timber and ivory with the protection of politicians and police. The Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) has established that in 2012 up to 48% of Chinese timber imports from Mozambique were illegal.²⁸ The EIA also reveals the close relationship between Mozambican officials and Chinese timber companies. Similarly, in 2017, the illegal activities of the Shuidong syndicate in Mozambique were exposed; this syndicate was smuggling ivory into Asia, facilitated by bribes.²⁹

Hanlon³⁰ argues that loosely organised networks of criminal actors, located in strategically less-relevant places, are exercising authority and playing an important role in the illicit trade. They are influential locally in illegal activities such as logging or mining for gemstones, as they both provide investment in local infrastructure and employ locals.

In addition to the activities outlined above, recent large investments in oil and gas exploitation near the Rovuma Valley in the north, and in mining rubies and

other minerals and gems near Montepuez and Mueda, have helped to grow the illicit economy by drawing in foreign workers or assisting to mask the generation of illicit wealth.

Challenges and the Way Forward

The Mozambican government is failing to dismantle ASWJ because of the terror group's diversified funding portfolio and its ability to raise money through transnational organised crime. The country has limited capacity to adequately investigate financial flows, and as such cannot comprehensively tackle ASWJ's funding mechanisms. This is further compounded by the fact that the province's economy is cash based and is also highly informalised. This makes it extremely difficult for the Mozambican authorities to effectively track illicit financial flows into ASWJ.

The membership and leadership structure of ASWJ remains unclear, making targeted counterterrorism operations difficult to carry out. Meanwhile, the terrain and the isolated nature of the five districts – Macoma, Nangande, Mocímboa da Praia, Palma and Quissanga – provide ample safe-haven opportunities for ASWJ. To further compound the situation, the province's road and communication network is very poor, making the movement and coordination of security forces extremely challenging.

To date, the Mozambican government's response to the insurgency has been very heavy-handed. A widespread curfew has been implemented in Cabo Delgado, mosques have been closed, and citizens have been arbitrarily detained, tortured and, in some cases, executed on suspicion of being ASWJ members. There has also been a media blackout, and various media organisations have been barred from visiting the province. In some cases, the security forces have either detained or arrested journalists who have managed to sneak into Cabo Delgado. For example, one journalist, Amade Abubacar, was unlawfully detained and subsequently subjected to torture. He was only released on bail after 107 days in detention. As a result of this media blackout, there has been a general lack of information about the conflict. Furthermore, the Mozambican security forces' use of brutal tactics has served to alienate a population that was already disillusioned, and garnered additional support for ASWJ. As observed by Bester,

Johnson, Omeni and Ukeje et al,³¹ terrorist attacks generally escalate following indiscriminate security crackdowns – as seen in Somalia, the Lake Chad Basin, the Sahel and the Maghreb.

The Mozambican government, therefore, needs to immediately review its counterinsurgency tactics and prioritise addressing the socio-political and religious dynamics behind the insurgency. If these are not addressed, the attacks are very likely to continue. Already, the conflict has had a debilitating effect on the citizens of Cabo Delgado. The province is already at food insecurity stress levels (IPC-2) because locals have restricted access to their crops and livelihoods due to the violence, while the continued insecurity and displacement are negatively impacting local economic development within the region.

Security services, especially the police and private security companies, must be trained on how to carry out their responsibilities in ways consistent with international humanitarian law in conflict settings. In this regard, legal provision must be made and systems put in place aimed at holding security forces accountable for human rights violations.

The Mozambican government should develop an amnesty system for youths who have been recruited into ASWJ. The amnesty programme should be accompanied by an offer of rehabilitation, vocational skills training and employment opportunities.

Improving relationships between the local civilian population and security forces is also key to improving the efficacy of counterterrorism operations. ASWJ's use of guerrilla tactics, melting into the local populace after an attack, has led security forces to indiscriminately target whole villages, creating new grievances against the state and distrust towards the police and military. Since a large proportion of ASWJ militants are natives of the Cabo Delgado communities, residents are already reluctant to provide information which would help security officials to combat ASWJ. Currently, ASWJ lacks a charismatic leader and, as such, there is potential for the government to exploit internal weaknesses to its advantage. Active measures can also be taken to target this leadership vacuum through strategic communications and counter-narratives.

There is an urgent need to find common ground from which to build trust among communities. This will require facilitated community dialogues among a broad spectrum of faith-based, traditional and community leaders, including

women, the youth and government officials. Increased community participation is paramount for effective conflict resolution. Government officials must be trained and equipped with good communication skills to properly engage with communities and, conversely, for communities to feel respected and consulted. Similarly, there is also a need for the media, especially community radio stations, to play a part in promoting social cohesion, public participation and inclusivity.

The problem in northern Mozambique is in large part economic. As such, there is a need for an equitable distribution of wealth, employment and inclusive economic participation. The communities of Cabo Delgado should also enjoy part of the wealth generated, and steps must be taken to ensure that the local population has access to training and employment opportunities, particularly in the fields of health, agriculture, aquaculture and education.

The Mozambican government should also consider establishing a comprehensive stakeholder commission populated with strong representation from affected communities, including representatives from both the Muslim and Christian faiths. The aim of the commission should be to examine the allegations of abuse by multinational corporations in all sectors within Cabo Delgado and, where appropriate, offer compensation to citizens. The commission could also serve as a truth and reconciliation mechanism and a grievance and solutions platform.

Meanwhile, the Mozambique government must combat the influence of criminal organisations on the political system. Legislation should thus be enacted that makes the financing of political parties and election campaigns more transparent. In the interim, individual cases of corruption should be publicised to create the pressure to act. Moreover, there should be a total revamp of law enforcement, and the regular rotation of law-enforcement personnel countrywide. Also, to the extent possible, the unregulated informal sector in northern Mozambique should be brought into the formal sector and promoted.

Collaboration between regional governments is key to addressing the insurgency, and the Mozambican government should approach SADC and its neighbours with a view to establishing consensus and a joint action plan aimed at border cooperation, especially in tackling any illicit financing.

Conflict in Cabo Delgado is driven by a range of underlying drivers and a complex set of factors. As such, there is a need for a comprehensive and integrated strategy which aims to address the insurgency in a more holistic manner, rather

than simply using heavy-handed security responses. In this regard, the government must stop downplaying the situation by calling it ‘banditry’. Rather, using the aegis of SADC, the African Union and the United Nations, the Mozambican government should comprehensively brief the international community on the nature and form of the threat so that resources towards countering the threat can be mobilised.

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Endnotes

- 1 Alibegović & Slijepčević, 2018; Nabatchi & Jo, 2018:75; Radtke et al, 2018; Liu et al, 2018; Niedziałkowski et al, 2018; Rasheed et al, 2018:78; Shen, 2020; Rousseau et al, 1998; Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2003.
- 2 Maier, 1974.
- 3 Chiovelli et al, 2019.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Alu Sunna Wa-Jama is loosely translated to mean 'adepts of the prophetic tradition'. The group is also sometimes referred to as Ahlu Sunna Wa-Jama, Ansar al Sunna or Al-Shabaab.
- 6 Meyer, 2019; Matsinhe & Valoi, 2019.
- 7 Bryden & Bahra, 2019; Meyer, 2019; Maberu, 2019; Dang, 2019; Herráez, 2019:203.
- 8 Chome, 2020:150; Vicente & Vilela, 2019; Faleg, 2019; Chome, 2019.
- 9 Chiovelli et al, 2019.
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- 20 Atanasio M'tumuke, Bernadino Rafael, Abdul Rahmin Faizal, Abdul Remane, Abdul Raim, Nuno Remane, Ibn Omar, 'Salimo' and Abdul Aziz are some of the members who have been identified.
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- 31 Bester, 2019; Johnson, 2019; Omeni, 2019; Ukeje et al, 2019.