



International liaison, dialogue and research

Reg no: 2006/020285/08

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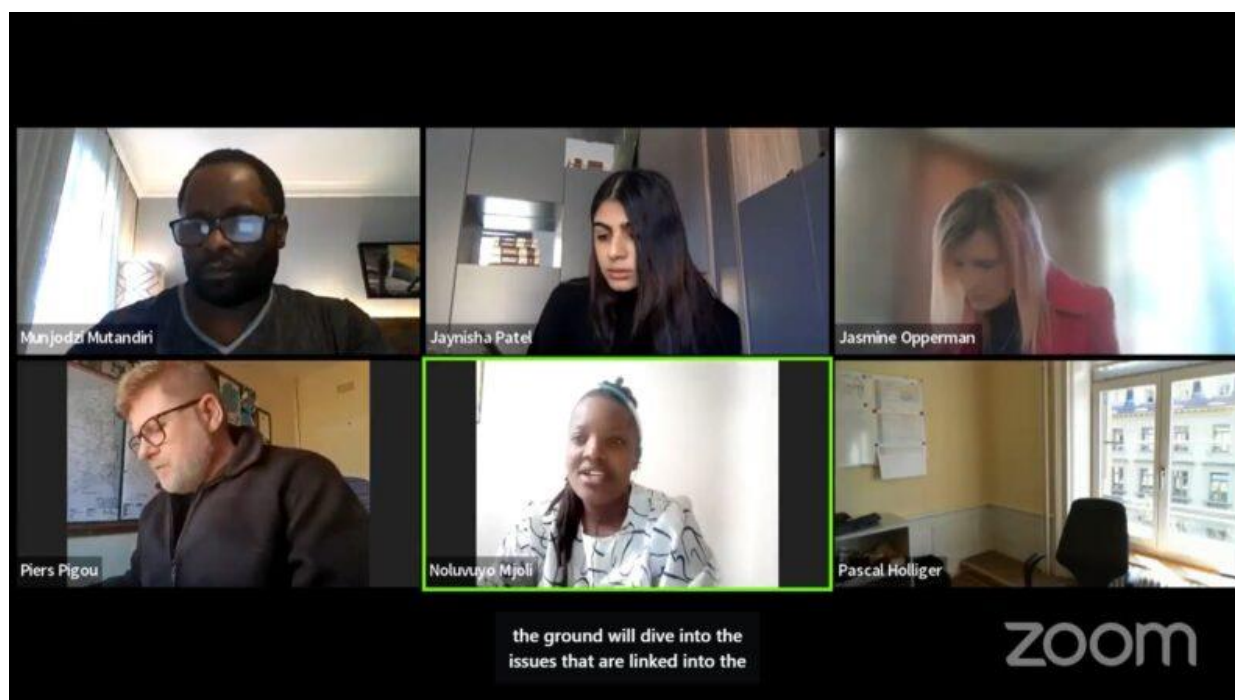
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Policy Dialogue Report

10 June 2022, Zoom Platform

Public Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Mozambique



Background

On 10 June 2022, the Southern African Liaison Office hosted a Multistakeholder dialogue on the status and development of the ongoing conflict in Mozambique. This dialogue aimed to build regional and international consensus on the conflict in Mozambique including the underlying drivers and how political actors might best respond. The panel, consisting of Julia Wachave, Jaynisha Patel, Jasmine Opperman and Piers Pigou, discussed issues related to the conflict including the most recent security developments, tactics used, illicit funding linked to the insurgency and the impact of the conflict on women, youth, and children. SALO's Munjodzi Mutandiri chaired the meeting, Noluvuyo Mjoli gave the opening remarks and Lwazi Somya gave the closing remarks.

Introduction

The security situation in Cabo Delgado remains complex as it exposes a confluence of diverse scenarios. When one compares areas such as the Rovuma Basin, Ruat, Afungi, Palma and Mocimboa da Praia with Meluco, one sees the completely different security dynamics at play. This presents enormous challenges to forces deployed to Cabo Delgado. Security Analyst Jasmine Opperman noted that in the first 4-6 years insurgencies are mostly on the offensive as they have the benefit of the environment, and any military deployments remain mostly reactive and defensive. Opperman further noted,

“What many would like to present to you as insurgents-in-defeat, is under-estimating the tactics, the strategies, and the leadership structures now at play within these cells.”

There are definite links with the Democratic Republic of Congo and open links with ISIS, and Opperman believes national security strategies are needed, with the military as the central actor to contain the freedom of movement of insurgents.

“If you look at the insurgents today, one of the red flags I want to highlight is the simple fact that there are definite underground railway lines in support of the insurgents...they cannot maintain this momentum without any support.”

Unconventional confrontation

The insurgents are constantly communicating through cell leaders in central and northern Mozambique, and a push southward would indicate that they are under pressure and adjusting to the counterinsurgency. In the 'Future Scenarios' presented by Opperman, there were four possible areas of convergence: an *Endless Gravel Road*, a *Black Swan*

Hitting the Front Window, a Gravel Road Unexpected U-turn and a Gravel Road Turning into a Tarred Road.

Opperman pointed out that insurgents had freedom of movement in some areas where they avoid conventional confrontations with security forces.

“They refrain from conventional confrontation with security forces, and what they do is flee into areas... The question is why do they have this freedom of movement? Why did we have Quissanga being cleared and only now do we see insurgents return to West Quissanga? This raises the question of, do we have enough capacity for the forces at play to execute and enable a situation of sustained security?”

She points out that the vegetation in places like Meluco is dense, making it difficult for security forces to move around, whereas the insurgents have the advantage of knowing the area and footpaths. In most instances, insurgents can get traditional food for daily survival, the complexities of which have not been understood. Added to this, there has been an increase in the ambushes on vehicles.

“These ambushes on vehicles have a direct impact on the security force deployment. We must keep in mind that they stick to the main routes, that they focus on the main routes, and that they are trying to steer the insurgents away. The problem is the vastness, it is extremely difficult to have one soldier [for] every 500 meters guarding these main routes and that creates an opportunity. They've realized that, and they are using that to their own benefit”.

Opperman assesses that small cells are moving around Palma, Mocimboa da Praia and Nangade and this freedom of movement may indicate a planned attack. Insurgents have also been placing IED bombs along the roads which raises a huge concern as it indicates that they are becoming more sophisticated and are more willing to engage in acts of terrorism. This will have a direct effect on how security forces engage with them.

Opperman further questioned the return of TotalEnergies to Mozambique to extract oil and gas in the LNG security basin area because of the pressure of the Ukraine/Russia war.

“The concern with Meluco now... are the power stations. There is a power station that is providing power to a vast area of Cabo Delgado - if insurgents should hit that power station, it is going to have serious implications. Secondly, a solar plant was opened in April this year in Meluco, which is now under serious observation because we have seen how they like to go for where power is being distributed.”

The Mozambican Defense Force and SAMIM

Concerning the training of the Mozambican Defense Force, Opperman states,

“We sit with a small-scale Iraq, I hate the comparison, but we don't have time. We are sitting with an Iraqification and militarization that is running at the speed of light.”

According to Opperman, trust in the Mozambican Defense Force is being questioned, as well as trust in SAMIM. Opperman further states that they act defensively, not proactively. Both MDF and SAMIM would need to be quick and effective, with informed intelligence, ‘to wipe out insurgents.’ Intelligence is of paramount importance and coordination between forces is extremely difficult. Opperman claims there has been an underestimation of the Islamic State in the region concerning their global expansion tactics.

“What is happening now between the insurgents, insurgents’ cells, and the Islamic State Central is an entrenched presence in their propaganda channels. We are now seeing beheadings being part of the photo reports being released. This is a serious red flag. If communication is in place, that means other support channels will open.”

Dhow movements and structured leadership

There have been reports of Dhow movements coming in with trained fighters through unverified routes, which have become a threat to marine security. ISIS has recognised ‘Wilayah Mozambique’ or the Mozambique Province, seemingly in an attempt to establish an IS caliphate.¹

Opperman stated,

“The Islamic State's outward projection in the region is at play. The next red flag already present is the structured leadership within cells. There are leaders within cells. If there are leaders they are talking and I do hope interceptions will be of such a nature that the content will be able to be picked up, analyzed, and submitted as intelligence reports to guide the Mozambican forces”.

Opperman believes that

¹ Zitamar News. 2022. IS designates Mozambique as its own province following battle in Quiterajo. 13 May. Available: <https://zitamar.com/is-designates-mozambique-as-its-own-province-following-battle-in-quiterajo/> [18 January 2022].

“There is a Jihadi culture unique to Cabo Delgado which is at play, and this cannot be countered by a bullet only. It needs to be countered by a diverse range [of factors]- and here compliments [to] some of the non-governmental organizations focusing on women, focusing on children, focusing on the expectations of the Cabo Delgado population.”

“While time is running out, the insurgents are banking on this. The Islamic State’s most preferred ally is time. There is an Islamic State presence in South Africa as a case in point – it’s there, it’s a matter of activation and gaining the support they want.”

What needs to happen at a political level is a complex issue, however, the Mozambican government needs to align its security with sufficient training and capabilities. The European Union has also released millions in funding; however, it is not certain how and where this money will be going. Opperman closed off by stating that the government needed to be serious about countering insurgent or Islamic State opportunists, the hard questions need to be asked so that a strategy is developed for the sake of the people of Cabo Delgado.

Drivers of extremism in Cabo Delgado

Jaynisha Patel shared some insights on the work done by the IJR in Mozambique, particularly on transitional justice and understanding the drivers of extremism in Cabo Delgado and how these can be used to develop an understanding of how to strengthen resilience for the youth, especially in Cabo Delgado. IJR conducted four workshops with youth affected by the insurgencies in Pemba and Montepuez in 2021. The youth came from diverse religious backgrounds; youth who had lost family to the insurgency, and youth who had been contacted in attempts to recruit them into the insurgency.

According to Patel, some of the challenges were material drivers including poverty and loss of income because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many youths’ businesses were shut down which resulted in material deprivation. The youths were also experiencing high levels of unemployment and many felt demotivated and hopeless at the lack of opportunities. Patel said,

“The youth are feeling slighted by the unequal dispensation or rather unequal allocation of wealth at a national level. So, what the youth are really saying is that in the southern regions, and specifically Maputo, they see a lot of development compared to what they see in the central and northern regions of the country, and this has led them to hold a perception that the southern regions benefit from the

resources of the North without really developing the areas where the resources come from.”

In the research, Patel noted that there was a manipulation of religious and ethnic identities as a driver of extremism. The youth believed religious fanaticism was leading people to commit certain acts and is being used as a tool to divide populations. According to Patel,

“There are ethnic tensions at play that they believe that the extremists or the insurgents can use to sort of exploit and insert narratives within these divisions to decrease the cohesiveness of society.”

It is also believed that the young people in Cabo Delgado join the insurgency to avoid being killed themselves – it is a fear response because of the failing security. There was uncertainty over safety and security. One young interviewee exclaimed,

“Most of the young join extremist groups because they are threatened, and because of insufficient security, they end up joining as a way to safeguard their physical integrity and that of their families, since the national security forces, to some extent, failed to protect them.”

According to another young person in the report from the IJR,

“If the government itself hires a private military, that means the government itself does not believe in its own military - so who am I to believe in it?”

This also pointed to the general mistrust of the national military. While a lack of safety and security is driving young people to join the insurgency, it is creating a counter effect where young people are enlisting in the army because they want to be helpful and take their community and their family safety into their own hands.

Governance and politics were seen as key drivers of extremism, a *“beast with seven heads”*, indicates the study presented by Patel.

“Young people feel slighted by the unequal dispensation of public wealth with most of it being allocated to Mozambique's southern regions, and they see this as a flaw in governance. They also speak about corruption being a driver at a local and a national level, with youth describing many instances where they've seen corruption happens, and where it's set them back in their lives.”

Added to this, Patel said there was a 'democratic despondency', meaning that youth were disillusioned with the democratic system. Young people felt that it is useless to vote as it does not make a meaningful contribution to their lives. They also felt that they were being used by politicians, especially during the election season. Lastly, the youth felt that there was no grievance mechanism to resolve the issues they were confronted with. The local government was seen as unresponsive to these needs, causing much frustration in the community.

Patel further stated that some of the issues were a result of a lack of social cohesion. The study noted that social capital was low for the youth in Cabo Delgado. There was also a low sense of patriotism and generally not buying into the national vision. Patel further noted,

“Even though ethnic tensions don't often become violent, there is sort of a latent tense atmosphere between different ethnic groups, and that impacts coexistence in Cabo Delgado. That is where there is then a gap, which extremist narratives can infiltrate to further broaden the social fractures within the society.”

Patel pointed out,

“They also note that competition over scarce resources often plays out along ethnic lines, and language barriers also prevent cohesive responses from local communities and lead to a lot of misunderstandings which extremists can then use to pit people against each other.”

A thriving illicit economy and the Hawala networks

The research conducted by IJR also looked at the role of illicit financial flows, and the Hawala networks in northern Mozambique. The UN found that in Mozambique, there were illicit financial flows but of the four types, it was uncertain which one was linked to financing the insurgency. Evidence suggests that financing of the insurgency comes from local communities and the possible manipulation of existing informal economic systems. The Hawala network, an unregulated network in the informal economy, is largely cash-based and connected to neighbouring countries like Tanzania. The porous borders make it easier for communities to make a livelihood on both sides of the border. From speaking to sources and other experts

“there is a sense that cross-border trade with Tanzania is thought to be a major source of revenue for the insurgency, particularly in instances, where cash-based informal cross-border traders don't pay customs fees, but they're able to sell their

goods at inflated prices... alongside the movement of goods that passes through this border, there's also a considerable amount of physical cash that's passing hands and this cash is difficult to trace."

Data collected by Afrobarometer in 2018, indicated that 9 in 10 people did not own banking accounts in the Cabo Delgado region, while 1 in 3 people received remittances through informal channels including mobile money transfers through Hawala and MPESA. The Hawala network is an ancient system of transferring money - it has a history of being used by extremist groups such as Al Sabab in places like the Middle East and East Africa to do business deals in Dubai and to collect taxes locally. The use of the Hawala network in Cabo Delgado is difficult to trace, there is however a strong presence of it, especially in rural outposts where formal banking is not there or is difficult/expensive to access.

"Hawalas are also accepted under Sharia law, and they offer anonymity. So, they find themselves at the centre of a lot of remittance flows, but NGOs, humanitarian aid workers, and other groups also use Hawala systems to reach communities that they can't physically reach. So, it's important to also know that regulating Hawala's puts a lot of remittances and sort of community development work on the back foot and because of that, there is a cost load."

Undocumented internally displaced people (IDPs)

From the Catholic University of Pemba, Bianca Gerente worked on the humanitarian crisis in Cabo Delgado offering research and legal advice. Through the juridical clinic, they were able to estimate that around 7 000 IDPs, many of whom are women and children, are affected.

"Many of these people come from Quissanga, Mocimboa da Praia, Macomia and Muidumbe. There was a lot at Pemba, Metuge, Chuire, Mecufi, and Montepuez. In terms of age, you can see we have young people affected by this situation, we are talking more than 20 to 34 years old. We have 60% of people that cannot read or write."

Most of the IDPs need legal advice and without regularised documentation (ID cards and birth certificates), it is difficult to attend to some of their issues. Almost 45% of the people did not have documentation as it was either burnt or destroyed. It also makes it difficult for individuals to become beneficiaries of state help in line with their basic rights and many IDPs are undocumented. When observing some undocumented IDPs, Gerente says,

“You understand that sometimes they don't know how important it is to have this ID card because they don't have access to many services. They don't know that this is a human right and that they should have this basic service. it's very complex to deal with this situation because we don't have any database to control the movement of the IDPs.”

Rwanda and SAMIM intervention

As a respondent to the panellists, Piers Pigou criticised the narrative that the Rwandan and SAMIM intervention was successful, especially in eroding the capacity and competencies of the insurgents.

“The way the insurgents have also been responding and the adaptation of their own tactics within a broader strategy shows that even if they're downsized in terms of the numbers actively operating at the moment, they're still able to cause tremendous damage. We saw a downtick in activity during the Ramadan period, and now we've seen this uptick over the last few weeks, which is extremely disturbing, with a push down south.”

Pigou warns however that pushing in one area may generate a problem in another area, these operations then become a distraction. He further questions the level of cooperation between the three forces and the role that Mozambican defence forces play as a point of communication and coordination. Pigou further noted that Rwanda's public relations and propaganda have been more effective in presenting their work and the achievements thereof, including taking on responsibilities of different SAMIM forces in the Macomia and Nangade districts. Following weeks of intervention by the Rwanda Defense Force and SAMIM, the Islamic State were particularly quiet in its media Jihad channels. There was an announcement that Mozambique had provincial status in the Islamic State family and that it would be reporting directly to IS Central.

Attacks on infrastructure and communication

“We've seen a series of attacks, also sabotage, vandalism, and attacks on cellphone infrastructure, in some of those southern districts.”

Meluco power station also remains a critical issue as it may be tied to a wider insurgent strategy to undermine the communication infrastructure, it is believed it was a central tactic in about 5 districts.

Development of a Jihadi culture

According to Pigou, there has been the development of a Jihadi culture emerging which can be seen as one of the red flags.

Pigou noted

“Evidence has been collected from materials captured from insurgent camps by Rwandan and SAMIM forces indicating that there was a structured radicalization program taking place in a number of these camps. So, whilst a number of the youth may have been pushed into joining this insurgency for a range of reasons, material and others, we don't have a clear sense of the extent to which insurgents and others, even captors, have been radicalized during the period whilst they've been operating.”

Providing humanitarian assistance

Commenting on the move down south of the insurgents, alluded to by Opperman, Pigou mentioned that this would have an impact on the humanitarian situation and cause general insecurity, especially for IDPs who have moved more than once. It also has an impact on the kind of support humanitarian agencies can provide to IDPs and this needs to be monitored. The legal support and documentation provided by the Catholic University of Pemba was a perfect opportunity for investment in local communities which still needs to be synchronised systematically. Pigou believed that the state should deal with the deficit by providing the required documents to improve emerging development initiatives. The state and other development programs must not work in silos to achieve this. The support provided by the European Union is estimated to be €89 million, including equipment. It however does not add to the fighting capacity because weapons and ammunition are not included – it's mainly non-lethal support. The EU will have challenges monitoring the impact of their training and the operations on the ground.

Contributions from participants

1. Benjamin Kaufman: Regarding the Mozambique province and how that would have an impact on relations with other provinces in Africa, I'm thinking specifically about relations with the IDF in eastern Congo, what are the potential impacts for greater regionalization?
2. Mankoe Makupu: I know SADC has enough military [personnel] posted in Cabo Delgado - are they winning? Because if we keep on having some attacks in different districts, this is a concern. I can see that we are having a serious situation in Cabo Delgado.

3. Athenkosi Thoba: From some of the presentations, there seems to be an element of socio-economic issues that needs to be addressed. Are there any indications both from the region and the government of Mozambique that, to some extent, there is a concerted consideration of those issues that relate to youth unemployment, and socio-economic challenges in the north?
4. Martinho Chachiua: How is it now that we hear a lot of claims of attacks, and so on? Is there any increasing evidence of material or technical advice moving into Cabo Delgado or not?

There was a report from CDD, which claimed that there were about 26 countries supporting Mozambique. In that list, I did not see Russia. What is the situation with the Wagner group at the moment? Have they completely withdrawn, or are they dormant somewhere?

Final remarks and Conclusion

Jasmine Opperman asserted that in the unlikely event that Rwanda withdraws its military, it would be seen as one of the worst Black Swans ever. Rwanda is seen to be reluctant to directly engage in offensive battles beyond the security corridor. More urgently

Opperman stated that there was no indication that Wagner had been deployed and redeployed as soldiers on the battlefields, although there were assumptions that some Wagner members were being used to trace interceptions. Opperman further stated that it would not be a surprise if Mozambique and Russia reverted to the agreements made in 2017 between the two countries. There would be definite benefits for Russia in the gas industry. Wagner, as a persistent player in Russia's foreign policy, is still active in Cabo Delgado and the analysis should not be confined to the battlefield, remarked Opperman.

The overarching framework to deal with the socio-economic grievances is the Mozambique North Integrated Development Agency (ADIN) established in 2020. One of the main pillars of ADIN is economic development, it however faces issues of legitimacy and transparency, and the Mozambican government has a responsibility to ensure that funds are not misused or misappropriated for the benefit of FRELIMO's patronage networks. The LNG sector also presents an opportunity to reset the unequal dispensation of national wealth. Jaynisha Patel mentioned that if the proceeds and the gains from the LNG sector do not reach people in Cabo Delgado, it may create a layer of material grievances that extremists can exploit. Mozambican political and economic elites need to

have a dialogue to have a greater sense of unity and purpose to address the immediate hard security and developmental issues.

The analysis and recommendations included in this report do not necessarily reflect the view of SALO or any of the donors or conference participants, but rather draw upon the major strands of discussion put forward at the event. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this document. The contents of the report are the sole responsibility of SALO and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the donors who provided financial assistance for this policy dialogue session.

About the Southern African Liaison Office:



The Southern African Liaison Office (SALO) is a South African-based not-for-profit civil society organisation which, through advocacy, dialogue, policy consensus and in-depth research and analysis, influences the current thinking and debates on foreign policy especially regarding African crises and conflicts.

SALO would like to thank

The Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA)

for their direct support for this event

