

NUMBER 2

# CMI INSIGHT

MAY 2020



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## War in resource-rich northern Mozambique – Six scenarios

**AUTHOR**  
**Francisco Almeida  
dos Santos<sup>1</sup>**

Since the October 2017 attacks by alleged Islamist insurgents, commonly referred to as *Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama* and locally known as Al Shabab, on Mocimboa da Praia, it has not been entirely clear who the attackers were, what their strategic objectives are and on whose domestic and international support they rely. This paper, grounded in a historical understanding of conflict in northern Mozambique's Cabo Delgado Province, seeks to identify possible stakeholders and scenarios in what we no longer see as an insurgency, but a war.

## Introduction

The attacks have been happening at a critical juncture in Mozambique's history. In August 2019, a peace agreement – the third – between the Government and the Renamo opposition was signed by President Filipe Nyusi and the Renamo leader Osufo Momade. Complementing a decentralization reform through a change in the Constitution, with a focus on provincial governments, the agreement focusses on the demobilisation, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) of more than 5,000 Renamo soldiers – an ongoing process which commenced very slowly and excluding a section of the Renamo guerrillas still active and lethal in central Mozambique. The government's response capacity is limited, politically and financially. It faces stringent budget constraints caused by several interrelated factors.

The major ones are, the economic and fiscal fall out of the USD 2.2 billion secret debts contracted in 2013 to finance dubious fisheries and maritime security projects; a decline in economic growth and foreign direct investment, and in tax revenue (except for windfall revenue from the sale of Anadarko and its gas extraction and liquefaction concession in Cabo Delgado to Total), and, the drop in aid allocated via budget support, which, together with a cautious good governance attitude of the IMF and major bi- and multilateral cooperating partners forces government to increasingly resort to non-concessional domestic and international credit to finance its budget deficits (Mahdi & al., 2019; Müller & Vorrath, 2019).

The resulting, deteriorating provision of public services and maintenance of public infrastructure, especially outside the capital Maputo, together with a disenchanting electorate concerned with corruption and a trend towards authoritarian rule did, however, not affect the outcome of the presidential, parliamentary and provincial elections on October 15, 2019. Frelimo and its presidential candidate Nyusi won by a large margin, amidst accusations by opposition parties, civil society organizations and international observers of massive fraud and irregularities in all phases of the electoral process. With dwindling domestic and international support, the President and his party now face major difficulties to deliver on their promises to combat corruption, promote and consolidate peace, boost small-scale agricultural and food production and processing, as well as improve public services, notably water supplies, in a more inclusive way. These challenges are now, in early 2020, exacerbated by the socioeconomic impact of the state of emergency declared on March 31, 2020, due to Covid-19. Under these difficult circumstances, the liquefaction of natural gas (LNG) projects in Cabo Delgado with major reserves an estimated total investment of more than USD 50 billion to become Africa's Qatar, represents a silver lining of hope on the

horizon, at least in terms of upstream and downstream investment and revenue generation, from 2024 onwards (EIU, 2019).

True to the saying 'when it rains it pours', this silver lining may vanish and turn out to be a mirage, for two interconnected reasons. The first is the tumbling of global energy prices, partly due to the increase of production of oil by both Russia and Saudi Arabia, causing an expected decline of demand, refinery output, available storage, and return to investment expectations in energy exploration. This may negatively affect the inclination of gas and oil majors Total and ExxonMobil to proceed with their onshore investment in Cabo Delgado as planned. The second factor is the expanding armed activities of insurgents in Cabo Delgado, which the government and its reinforced defence and security forces (FDS), have not been able to contain, even with some support from private security and military enterprises (PSMEs) and police cooperation with neighbouring Tanzania. Combatting the armed activities exact a high toll on both the government and the investors' budgets.

The idea, that the insurgents are spearheading an attempt by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and its regional affiliates in Africa to incorporate Cabo Delgado into the Islamic State's Central African Province (ISCAP) is gaining currency in studies and reports on the Cabo Delgado insurgency.<sup>2</sup> Yet, in our view, solid research-based evidence together with the scientific exploration of other explanatory avenues is still lacking to verify this hypothesis despite claims by ISIS within 24 hours after attacks to the contrary.

In the present analysis, which considers historical dimensions of state building and the political economy in Cabo Delgado, we try to examine additional, complementary hypotheses on the origins and dynamic of what we label a *New War* in Mozambique's northernmost province. We use this concept as an antithesis to the 'Islamic State onslaught' thesis which has not seriously been challenged to date. **Our argument is that without more profound examination of determinants such as political history and change, ethnicity, interests of private security enterprises associated to investment in extractives as well as international relations, our understanding of the war in Cabo Delgado, its causes, and implications will remain incomplete.**

After analysing these issues and stakeholders involved, we suggest six scenarios considered more or less relevant to explain the conflict dynamic in Cabo Delgado. The analysis of structural factors such as demographical trends, poverty, disenchanting 'youth in waitness' (Honwana, 2013) unequal access to land and concession, long-term allocation and distribution of budgets and their effects on public services, structural state violence, among others, cannot be dealt with in the context of this study. The interested reader is referred

to Feijó & Maquenzi (2019) and Weimer (2020) as well as to the contributions to the debate, by Mozambican Professor of Cabo Delgado history, Yussuf Adam<sup>3</sup>. The paper's second caveat is that it abstains from summarizing of what we already know pretty well about the 'insurgency armed groups', such as their gaining military strength, strategic competence and the increasing efficiency of their armed action. From the vantage point of a distant international observer with fieldwork accomplished by the end of end of December it would be misleading to make any sober and informed assessment. The competence of the IESE research team on Cabo Delgado has all the advantaged to come up with such an assessment.

Methodologically the study is based on a review of literature and fieldwork carried out in Mozambique (Maputo and Cabo Delgado) during the last quarter of 2019, with interviews conducted with 35 key informants.<sup>4</sup> The authors would like to express their profound gratitude to all men and women interviewed, providing most valuable information and insights. For obvious reasons, their names and identities are being withheld.

### Recent armed action - New dynamics

Since October 2017, when the armed attacks started with an assault on police and administrative buildings in Mocimboa da Praia by a ragtag group of young men, an estimated number of 1,000 persons have been killed, and an unknown number of private dwellings and public buildings destroyed. More than 100,000 internally displaced persons (IDP) have abandoned their home and fields (Vines, 2020). After the attacks on Mocimboa, large numbers of IDPs have undertaken the voyage by boat to the provincial capital Pemba. Yet, according to sources in both government and aid

agencies, government fears an internationalization of attention on the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Cabo Delgado and thus has refused to recognize their IDP status in order to authorize humanitarian assistance which would be available through UN agencies.

The recent attacks by unknown armed men on three targets in Cabo Delgado province, Mocimboa da Praia town, Miengalewa village, and Quissanga village, within three days (March 23 to 25, 2020) shows both a capacity to escalate attacks and of planning and executing effective military operations with precision. Based on reports in the media, up to 30 army soldiers but few civilians were killed or injured, as the attackers had, at least in Mocimboa, directly and indirectly warned people of their imminent assault, targeting army barracks, municipality and district administrations buildings, banks and petrol stations. In Quissanga, residents had been warned and left the area in large numbers, by boat to the Quirimbas islands and on foot southwards, towards the adjacent district Pemba-Metuge. The attack on Mocimboa was coordinated with one group arriving by speedboats from the sea, and others via access roads, occupying six entry points and taking positions in the *Milamba bairro* before the attacks on the garrison, public buildings, banks, etc., in the early hours of the morning.

Particularly in the Mocimboa operation the attackers seized large numbers of arms and equipment, including an armoured car, and raided cash from banks, distributing part of it to the local population. Inmates from the local prison were also freed. Army barracks and vehicles were set on fire. In some *bairros* residents waved enthusiastically on the attackers' departure, the armed men donning FADM uniforms, new arms and the black flag of ISIS, bidding a brief farewell by invoking '*la ilaha illallah*'.<sup>5</sup> In Mocimboa and Quissanga the armed men

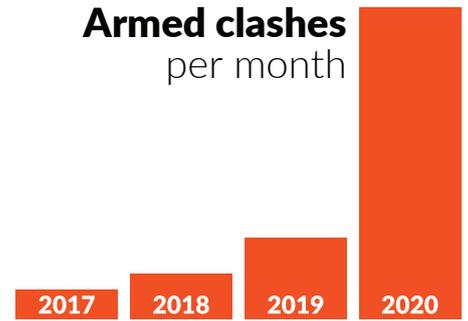


# VIOLENT ENCOUNTERS AND ARMED ATTACKS

(army/police, insurgents, civilians)

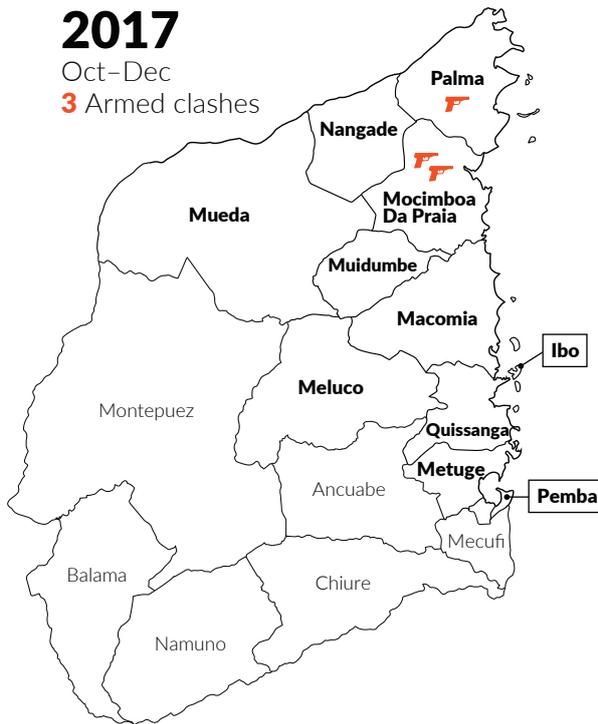


Armed clashes  
per month



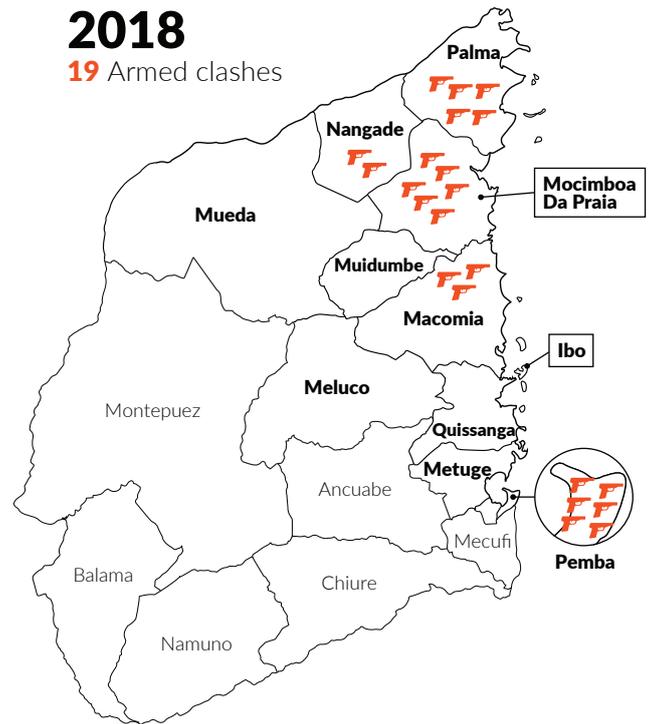
**2017**

Oct-Dec  
3 Armed clashes



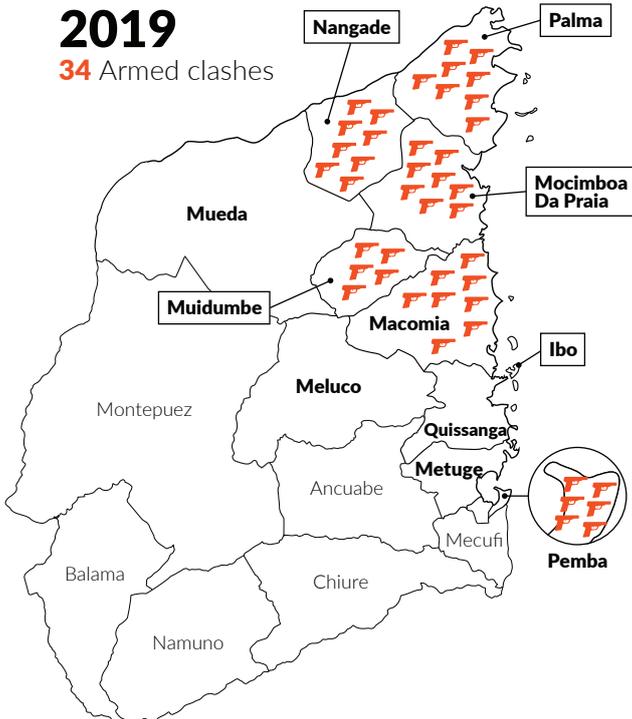
**2018**

19 Armed clashes



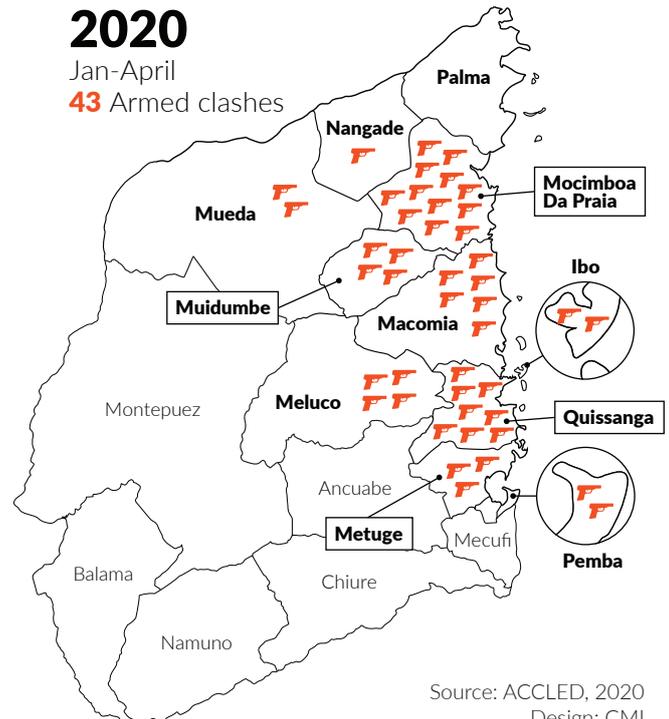
**2019**

34 Armed clashes



**2020**

Jan-April  
43 Armed clashes



posed in front of government buildings to document the event for a wider audience, particularly on social media.

Where were the Defence and Security Forces (FDS) during the assaults? The name FDS suggests a combined and coordinated force consisting of the *Polícia da República de Moçambique* (PRM) (including its highly militarized special force, the Rapid Intervention Unit (UIR) and other specialized units) under the command of the Ministry of Interior, and the *Forças Armadas e Defesa de Moçambique* (FADM). The latter, with its army, and small air force and navy, come under the command of the Ministry of Defence. There seemed to have been neither much of combination nor coordination in FDS in immediately repelling the armed attacks. It was not seen to mount any notable resistance to the attacks, except a reported exchange of fire in Miengalewa. According to local sources, some soldiers garrisoned in the Mocimboa barracks changed from their army fatigues into civilian clothes and mingled with the civilian population, using the same protective camouflage as some senior members of the local municipal and district governments fearing for their lives. Reinforcements came late, to Mocimboa shortly before the insurgents left the town voluntarily. According to our sources the FDS are widely seen to be unable to fulfil their mission to defend civilians from violent attacks by insurgents, on top of being unpopular with the population because of their heavy-handed approach in ‘controlling’ it, and well reported human rights violations. In fact, three days before the March 23 attack on Mocimboa, a large part of the Mocimboa contingent, including the command structure were said to have been withdrawn to Mueda, the FDS operational headquarters of the Cabo Delgado sphere of operations. This occurred under the eyes of visiting army fatigues-clad President Nyusi, the supreme commander of the FDS, who in an appeal to the troops reiterated the armed forces’ combat readiness and dedication to protect the people.

### **Evildoers or civil war?**

The conflict in Cabo Delgado is, from the logic of the government’s point of view, about so called ‘evildoers’ (*malfeitores* in Portuguese) from abroad, instrumentalizing Mozambican disenfranchised, radicalized Muslim youth in their attempts to contest the exploitation of the natural gas resources, particular in Palma District where the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) plant and associated infrastructure is under construction. However, this government narrative is not coherent (Chichava, 2020). In the period following the first armed attacks on police units in Mocimboa da Praia in October 2017, the government suggested that the criminal acts by the ‘evildoers’ would be dealt with by the police and courts. It nevertheless mobilized well-equipped and -armed troops to Cabo Delgado

with additional extraordinary powers not foreseen by the constitution, such as those to detain suspects, particularly journalists.

Rifts between the Ministries of Defence and Interior also became apparent in February 2020 in contradictory public statements. While photos of militant insurgents standing on a captured military vehicle and brandishing the ISIS flag were declared as being manipulated and fakes by the Minister of Defence, the spokesperson of the PRM confirmed their veracity<sup>6</sup>. And there is a notorious and dangerous fracture, notably in the army, between the commanders and the rank and file of ‘foot soldiers’. The latter, often new recruits with few months’ training and little combat preparedness, feel that they are not told and do not understand the rationale of the fight against an opaque enemy. And they feel ill equipped and abandoned in the bush to fight an ill-defined and anonymous ‘insurgent’. Morale is said to be low, and many soldiers apparently sell their uniforms and weapons to run away from a war which they do not see as theirs.

If the narrative above of an external onslaught on the LNG project with the help of local militant Muslim youth is correct, it would help to understand the views of the President and his Ministers of Defence and Interior, on two issues. Firstly, why are the targets of armed attacks moving southwards, away from the LNG location in Palma District, passing through coastal districts (Macomia, Quissanga, and Meluco) towards Pemba, the provincial capital? And why do government and FDS ban all media reporting and any investigations on the conflict? We assume that journalism and academic research may be instrumental in bringing about clarity regarding the identity of the attackers, their motivations and agenda, all of which government claims to need to know in order to engage in direct talks with the ‘enemy’, as President Nyusi has publicly stated several times.

From an analytical perspective, these unanswered questions, are part of the ‘mysteries’ of that ‘faceless’ conflict, about which several international analysts are most worried (e.g. Allison, 2019). And they point to the need to better understand the true nature of the conflict in Cabo Delgado and its many drivers and dimensions (Pirio, & al., 2019). In our own reading of the conflict, we subscribe to what Mary Kaldor; the Director of the Conflict and Civil Society Research Unit at the London School of Economics (LSE) has labelled a *New War*. In this type of war, the warring parties gain from ongoing fighting and not from victory, as was the case in *Old Wars* between well-defined enemies, usually ending with the defeat of one over the other or a political settlement between two sovereigns. In Kaldor’s words, *New Wars* are:

*wars, where taxation is falling and war finance consists of loot and pillage, illegal trading and other war-*

*generated revenue. They are wars where the distinctions between combatant and non-combatant, legitimate violence and criminality, are all breaking down. These are wars which exacerbate the disintegration of the state – declines in GDP, loss of tax revenue, loss of legitimacy, etc. Above all, they construct new sectarian identities (religious, ethnic, or tribal) that undermine the sense of a shared political community' (Kaldor, 2005).*

Thus, the emerging *New War* in Cabo Delgado has all key elements of a civil war, the term used by Joseph Hanlon to characterize a conflict, which others prefer to label, in a simplistic, monocausal, almost conspiracy theory-based way as an 'insurgency' by radical Muslims with international jihadist support.

### History matters

Academic literature such as *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars* (Kalyvas, 2007) or *Networks of Rebellion. Explaining Insurgent Cohesion and Collapse* (Staniland, 2014) suggests that in these type of new wars, which mean business for some and, death and misery for the many poor, decisive explanatory factors are:

- a) open and hidden, legitimate and illicit, national and foreign interests;
- b) historical claims to power and resources and their contestation by newcomers;
- c) ethnic and religious cleavages together with myths and stereotypes of the other;
- d) interests of local Big Men, and;
- e) unresolved grudges and grievances of one group over the other, pre-dating the conflict.

In such a setting, selective violence, often exaggerated in the form of brutal acts of killing, is used, among others, to cloud the identity of the 'owner' of the violence, who needs to have means and men with local knowledge to perpetrate the attacks. Violence against the same of kin is also used to exert group pressure on those who are undecided. And it may be part of psychological warfare, i.e. a ruse to detract attention from the own group's violent acts by using the violent handwriting attributed to the enemy.

Cabo Delgado, a latecomer in the formal building of the Mozambican state in its present territory, has all the historical conflict ingredients to serve as a theatre of war. Portuguese colonial power, a late arrival in relation to Muslim rule along the Swahili Coast, was violently projected through the undercapitalized Nyassa Chartered Company, with its coercive, militarized practises of exploitation of labour and natural resources, in partial competition with the Muslim rulers of the Swahili Coast loyal to the Sultanate of Zanzibar and



Kilwa (Newitt, 1995; Medeiros, 1997). This juxtaposed the Makonde, 'earthbound' group of the hinterland subject to Christianisation and 'Portuguese-zation', and the 'ocean bound' Muslim Kimwani speakers on the Swahili Coast who engaged in trade of goods and slaves.

Despite colonization and Christianisation, the Muslims of the coast extended their control over the hinterland, through marriage and association with African leaders. They were to become, in the words of Rafael de Conceição (2006), the 'undeclared enemy' of, and obstacle to, Portuguese state building. Colonization was based on the control of some coastal towns such as Tungue (today Palma), Mocimboa da Praia and Ibo, the capital of the Nyassa Company, and the latter's forced labour system *Chibalo*, together with haphazard attempts to co-opt the Makonde of the highlands around Mueda, including through Christian mission schools.

Mueda on the Cabo Delgado highlands is considered the cradle of the Mozambican armed liberation struggle, in which Makonde provided the main fighting force. As Israel (2006) has shown, it is here, where the identification with Frelimo is strongest, that movement composed of three regionally/ethnically oriented movements which were violently forged together. Particularly relevant for our analysis is the early history of Frelimo with its violence, splits, and the killings of leaders (Opello, 1975; Marcum, 2018). One of the prominent victims was Frelimo's first president Eduardo Mondlane, who was assassinated in Dar es-Salaam on February 3, 1969, under circumstances not yet fully told (Cruz e Silva, 2018). And Makonde were split between a military wing around generals such as Alberto Chipande and Raimundo Pachinuapa, on the

one hand, and the followers of Lazaro Nkavandame. Nkavandame, a highly esteemed Makonde leader had, in the early 1960s, envisaged and propagated a diffuse concept of a somewhat independent Cabo Delgado as a first step to national liberation, being, as a result, labelled as 'tribalism counterrevolutionary' and executed by firing squad after Independence (Laweki, 2019; Pachinuapa & al., 2019).

There also was a split between the Frelimo leaders hailing from the north and centre of Mozambique, including Nkavandame and the Frelimo vice president Uria Simango (also extrajudicially executed after Independence) and the so-called 'southerners' (*sulistas*), headed, at a later stage of the armed struggle by Samora Machel, then-secretary of the Frelimo Defence Department (Marcum, 2018). He became Mozambique's first president and was killed in a crash of a Soviet-built military plane on October 19, 1986, in circumstances not yet publicly clarified (Cabrita, 2000). The recent book by Luis de Brito demonstrates how these conflicts dragged on after Independence, and the way in which the dominant groups in the Frelimo elite consolidated and enhanced their hegemony using selective tenets of Marxism and Socialism (de Brito, 2019).

### Is there an ethnic factor?

Framing the violent power struggles within Frelimo as a conflict between a 'narrow-minded and short-lived local elite of Makonde capitalists and chieftains' and 'cosmopolitan and modernizing' Socialist-oriented elite in Maputo (Derlugian & Earle, 2013) may be necessary but is not sufficient a factor to fully explain them. It would need to be assumed that the intra-ethnic rifts and dissidence alluded to above, continue to exist today and are considered relevant for the analysis of civil war in general (Staniland, 2016) and in Cabo Delgado in particular (Devermont, 2019). For example, according to several key informants, some Makonde juxtapose Makonde from Muidumbe (*Makonde de primeira*, i.e. 'first class Makonde') and those from Mueda (*Makonde de segunda*, i.e. 'second class Makonde'), with the former complaining about not having seen the benefits of their contributions and sacrifices to the war for Independence. During the early phase of the liberation struggle, Bishop Dom José Inácio dos Santos Garcia, of the *Sociedade Missionária da Boa Nova e da Diocese de Porto Amélia* (today Pemba) noted in his diary entitled a Guerra dos Makondes:

*'On October 1, 1964, two FRELIMO members cowardly killed the driver of the bus from Mueda to Muidumbe. At the CHAI Administrative Post some women and children on the veranda were targets of a group of rebels, who fortunately did not reach anyone. The rebels were made to flee by a European police officer, abandoning weapons and part of their uniforms. On October 9, the first Matide and Ngole stores were attacked.*

*In Nangololo, some Makonde who were not sympathetic to the Liberation Movement were threatened and others were killed for the same reason. Several régulos considered friends of the Europeans, were liquidated' (dos Santos Garcia, 2015).<sup>7</sup>*

He also reported that many Makonde fled from the atrocities to Tanzania:

*'including almost all teachers' ... The schools were all closed and the Makonde teachers, being attacked more than once by FRELIMO members, went home. On the 8th of October the Makonde teachers almost all went to the other side of the border, where they were safer (ibid).*

This intra ethnic split re-emerged and became evident in Muidumbe, in mid-2005, when, according to a key informant, one of the veteran generals of the liberation war was quoted as saying that Frelimo 'was born here and could end here' if the material benefits of Independence were only enjoyed by 'southerners'.

This north-south rift within Frelimo is reinforced by wealth differentials between the Makonde Big Men and their families in Cabo Delgado, acquired through their alliance with the 'southerners', and the relative poverty of ordinary Makonde. The story of the 'war of lions' narrated by Israel (2009) suggests, that in 2008, when several people in Muidumbe were mauled by lions, wealthy Makonde associated with local government were considered to be sorcerers, who acquired their wealth illicitly and were therefore lynched. Further, the ethnic divide and conflict between the Makonde and, the KiMwani and Emakhua speakers in Cabo Delgado, with Islam as the 'enemy of always' (de Conceição, 2006), have been carried forward in various forms. It has been recently aggravated by the perception of people of the Swahili Coast, that it is not unknown insurgents, but alleged 'national owners of armed violence' who perpetrate those horrendous acts, instrumentalizing radicalized Muslims for that purpose. As a senior civil servant based in Ibo District interviewed during this study put it: these violent acts aim to 'sweep [...] us off our land'.

If Cabo Delgado represents the macrocosm of a violent conflict, Mocimboa da Praia is its microcosm, where several conflict dimensions come together like under a magnifying glass (Weimer, 2020). This implies, that there are old grudges and stereotype convictions which may suggest a Mwani rebellion against what they see as an encroachment by Makonde people and interests of their land, economic activity and way of life, if not a perception of outright oppression by the 'new masters' from the highlands. The fact, that historically speaking, the Mwani's religion, Islam, is perceived to be inimical to Makonde and Frelimo rule in Cabo Delgado, only reinforces this perception.

Reducing the inherent and inherited conflict

potential is, in our view, not helped by President Nyusi's attempts – himself a Makonde – at Makonde-izing the higher echelons of the command of PRM, FADM, FDS and the State Security and Intelligence Service (SISE), creating a 'Makonde Pentagon'.<sup>8</sup> These attempts are said to be viewed critically within those institutions. And the expansion of Makonde business interests, particularly in Cabo Delgado, via enterprises and shareholdings of family members of Big Men and arrangements with international business partners is not always seen favourably by many Cabo Delgadonians interviewed, either. There is a general feeling that leaders hailing from the Makonde highlands are trying to reassert themselves and become more aggressive in the way they try to enhance and control economic and political power, according to one key informant.

Many people in Cabo Delgado, apart from Makondes, believe the wealth of their province is theirs and belongs to Cabo Delgadonians in the first place. Some years back, one source alluded to the fact that a group of Makonde had studied cases of territorial autonomy and secession in resource-rich African countries, visiting, for example, Cabinda in Angola and the Niger Delta in Nigeria. After the much-doubted and contested 'resounding electoral victory' of Nyusi and his party in the October 2019 elections, it is critically observed that persons loyal to these leaders are, being launched into the public administration to assure that economic interests in the exploitation of Cabo Delgado's natural wealth remain under the control of and benefit to the Big Men (interview, key informant).

### **Incumbent claims vs newcomer claims**

The expanding Makonde influence in business and security services, and particularly that of newcomer President Nyusi and his next of kin, may certainly not be to the liking of his predecessor Armando Guebuza. Guebuza, his family, and business partners had during the years in government (2005 to 2014) staked their claims to the concessions and land use titles for agriculture, infrastructure, tourism and mining developments including in Cabo Delgado. The so-called White Book of Natural Resources in Cabo Delgado, elaborated from the mid-1990s with the technical assistance of the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, was a key instrument to inform potential national and international investors about lucrative investment opportunities in Cabo Delgado. The White Book lists comprehensive descriptions and analyses of all natural resources (water, minerals, forestry, agricultural land, wildlife, etc.) making Cabo Delgado the only province to have such an inventory available for informing carefully selected investors. This partially explains the multitude of investments in the extractive economy of Cabo Delgado, in the broadest sense, including mining, forestry, and agriculture.

According to the Mozambican mining cadastre<sup>9</sup> all of Cabo Delgado's land surface, except for the Quirimbas National Park, has been granted in concessions, at the cost of the local population's interests in small-scale agriculture, artisanal mining, harvesting of forest products for construction, charcoal production, etc. Many of the new concessionaires belong to the province's Big Men,<sup>10</sup> in other words to the 'narrow minded elite of Makonde capitalists and chieftains' allegedly defeated by the 'cosmopolitical and modernizing elite' in Maputo, according to the arguments of Derlugian & Earle (2013).

It is general knowledge in Mozambique that Nyusi's predecessor Guebuza had plans to reap the longer-term benefits from the investments he, his family, and his business associates made during his presidency. Attempts to this effect were made by, among others, changing the Constitution to provide for more than two legally allowed mandates, by promoting persons loyal to him as Frelimo candidates for the 2014 presidential elections, and by retaining the presidency of the Frelimo party after Nyusi was elected president. Nyusi was obviously not Guebuza's favourite candidate as successor, and the transition from the incumbent to the newcomer reflected a 'bruising power struggle' (Vines et al., 2018: 21) for influence, resources and loyalties within the party. While the incumbent was keen to defend and enhance his direct and indirect influence and expected gains, the newcomer, keen to affirm himself and his next of kin politically and seizing the opportunity to cut a share out of the growing business opportunities for themselves.

One example is the conflict around one of Guebuza's favourite projects, the Pemba Logistics Base for the gas exploration projects in Palma and Afungi. This logistical base, announced by the Guebuza government in 2013 is owned by Portos de Cabo Delgado (PCD), together with Caminhos de Ferro de Moçambique (CFM) and Empresa Nacional de Hidrocarbonetos (ENH) as the only two shareholders, on a 50:50 percentage shareholder basis. The concession was given to ENH Integrated Logistics Service (ENHILS), a private company which is 51 %-owned by ENH Logistics (owned by ENH) and 49 % by Orleans Invest, with the Italian billionaire Gabriele Volpi (one of the Guebuza family's business partners) being ENHILS' majority shareholder. However, the initial area of 10,500 ha claimed by Guebuza and his associates in 2013 was reduced to a mere 1,500 ha by the successive government.

This and other conflicts over assets and investments seem to be looked at as being part of a zero-sum game for power between the then incumbent and the newcomer, including through ethnic lenses. Hence it not surprising to hear Guebuza speak of 'strong tribalism' within Frelimo,<sup>11</sup> on the occasion of the Frelimo Central Committee meeting held in Matola, May 3-5 2019, alluding to the danger of repeating Frelimo's violent early history of ethnic strife of opposing 'northerners'

and ‘southerners’. The fact that, in the context of the odious debt case, the Nyusi government consented in detaining and charging a family member, as well some collaborators and allies of Guebuza, certainly did not help to promote reconciliation between the present and former head of state but may have reinforced the interpretation of an ethnic vendetta on the part of the latter.

### **War is business: on private military contractors**

By Makonde-izing the security apparatus during Nyusi’s first presidential mandate, the President haphazardly helped create individual business opportunities for the military leaders. It is alleged by trustworthy sources interviewed for this study that the private company which provides logistical support and supplies to the FDS belongs to the former Minister of Defence, Atanásio M’tumuke, hailing from Muidumbe district in Cabo Delgado. One source close to the Army suggested that probably four out of ten Land Cruisers procured by the army are being ‘privatized’ by senior officers. Recently it was revealed by the media, that M’tumuke, together with the former Minister of Interior, had signed an agreement with the major players in the gas business (Total, taking over Anadarko, and ENI, i.e. Mozambique Rovuma Venture) to supply military and security services through FDS to the stakeholders in the gas business and financed by the stakeholders.

It is not known whether the private airline Asas do Indico is part of the Makonde-dominated business in Cabo Delgado. However, it transports army soldier reinforcements from Pemba to Palma and flies private travellers, evacuated from Palma for fear of attacks, on the return route at exorbitant tariffs. Other private companies in the security business are UK-based Control Risks, which has partnered with the Mozambican registered company Executive Logistics, led by two ex-servicemen of the Dutch air force and navy respectively and allegedly close to Nyusi. Control Risks is contracted by ExxonMobil, among other duties, to protect staff transit. This involves pre-travel threat assessment, strict journey management protocols, as well as security support to travellers and, ideally, coordination with FDS.

Nyusi and M’tumuke, the latter an early Frelimo graduate in motorized infantry from the Moscow based Vistrel Military, were instrumental in bringing about a rapprochement with Russia, once a world power now in pursuit of a stronger geopolitical role. This includes military aid and support by the Wagner Group. This, in formal, legal terms, private security enterprise is apparently linked to the counterintelligence of the Russian army and, via a St Petersburg-based food caterer/security entrepreneur, Yevgeny Prigozhin, nicknamed ‘Putin’s chef’, to the Russian President Putin (Østensen & Bukkvoll, 2018; Dolinina, & al., 2019). The Wagner Group is probably a state-owned,

but non official, i.e. ‘private’ military enterprise. It has been used as instrument of Russia foreign and security policies. It is known to have been active in Syria, Libya, and Central African Republic, among others, serving as leverage for Moscow’s strategic interventions and global power projection (Stronski, 2019). In Mozambique, they are said to have advised the army for several years. In September 2019, a couple of weeks before the general elections, military equipment from Russia, including attack helicopters, were seen being offloaded at Nacala airport. This equipment apparently serves to support the Wagner Group combat troops estimated to be up to 200 men deployed in Northern Cabo Delgado and stationed at Mueda. Losses in combat with insurgents of up to ten Wagner soldiers in November 2019 prompted their withdrawal to Nacala, their logistical base, which apparently includes a Russian navy ship (Thabiti, 2020). The Wagner Group and its leaders are alleged to be behind the killing of three Russian journalist’s investigating Wagner’s activities in the Central African Republic. And the Russian newspaper Novaya Gazeta is quoted by the Moscow Times as saying that the mercenaries of the Wagner Group were responsible for beheadings during their support for the Syrian regime against ISIS in 2017.<sup>12</sup>

Russian interests in Mozambique go far beyond the deployment of Wagner Group operatives. It could spearhead and be part of an economic strategy aimed at Russia becoming a major player in the Mozambican gas and oil business, via her parastatals Gazprom and Rosneft (in which Qatar is a major shareholder). It is considered part of a global geostrategic game of force and for influence, in which the US, China are the main competitors (Stronski, 2019; Sukhankin, 2019). The intensifying contacts with Russia, with Nyusi and senior government officials, including from the parastatal energy company ENH, visiting Russia several times during 2019 underlines the growing cooperation between Moscow and Maputo, and Russia’s strategic interest in Mozambique’s energy sector.

France, with its presence in the Indian Ocean, plays a minor role, but is by no means a *quantité négligéniable*, given the presence of France’s energy giant Total and its interest in also collaborating in the military and intelligence fields, e.g. by supplying reconnaissance drones built by Airbus in Toulouse.<sup>13</sup> Some senior managers in the global oil business even consider Total ‘an army’.<sup>14</sup> Also South Africa-based PSMEs, consider Mozambique and Cabo Delgado a market on their doorstep, according to one key informant, Eeben Barlow, the founder of Executive Outcomes and owner of a PSME named STTEP (Specialised Tasks, Training, Equipment, and Protection International) certainly eyes this market suggesting that South African PSMEs had comparative advantages over their Wagner Group and other competitors.<sup>15</sup>

Many national and international observers attentively followed the shady deal between three private Mozambican companies (EMATUM, MAM, and Proindicus) linked to SISE and Prinvest, a subsidiary of Abu Dhabi Mar; and its political, economic, and juridical fallout (see: Vines et al, 2018). The deal was struck in the last two years of the Guebuza government with the internationally operating Abu Dhabi-based company in shipbuilding and maritime security, of which the Crown Prince of this emirate is a shareholder. The deal was financed by the infamous USD 2.2 billion illegal credits provided by Prinvest and obtained from Credit Suisse and the Russian VTB Bank, hidden from the Mozambican public and Parliament. It cost the Mozambican economy and state heavily in terms of decline of the economy, fiscal stress, and loss of international reputation and creditworthiness. The 'winners' of the deal, in terms of bribes and kickbacks received, were about two dozen persons linked to the then-President, members of his family and entourage, who cumulatively received up to USD 150 million. From the New York court case against Prinvest's senior manager Jean Boustani it transpired that the company saw Guebuza not only as the wealthiest person with wide entrepreneurial interests in Mozambique, but also as a long-term business partner worth investing in.<sup>16</sup>

Together with Prinvest, Eric Prince also entered the stage. He is a former US Navy SEAL and owner of Blackwater Inc, a private security agency contracted by the US Army in Iraq notorious for its killing of civilians. He now holds the position of CEO of the Hong Kong-based Frontier Service Group (FSG), a subsidiary of which, the Lancaster 6 Group, is viewed as a private military service provider by some and a group of mercenaries by others. Prince, once resident and registered in Abu Dhabi with a security company, was responsible for setting up a praetorian guard for the rulers of the UAE and as such has been considered a key foreign policy and military adviser to the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi (Isenberg, 2017). Together with Abu Dhabi Mar and other companies, Prince played his role in consolidating Abu Dhabi's strong defence, technological and industrial base. Prince's businesses are part of the Emirates' strategic and policy design for North East Africa and the western Indian Ocean, which has a religious, economic, development cooperation and military agenda. The UEA's military support for the Yemen government against the Iran-supported Houthi Rebels in Yemen, through an UEA intervention force and the setting up of bridgeheads along the Somali coast are cases in point. Prince is said to have been involved as a key player in both (De Waal, 2018; Cole, 2019).

In Mozambique, Prince became infamous for two main reasons. Firstly, on his visit to Maputo in December 2017 and FSG becoming a shareholder of EMATUM, (now called TUNAMOZ), he boasted

to be able to 'resolve' the insurgency problem in Cabo Delgado within weeks. And secondly, in August 2019, the Lancaster 6 Group made two Alouette Gazelle 341 combat helicopters available to the Mozambican army, allegedly for the fight of insurgents. However, they were withdrawn, apparently without combat action, to make space for the helicopters and Wagner troops supplied by Russia. The circumstances of this substitution and the main political and military stakeholders involved were neither investigated nor properly explained.

The same is true for the allegations made by one of the well-placed key informants in Cabo Delgado, that in 2012, under the Guebuza government, a specialized military unit was set up and trained at a base in the dense bush of Nangade District, whose purpose, size, and, command and control structure remains unclear. According to this credible source, this unit is said to have motivated, trained, and equipped Mozambican fighters, some of whom possibly have a university background. In any case, at least during the Guebuza era, Abu Dhabi together with the UAE need to be considered strategic stakeholders in Mozambique and Cabo Delgado. Since 2013, the UAE are Mozambique's principal source of direct foreign investment<sup>17</sup> and Abu Dhabi's involvement with the three aforementioned shell companies and close ties with the Guebuza 'business empire' are more than obvious. Further, Cabo Delgado's wealth in natural and energetic resources are certainly attractive for the UAE, given their own stakes in the global energy market, lack of a natural resource base and their geostrategic outward looking ambitions (International Crisis Group, 2018).

### **Is there a split in the army?**

Regarding the insurgent attacks, and the military operations and counterinsurgency activities by the FDS and its allies in Cabo Delgado, a strategic plan by the provincial government is said to exist,<sup>18</sup> identifying the enemy as foreign radical Muslim groups collaborating with their local counterparts. It foresees the re-establishing the bottom-up vigilante system of 10 houses, residential quarters, bairro, etc., which Frelimo had introduced in two years after Independence, aims at identifying, denouncing, detaining, and interrogating suspects. The system is rejected by many as it evokes its abuse by the National Service of Peoples' Security (SNASP) and Revolutionary Courts during Frelimo's Socialist phase, allowing for arbitrary arrests, torture, and even killings without any accountability except to the party (Machava, 2011). The re-introduction of the vigilante system must be seen as a double-edged sword, as it may help to provide a sense of security on the one hand and, subject to abuse, promote the cause of insurgents on the other.

The recent spate of attacks shows that the attackers have a clear strategic understanding and operational command, are well equipped, and are intrinsically

familiar with the terrain, showing reconnaissance capability. Thus, they pose a formidable challenge to the FDS and their allies, who are suffering from lack of motivation and desertions of foot soldiers anyhow. Sources close to the military even hint at a divided FDS command, with one part executing combat missions, while the other tries to prevent and sabotage such missions by providing false information and coordinates, thus playing into the hands of the insurgents. It is not clear to what extent the split between Nyusi and his predecessor is reflected in the senior echelons of the army. According to a former government minister interviewed, a sizeable proportion of the army is considered loyal to Guebuza, lauded for his policy and action of beefing up the army after years of neglect during the Chissano era, post-Rome Peace Agreement with Renamo in 1992. The weekly Magazine *Independente* assumes that Nyusi and FDS are opposed and 'torpedoed' on the Cabo Delgado war theatre from other, unnamed groups in what appears to be a power struggle within Frelimo.<sup>19</sup>

### **The seeds of Wahabism – towards an Islamist state in Cabo Delgado?**

What about the insurgents being directly linked to ISIS and other groups such as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), as the report of the Secretary-General to the UN Security Council (February 4, 2020) suggests?

This report maintains, that '*according to several Member States, ISIL [Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant] in Puntland is now operating as the command centre for ISIL affiliates in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mozambique and is in charge of loose networks of supporters of the affiliates*' (UN Security Council, 2020: 5/17). Does this constitute enough evidence to suggest that the Mozambican insurgents are, in fact part of Al Qaeda and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS<sup>20</sup>) operating via ISIS affiliates in Somalia and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in Uganda / Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)? Answering this question, one would need to take into account, that, firstly, this evidence has not been independently verified. And secondly, the view expressed in this report is based on information provided by one UN member state, Mozambique, which has already defined Islamist insurgents from abroad in its counter insurgency strategy dating back to early 2019, to be the main and only enemy? Is this a case of self-fulfilling prophecy?

It has been verified during a trial of a captured Islamist in a court in Pemba that several Mozambican men received military training in a camp in Eastern Congo run by the ADF. This organization, mostly led by Ugandan dissents opposing President Museveni, are a formidable, battle-hardened fighting force embracing a radical, violent interpretation of Islam's scriptures and seeking to establish a linkage to jihadist movements such as ISIS or Al Qaeda (Fahey, 2015; Congo Research

Group, 2018). They are operating in and out of eastern DRC, where they provide military training for their own and foreign fighters, including for youth from Mozambique.

The recent study by renowned scholars associated with the Mozambican Institute of Social and Economic studies (IESE) (Habibe et al., 2019) demonstrates unmistakably that there are Muslim youths inspired by Wahabi ideology, who received indoctrination and military training at home and abroad, including in Eastern Congo training camps. However, their operational link to ISIS and the Islamic State of Central Africa Province (ISCAP) has been seriously questioned by a number of scholars (Swart, 2018; Opperman, 2019), at least in 2018 and 2019. Habibe et al (2019) report that among those they interviewed for their study ISIS was virtually unknown. Do the insurgents' increased combat capacity, recently observed and brandishing the black ISIS flag when attacking or occupying a village or town<sup>21</sup> heralds that ISIS/ISCAP has taken over the Cabo Delgado insurgency? And if yes: what do we know about the causes and triggers for this potentially critical juncture? Is there more than circumstantial evidence to sustain the perception of such a takeover by authors such as Morier-Genoud (2018) and Postings (2019).

This view is also shared and propagated by security advisers linked to private security companies and institutions linked to the US-led War on Terror, or Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), as it is called nowadays. However, photos shown as evidence for an attack in certain village aware taken on different occasions and at different locations, and most of the evidence produced by the proponents of the jihadist onslaught theory, both in Mozambique and abroad is, in a path-dependent way, traceable back to very few sources associated with the US led CVE. One of the proponents of the total jihadist onslaught theory is Nuno Rogeiro, a Portuguese journalist and expert in geopolitics, who has been arguing in favour of an EU-led military mission in Cabo Delgado. In his scenarios he suggests that Pemba, Mocimboa, Quissanga, and Palma could be those towns, equivalent to Mossul, Raqqa, Idlib, or Aleppo in Syria and Iraq, which will be targeted by the ISIS via its Mozambican Shabab branch.

It is certainly true, that the seeds of Wahabism planted in Cabo Delgado, particularly in the 1980s by the Islamic Council of Mozambique (CISLAMO) and its leaders, bore fruits, in the form of Ansar al-Sunnah or Ahl al Sunna at the cost of Sufi Islam (Bonate, 2007). And there cannot be any doubt, that the *Ahlu Sunnah Waj-Jama'a and al-Sunnah wa Jamaah (ASWJ)* studied by Habibe & al. (2019), found fertile Wahabi grounds, which together with Wahabi Muslims returning from studies in Saudi Arabia and Sudan, and indoctrination by radical clerics such as the late Kenyan Abubacar Rogo helped establish what one might call a sect, which,

according to according to Habibe et al (2019) was not militarized at the beginning. Although they declared the State and non-Wahabi practitioners of Islam as enemies, their maturity, and coherence as a militarized religious group, as well as their link to ISIS, has been questioned by authorities on the subject matter (Bonate, 2018; Swart, 2018; Opperman, 2019).

In a seminar organized by IESE in December 2019, the Norwegian author of a highly praised book on African radical violent Islamism, Stig Jarle Hansen (2019), also doubted the present capacity of ISIS/ISCAP to significantly project their power to Cabo Delgado. They seem to lack local cultural embeddedness, a criterion complementary to that of global networking and communicating jihadist ideology. Other scholars and specialists on Cabo Delgado, such as Paolo Israel, however, hold a different opinion, suggesting that the recent attacks in Cabo Delgado clearly are attributable to ISIS/ISCAP.<sup>22</sup>

The doubters of ISCAP's involvement argue that the militant Islamists Cabo Delgado sect may not (yet) be able to demonstrate the degree of social, political, and military coherence, which would be necessary to conduct consecutive and effective military operations and sustained support by religious leaders. And they would be lacking a political programme, including taxation and social services, which have been a typical feature of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, and al-Shabaab in Somalia (Gari, 2018). The fact that the attackers of Mocimboa in March 2020 tried to win the 'hearts and minds' seem to contradict the practice of earlier attackers, which wreaked havoc on the population by decapitating apparently carefully selected persons in a village, and setting certain huts on fire.

Do we conclude from this observation that the insurgents have now reviewed their previous tactics, or should we assume that there are more than one-armed group operating in Cabo Delgado, one which decapitates, and one which seeks the population's hearts and minds? This is a remote possibility given the fact, that some of the recent attackers on Mocimboa da Praia were identified by the population to have been among those responsible to the first attack in October, 2017.<sup>23</sup> Irrespective of the doubts expressed in this section and the controversial discussion of the matter by specialists, we cannot discard a scenario which has, at its core, a growing alliance of local armed Islamists with ISIS and ADF; with the latter gradually taking over ownership of what would be a jihadist war in Cabo Delgado. The analysis of the genesis of militant Islamist insurgency in Cabo Delgado would suggest this conclusion (Matsinhe & Valoi, 2019).

### **Sharia and illicit business – an unlikely alliance?**

Aisha Ahmad (2018), author of the award-winning book *Jihad & Co. Black Markets and Islamist Power*

links illicit business of local entrepreneurs to Islamist movements suggesting that anarchy resulting from violent conflict and the absence of the state increases the businesspersons' transaction cost of doing business and reduces their profit margin. Supporting and cooperating with a radical Muslim movement, the author argues, offers businesspeople the opportunity to construct a better-regulated black market for illicit transactions in which both the Islamist movement and the business community obey the rules and reap benefits. The Islamist movement receives material and financial support whereas the business community gains security in illicit transactions and is 'freed' from tax payment obligations to the state, which increases their profit margin. As the author convincingly demonstrates in the case of Somalia, this arrangement may lead to the emergence of a 'proto-state' under Islamist rule.

In Cabo Delgado, there are favourable conditions for such a scenario. Firstly, there is a historical link of Wahabi-oriented CISLAMO to the business community in northern Mozambique, mostly composed of Mozambican non-African businesspeople usually of Indian or Pakistani origin, colloquially and derogatorily referred to as *monhés*. Many of them are intrinsically linked to and support the Frelimo party, which, even at senior leadership level not only ignores this group's involvement in illicit trade, e.g. heroin via the coast of Cabo Delgado and Nampula, but benefit directly from it (Hanlon, 2018; Haysom, 2020). Some of them, known for radical views on jihad, have set up business in the UAE, which has become a haven for tax evasion and money laundering. Their half-finished mansions in the Belo Horizonte suburb of Boane, a neighbouring town of Matola, may be an indicator of the decline of their profit rate. Secondly, Habibe & al. (2020) and others provide ample evidence for the support businesspeople offer to the Islamist insurgent groups, emanating from the illicit trade in timber, ivory, and drugs, as well as human trafficking. Thirdly, the general and widespread corruption for which Cabo Delgado is notorious represents an extra tax, eating into profits.

Thus, material business interests of powerful Mozambican Muslim businesspeople of Indo-Pakistani descent may coincide with religious and moral interest of the Islamist insurgents, fostering an alliance between them. There is, however, a major difference with organizations such as al-Shabaab in Somalia. This movement, considered a 'semi-territorial organization', is deeply entrenched in communities far beyond its nominal area of control (Petrich, 2020), and depends to a large extent on local revenue generated from taxing markets, transaction of livestock, etc., for financing acquisition of arms and recruitment of new fighters. So far, there is no evidence for this to be the case in Mozambique.

## The insurgency in Cabo Delgado in figures, as recored by ACLED from 1 January to 25 April 2020:

- 101** The number of violent incidents, marking a **300% increase** from the same period last year.
- 285** The number of **total reported fatalities**, bringing the total to approximately 1,100 from the beginning of the insurgency. (April 2020 was the month with the highest number of fatalities since October 2017).
- 200+** The number of reported civilian fatalities, (totaling more than 700 since October 2017).

Source: Carboni Andrea (2020). A concerning escalation in Mozambique. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). <https://acleddata.com/2020/04/30/cdt-spotlight-escalation-in-mozambique/>



# Conclusions – Six Scenarios

We conclude that behind the ‘fog of war’ in Cabo Delgado, several stakeholders and their external allies may have an interest in that *New War*, and act accordingly in strategic and military terms, under the fog’s disguise and that of a total media blackout.

We distinguish six scenarios or hypotheses, derived from differencing explanations of the origins of the violence in the previous sections. These are, of course, subject to further research for verification or falsification:

## 1

### **Alliance between illicit business and armed Islamists**

Based on mutual interest, this hypothesis would imply the eventual emergence of an Islamist proto-state in Cabo Delgado in which the two actors would benefit. They would do so by both the consolidation of an Islamist form of Islam in Cabo Delgado and of increased business profits arising from illicit transactions, protected by Islamist armed violence. The Mozambican state would increasingly lose control. Given the absence of signs of a political programme by the insurgents and for establishing a tax base of their own, typical for this scenario, we deem this scenario, for the time being, unrealistic and with a low likelihood. For emulating the successful model of Somalia’s al-Shabaab, the Cabo Delgado namesake may lack sufficient embeddedness in the local culture impregnated over centuries by popular Sufi Islam. This makes the emergence of an Islamist proto-state in favour of illicit economic actors unrealistic not very likely at this point in time.

## 2

### **Insurgents as extended arm of ISIS**

This scenario, very common in current reporting on the war in Cabo Delgado, would identify the Mozambican insurgents, increasingly well-equipped and trained, as perpetrators of jihadist-armed action in Cabo Delgado, which pioneers the incorporation of Cabo Delgado into an Islamist dominated ISCAP. In this case, ISCAP would be considered the ‘owner’ of violence. The brandishing of the ISIS flag by insurgent in attacks on towns in Cabo Delgado and the claim by ISIS of the attacks within 24 hours would be indicators for the likelihood of this scenario. However, as in Scenario 1, there are doubts as to the insurgents’ political programme and about the source of their weapons and supplies, and the venue of their training. It would also need to be explained how the ragtag insurgents of the first moments of the Islamist onslaught in late 2017 turned into a well-organized and equipped fighting force, which is highly familiar with the terrain of Cabo Delgado. Despite these caveats, at this time, this scenario seems more realistic and likely in comparison to Scenario 1.

## 3

### **Makonde Big Men and secession of Cabo Delgado**

This scenario is premised on the observation that many citizens of Cabo Delgado see the province’s gas riches as theirs, which need to be defended against the dominating interest of ‘southerners’. Now, that the political and partial military power has gravitated to Cabo Delgado, where the country’s perceived riches are located, the Nkavandame dream of a somewhat autonomous and wealthy Cabo Delgado under Makonde domination may be deemed less illusionary than at the time when the Makonde leader was killed for uttering that dream. The scenario also would imply the mitigation of intra ethnic conflicts. While in this scenario the Makonde elite would be considered the owner of violence, the armed acts may be perpetrated by others, including hidden, specialized units, possibly with the support of private military businesses of the Wagner Group type. However, the fact that Makonde Big Men are well entrenched in Frelimo’s political leadership and benefit from business opportunities in the whole country makes this scenario neither a realistic nor a likely one.

## 4

**Islamist inspired Mwani rebellion vs. Frelimo and Makonde domination**

This scenario implies a military attempt to reaffirm the way of life and religion of the non-Ki Makonde speakers of Cabo Delgado. Dialects of the Emakhua language family, to which KiMwani belongs, are spoken by most Mozambicans, also in Cabo Delgado. And Islam is, according the population census of 2017 by far the dominant religion in Cabo Delgado both in urban and rural areas, followed by Catholicism. This scenario would assume a rebellion of the Muslim majority of the Swahili Coast against the minority regime representing the Frelimo state seen as oppressive and corrupt. Two details may serve as indicators. Firstly, many of the insurgents seem to be KiMwani or Swahili speakers, and secondly, they seem to be recruiting followers in the adjacent Nampula province, predominantly in the coastal areas and districts, with a high cultural and religious affinity to those in Cabo Delgado.<sup>24</sup> An 'alliance of convenience' with ADF, ISIS and/or rebels of the Tanzanian Swahili Coast would be interpreted as reinforcement of the insurgents fighting power and for boosting Islam as the predominant religion. This scenario is in our view both realistic and likely, also because it implies a rootedness in local culture.

## 5

**Old claimants to power and resource stakes vs. newcomers' claims**

This scenario represents a kind of military conspiracy supported by external security assistance e.g. by Eric Prince's FSG and his backers, led by the earlier claimants to long-term power of the Guebuza group. It would have the double objective of destroying any secessionist dream from the outset and consolidating the rule of 'southerners' and controlling Cabo Delgado's extractive wealth under the label of national unity. Its strategic motivation could include revenge against an unwanted 'tribalist' newcomer, but also the prevention of the erosion of the historical dominance the 'Southerners' over political and economic affairs and resources of the whole of Mozambique, associated with fears of such loss. In our analysis we consider this scenario, which apparently has considerable adherents in Cabo Delgado and elsewhere, as realistic and likely.

## 6

**Partial overlap between scenarios**

Theoretically one cannot exclude the partial and temporary overlap of stakeholders' interests. One might think, for example of an intersection between Scenarios 1 and 2, which would imply the joining of forces between ISIS, illicit business and local jihadist armed groups to create an Islamist proto-state in Cabo Delgado to prevent domination of 'northerners' and their control over the extractive industries. One also could see some overlap of Scenarios 1, 2, and 3 which certainly would need to be considered a worst-case scenario. One could also imagine an intersection between Scenarios 1 and 5, in which the key actors of Scenario 5 employ Islamist 'handwriting' of their armed action to pursue their strategic interests, without necessarily attempting to create an Islamist proto-state.

In all the scenarios all key actors may apply excessive, targeted violence to either deter dissidents, coerce followers, enforce Islamist law and order, or deceive the enemy and the general public about the nature and authorship of violence.

The possibility and likelihood of each Scenario are difficult to establish, given the ongoing violence in Cabo Delgado, and the rigorously implemented government ban on any kind of investigation by national journalists and researchers, let alone by an international inquiry. Hence one of the key questions, if not the single most important one on violence in Cabo Delgado is, what is the government trying to hide by maintaining, even reinforcing that ban? Another important question

regards the role of various external factors, such as national and entrepreneurial global players in the energy sector and in the restructuring the world order in geopolitical terms, which, of course includes control of Cabo Delgado's major gas resources.

To answer either question obviously more qualitative and comparative research is needed, particularly in a global and regional context e.g. on western Indian Ocean, and within an analytical framework which permits to identify (open and clandestine) supporters of Jihadist groups in Africa for reasons of geostrategic interests. Another associated line of research would be on the potential winners and losers of the Cabo Delgado war, both domestically and internationally.

## Sombre perspectives

If the above analyses and scenarios have grains of truth, the consequences for Mozambique, as we know it today, would be enormous and devastating. Not only would the LNG projects come to a halt due to attacks and high security overheads, and thus, operational costs or would at least become substantially reduced. All other extractive industries would be likely to suffer similar consequences as they are vulnerable to such attacks and cannot be protected by the limited capacity of the national defence and security forces.

The simmering political, ethnic and religious wounds, old and new, would certainly break open and not only divide Cabo Delgado, but possibly the whole country in form of a civil war spreading from Mozambique's north towards the centre and beyond. These wounds, barely healed, are also attributable to Frelimo assuming power by constructing its idea of a state serving the political and military elite; and the systematic exclusion of large parts of the population from power, resources, and services, often enforced by warfare as the prevailing form of governance (Bertelsen, 2016).

Such a pessimistic scenario would entail major difficulties to conceive and organize platforms, national, regional (e.g. via SADC) and international, aimed at finding negotiated solutions or conflict mitigation measures. And a de facto territorial break up of Mozambique, like that of Somalia, could not be excluded. It is therefore of utmost urgency to consider the facilitation of regional and international conditions which would permit frank and open discussion of the issues, with all players at stake, and to permit research on the ground, necessary for testing the plausibility of the scenarios presented above.

As an immediate action the Nyusi government would need to heed the call by civil society and its leaders, including those of faith-based groups, to stop pursuing a military 'solution' to the conflict and to relinquish and ban any external support, i.e. the internationalization of the war, as well as the banning of independent media and research. And the Mozambican government would also need to be exposed to increasing international pressure to officially recognize the growing number of IDPs and allow humanitarian assistance to mitigate the plight of more than 160,000 women, men, and children who have lost their homes, only to be harassed, threatened, and sometimes tortured and killed by agents of FDS in places where they seek refuge, particularly on the coastal strip of Cabo Delgado. Further, as a matter of urgency, the proposal of Mozambican academics and intellectuals should be taken seriously through adequate support, regarding the establishment of a national platform or convention for rethinking Mozambique, politically, economically, socially, and administratively, premised on social justice, inclusion, regional fiscal balance, and the demilitarization of the mind.

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- 4 These include politicians (3), former and present office bearers in public institutions (5), businesspeople and professionals in the private sector (4), academics and researchers (6), diplomats and representatives of international agencies (5), representatives of civil society, media and faith-based organizations (6) and persons linked to public and private security agencies (3) and taxi drivers.(3).
- 5 Translation from Arabic: 'No god but Allah'
- 6 *Sintonía Zero!*? Media Fax, 04 February, 2020.
- 7 Translation by authors.
- 8 Correio de Manha. <http://www.correiodamanhamoz.com/lidimo-lidera-sise/>
- 9 <http://portals.flexicadastre.com/mozambique/pt/>
- 10 e.g. Pachinuapa's company Mwiriti Limitada owns 13 mining concessions in Cabo Delgado, covering more than 2,000 km<sup>2</sup>, including Montepuez Ruby Mining in partnership with Gemfields, which is infamous for its past human rights abuses in collaboration with units of FDS.
- 11 *Carta de Mocambique*, 20/05/2019.a
- 12 <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/11/21/russian-mercenaries-linked-to-gruesome-syrian-torture-and-beheading-video-a68261>
- 13 Cabo Delgado, an international battlefield? *The Indian Ocean Newsletter*, 28/02/2020
- 14 Personal communication
- 15 See Interview with Al Jazeera, Part 1, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmDFf1wP1AA>, Part 2: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLaGcG\\_rJmK](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLaGcG_rJmK)
- 16 *Pelas Declarações de Jean Boustani: Ministério Público é Obrigado a Investigar Imediatamente Armando Guebuza*. Centro de Integridade Pública. Anticorrupção. Edição No 20/2019 Novembro.
- 17 Mozambique: Investing in Mozambique, Country profile Mozambique <https://www.nordeatrade.com/en/explore-new-market/mozambique/investment>
- 18 According to a key informant based in Pemba
- 19 *Magazine Independente* March 31, 2020
- 20 In our context we do not make a distinction between ISIL and ISIS
- 21 See for example Joseph Hanlon's timely and accurate reporting: MOZAMBIQUE News reports & clippings 479 9 April 2020. [http://www.open.ac.uk/technology/mozambique/sites/www.open.ac.uk.technology.mozambique/files/files/Mozambique\\_479-9Apr2020\\_Muidumbe\\_attack.pdf](http://www.open.ac.uk/technology/mozambique/sites/www.open.ac.uk.technology.mozambique/files/files/Mozambique_479-9Apr2020_Muidumbe_attack.pdf)
- 22 Personal communication
- 23 Personal communication by Professor Salvador Forquilha, Director of IESE.
- 24 *Autoridades avisam: "Não se exponham a atacantes em Cabo Delgado!"*. DW (Deutsche Welle)-Portuguese 09/03/2020. <https://www.dw.com/pt-002/autoridades-avisam-n%C3%A3o-se-exponham-a-atacantes-em-cabo-delgado/a-52691737>
- 25 A de jure break-up of an African state has only two precedents: Eritrea and South Sudan.

## Other sources used:

allAfrica.com; Carta de Mocambique; Club of Mozambique. Correios de Manha, Magazine Independente, Mediafax, Savana Weekly

## Notes

- 1 Pseudonym. CMI, as an exception to its established publication practise, has accepted the author's wish of anonymity, taking into consideration the risks associated with doing research and publishing on the war in Cabo Delgado. [dossantosfrancisco939@gmail.com](mailto:dossantosfrancisco939@gmail.com). The author is indebted to four peer reviewers and the team at CMI for publishing this piece.
- 2 An example are the writings and comments disseminated by Eric Morier-Genoud, Eric Morier-Genoud is Senior Lecturer in African and Imperial History at Queen's University Belfast, disseminated via various websites and a twitter account (<https://twitter.com/emorier>).
- 3 E.g. on the occasion of the Washington Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS)'s roundtable on Understanding Extremism in Northern Mozambique. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=723&v=34aJMFN2XuE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=723&v=34aJMFN2XuE)