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## Violence in Cabo Delgado: A way to peace(Special Feature)

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## Special Feature

# Violence in Cabo Delgado: A way to peace

**Fontes Ramos**

**Lieutenant General (retired)**

**Guest Professor at the Political Studies Institute of the Portuguese Catholic University**

*Everywhere inequality is a cause of revolution*  
*Aristoteles*

## Introduction

Undoubtedly, the preparation for large-scale exploration of natural gas in Cabo Delgado had a substantive impact on social expectations, and the absence of tangible results for the local population may have contributed to inflame an already difficult situation.

The multiple grievances<sup>i</sup> and social instability that had dragged on inorganically were also presumably exploited by extremist religious elements eventually supported by transnational terrorist networks. The conflict in Cabo Delgado acquired a violent expression in 2017 and reached, in the following years, a brutality never seen in the region. Despite support from external military forces since 2019, which have substantially reduced its bloodiest expression, violence remains present in Cabo Delgado, having even spread recently to neighboring areas.

Present security conditions do not yet encourage the return of the approximately one million displaced persons who continue to weigh unsustainably on already fragile neighboring communities. After 5 years of conflict,<sup>ii</sup> people's complaints remain, the instability in the region continues and there is not yet a political recognition of the drivers of the conflict, nor an articulated overall purpose or a known plan covering the different components of this problem.<sup>iii</sup> And until this happens the causes of the conflict remain, and the inducers of violence are likely to continue. One has the idea that as soon as the military forces stationed there withdraw, violence will return to the initial intensity.

This reflection constitutes therefore an appeal to the development of a positive peace perspective, taking advantage of the better conditions provided by the decrease in the level of violence in Cabo Delgado after the external intervention support. To this end, we present the outline of a concept based on a holistic and integrative approach. Concept or plan that seems to be still missing, after five years of war.

## 1. Methodological approach

Analyzing a conflict and developing ideas for its resolution is neither an easy nor guaranteed task. The only historical certainty about conflicts is their continuous adaptation to new contexts and opportunities, acquiring the forms and character allowed by circumstances. Clausewitz had already warned us of this chameleonic capacity.

Is the violence in Cabo Delgado due to acts of banditry, as the Mozambican government initially proclaimed, or is it a consequence of jihadist terrorism, its current thesis?

The argument of this analysis is based on the understanding that in Cabo Delgado there is a situation of insurgency, let's say revolt, generated by a context of severe social imbalance, widespread poverty, and lack of real expectations of overcoming them, leading to popular support for the actions of rupture against felt iniquities.<sup>iv</sup> A situation in which there has long been a climate of suspicion among ethnic groups and where the recent emergence of a radical jihadist current has brought impetus and a sense of legitimacy to the conduct of terrorist and guerrilla actions of extreme violence.

The response to each of these situations naturally includes differentiated measures which may aggravate the situation rather than improve it, if the context on the ground is different from what it was considered to be. In other way, if the depressed social context in the region is not resolved, terrorism or banditry can be reduced by security measures, but the conflict will probably resurface next, since the root causes remain. Similarly, the answer to economic and social issues alone does not allow to overcome the network of organized crime that is well known at the "heroin coast" of Africa,<sup>v</sup> nor the network of violent jihadist that has settled in countries increasingly close to Mozambique.

To overcome this conflict, we therefore consider necessary to develop a holistic and integrative approach. Holistic, because any solution must consider at least three objects: individuals and their motivations; the organic structures and governance; and the participation of society. Integrative, because we believe that, only when there is a solution involving a win-win situation, positive peace can be achieved. In short, my argument is that Agency, Structure and Society should come together, mutually reinforcing each other, if we want to achieve a lasting solution.

We will start from Aristoteles<sup>vi</sup> proposition that "everywhere inequality is a cause of revolution ...," either because no proportion is kept between different or because there is too much difference between equals. In the same line of analysis, Ted Gurr<sup>vii</sup> added the factor of frustrated expectations to the Aristotle's equation. Men "rebel", due to "relative deprivation" when a perceived discrepancy between what they deserve and what they receive is unbearable.<sup>viii</sup> People feel deprived of something they had, but subsequently lost, or when others have gained relatively to them. In sum, to Ted Gurr, collective violence

depends on how badly societies violate “socially derived expectations” about the means and ends of human action.

As we will see, unfulfilled expectations have been almost constant in Cabo Delgado, but what strike us is the level of relative deprivation. This province is not only one of the least developed in comparison with the other provinces of Mozambique, but also in relation to neighboring countries. And if we look inside the province, there is a clear perception of unduly advantages of one of the local ethnic groups in relation to the others.

If nothing else existed as a cause, the arrival and visibility of those who demanded Cabo Delgado to participate in the exploitation of valuable mineral resources and presented themselves with their affluence before a poor and hopeless population, could constitute a powerful source of instability or even a detonator if local expectations did not materialize and if, on the contrary, the exploitation of national wealth would lead to their loss of agricultural land or to its displacement from areas, now required by the new commers.

In the commemorative edition of the 40th anniversary of the first publication of his work, Ted Gurr, continued convinced that “to build a more peaceful and secure world, we need to begin by analyzing the minds of men—and women—who oppose bad governments and unpopular policies.” But he also considered necessary “to know about the societies in which they live, their beliefs and cultural traditions, and the governments they oppose.”<sup>xix</sup>

A substantial progress has been achieved in the study of how different dynamics of a society can affect conflicts. We will follow the classic approach developed by Johan Galtung and centered in the satisfaction of basic human needs. He departed from the understanding that “however much collective actors are capable of realizing abstract goals, ultimately, sooner or later the failure to satisfy basic human needs will generate forces—popular movements that is—that will threaten even the most beautiful construction in social-political architectonics.”<sup>xx</sup> He then consider the most Basic Need as survival and proposed the concept of “negative peace” as the absence of direct violence to people. Recognizing that human lives can be wasted from a range of other basic human needs absence like hunger, shelter, protection, or work he considered that another approach to violence was needed, therefore proposing the category of “structural violence” for that purpose. “The concerns of peace research were expanded from understanding the conditions of reducing direct violence to include the reduction of structural violence.”<sup>xxi</sup> He then introduced the concept of “positive peace” as the social situation resulting from the absence of socially driven violence against people.<sup>xxii</sup>

He further developed the concept of ‘structural violence’ over his life but maintained the overall approach based on two simple arguments. A wide approach to the content of violence, defined as the “cause of the difference between the potential and the actual,

between what could have been and what is”<sup>xiii</sup>; and structural violence considered to happen “if insight and/or resources are monopolized by a group or class or are used for other purposes, then the actual level falls below the potential level, and violence is present in the system.”<sup>xiv</sup>

Later, Galtung (1990) developed the concept of “cultural violence” involving “those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence - exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics) - that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence.”<sup>xv</sup>

For him, “the study of cultural violence highlights the way in which the act of direct violence and the fact of structural violence are legitimized and thus rendered acceptable in society.”<sup>xvi</sup>

In Cabo Delgado religion has been used as an important legitimator of violence. As it has happened in other places, radical Islam, if unconstrained, tend to spread a simplistic reading of society and presenting violence as an essential and divine solution to overcome dissenting views and reported injustices. A civic and a religious dialogue seems therefore necessary in Cabo Delgado.

This analysis will be articulated in 3 parts: a characterization of some of Mozambique historic and economic factors to present the most relevant parameters of the country. An analysis of the situation in Cabo Delgado in which the conflict develops, seeking to highlight its phases and characteristics; and, in a final part, a generic outline of possible components of a Peace Project for the region from a comprehensive and integrative conceptual perspective.

## 2. Mozambique. An abridged view

### ( 1 ) Historical context

Mozambique is a coastal country about 2000 km long, but with a variable width narrowing to about 250 Km in its central region. In this area, Mozambique is crossed by the Zambezi River, cyclically transformed into a major obstacle due to severe floods that severely complicated the circulation. Only after 2009, the Emilio Guebuza Road Bridge allows the continuous circulation between north and south at the coastal area.

In addition, Mozambique’s location alongside resource-rich inland countries such as Zambia, Zimbabwe or South Africa has conditioned the country communications system that tended to be developed horizontally. Roads and railways were designed to support the link between these hinterland countries and Mozambican coastal ports. In a certain way, horizontal links thwart vertical communications and generates more cultural “distancing” between north and south. The Zambezi River is often taken as the separation line between

the two areas.<sup>xvii</sup>

This has been a vulnerability to the formation of Mozambique's geographic unity, particularly as the military occupation of the central region has been used to cut the economic flows and challenge the regime. The central region was the stronghold of Renamo<sup>xviii</sup> during the post-independence civil war, and recently in 2010's it was again military occupied by Renamo to complain against the monopolization of the state by Frelimo.<sup>xix</sup>

Maputo, the capital, is in the extreme south of the country. Cabo Delgado is exactly in the far north. What happens here is somewhat lost in the distance, as it does not directly affect the rest of the country, namely the capital Maputo, located at the opposite end. This resulted in an historic sense of abandonment in Cabo Delgado as well as of some mistrust in the government, since the southern provinces have better indexes of development.

Mozambique is made up of diverse ethnic groups that are not very visible in the main cities, but which gain greater homogeneity and territorial expression in rural areas, particularly in the poorest ones. In the province of Cabo Delgado three ethnic groups are very evident and represent almost 95 percent of the population.<sup>xx</sup>

The Makondes with about 20% of the province's population are concentrated in its northern and central areas and extend to Tanzania across the Rovuma River. They are generally Christians. The Makuas, mostly concentrated to the south and west of the province make up about 67% of its population and are the largest ethno-linguistic group in Cabo Delgado and also of Mozambique. They are composed of several subgroups that predominate in the neighboring provinces, such as eastern Niassa, Nampula and Zambezia being generically associated with the Islamic religion. Thirdly, the Mwani representing about 6% of the province's population, live along the coast particularly concentrated in Mocimboa da Praia. Generally Islamic, the group is primarily dedicated to fishing as well as trading activities that they carry out along the eastern coast of Mozambique.

This is the third conflict that occurs in Cabo Delgado. The relatively brief struggle for independence took place between 1964 and 1974, causing about 50.000 casualties in total.<sup>xxi</sup>

Led by Frelimo, the fighting took place in peripheral areas of Mozambique including Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Tete provinces. Its epicenter was, however, in Cabo Delgado and was led mainly by fighters from the Makonde ethnic group who, as mentioned, also live in Tanzania, where the Frelimo leadership and most of its logistical and training bases were situated. That gave the Makondes a particular value for Frelimo.

Frelimo's leadership was, however, substantially made up of urban cadres especially from the South, and this dichotomy of functions and mistrust – “we fight, and they command” – has left marks that persist to this day.<sup>xxii</sup> Moreover, Frelimo could not advance

inland during the struggle for independence mostly because the Makua ethnic group did not significantly join the conflict.<sup>xxiii</sup>

This division and interethnic mistrust still persist today in Cabo Delgado as one of the condiments of the present conflict. Both ethnic groups are suspicious of undue support given to the Makondes and of being underprivileged by the government.<sup>xxiv</sup> “The nation-building rhetoric of Frelimo did not prevent it being seen by some as a ‘Makonde’ party and its leaders as ‘southerners’ who did not represent the views of the majority of the population.”<sup>xxv</sup>

The war of independence ended in April 1974 and the transference of power by Portugal to Frelimo was made in July of the next year. Led by Samora Machel, himself a southerner from Gaza, Frelimo established a Marxist-oriented Constitution based on a single party and centrally planned economy and launched such a drastic process of nationalizations and economic and social transformations that it caused serious political and social upheavals.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Renamo was then created to lead the resistance against Frelimo’s experimentalist policies and to support a multiparty system in Mozambique. A long and utterly destructive conflict broke out between 1977 and 1992 that spread throughout the country causing more than 800,000 casualties, two million refugees and a dramatic destruction of the country’s social and economic infrastructure.<sup>xxvii</sup>

Peace was finally achieved after 16 years of war with the signing of the General Peace Agreement on 4 October 1992, between Frelimo and Renamo, paving the way for a multiparty regime and to a significant economic growth. Frelimo, however, have been in power since independence, being accused of having developed a network of influences that made it a “state party.” The outcome of all the elections, were contested by the opposition and considered suffering from significant irregularities or “highly flawed” by international observers. The four election results for parliament after 1992 were increasingly successful for Frelimo in the number of deputies (129 in 1994; 133 in 1999; 160 in 2004; 191 in 2009) while those for Renamo were mostly decreasing until 2009 (112 in 1994; 117 in 1999; 90 in 2004; 51 in 2009).<sup>xxviii</sup> In 2009 the participation of Renamo in the state structures was merely symbolic and reduced to a small presence in Parliament.

Hope in democracy began to fade and electoral participation declined from becoming almost absolute in 1994 to less than 50% in 2014, the year in which the Renamo vote was the lowest ever. Expressing its dissatisfaction with this “monopolization of power” felt in various social areas, in 2012 the Renamo leadership returned to a conflictual posture, with the leadership withdrawing to an unknown area in the center of the country.<sup>xxix</sup> A new period of instability and some violence followed but the political process was not fully

interrupted. In the 2014 elections there was for the first time a change of trends. Renamo rose to 89 deputies becoming closer to Frelimo with 144 deputies in Parliament.<sup>xxx</sup>

Since 1994, Renamo had been holding a significant percentage of votes in the country's poorest provinces particularly of Makua majority, such as Nampula, Zambezia, or Manica and Sofala, but this did not resonate in power-sharing, since political participation was practically limited to parliamentary representation. This explains why, regionalization and direct voting for regional and provincial level, have been an essential condition of Renamo for the Constitutional review and its return to peace. In Cabo Delgado it has been noticed that the Makondes tend to vote mostly for Frelimo and the Makuas and Mwanis for Renamo.

It was under the pressure of the current conflict in Cabo Delgado, and the impact of the "hidden debts" crisis that greatly weakened its image and international support, that Frelimo accepted the revision of the Constitution in 2018 to introduce provincial elections and the absorption of former Renamo fighters, a process that has dragged on since 1992.<sup>xxxi</sup>

The death of Dhlakama, the charismatic leader of Renamo, that occurred in the same year, left Renamo in a deep crisis. The party quickly split into two wings significantly reducing its political influence. In the 2019 elections, the first held for the Parliament and the Provinces, Renamo decreased significantly to 60 deputies, also losing all elections to the ten Provincial Governors.<sup>xxxii</sup> Frelimo grows again to 184 deputies. One time more the election was contested, like all previous ones, with the anomalies recognized in the Final Report of the European Union Election Observation Mission.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

## ( 2 ) Economic and social ups and downs

### (a) Growth and inequality

The signing of the Peace Agreements in 1992 created conditions that allowed a remarkable growth for two decades. Mozambique's National Development Strategy (2015-2035) noted that the country had recorded an average annual economic GDP growth of 8.1% during the period of 1995 to 2012, being one of the highest in the world, which is undoubtedly an exemplary result, even departing from a situation as bad as that which existed in 1992.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

However, the document recognized that this continued growth for 17 years had not reached all. The very high poverty rate had decreased from 69.4% in 1997 to 54.7% in 2008, but due to the increase in population, almost 10 million Mozambicans continued to live in poverty, with problems of food insecurity, low incomes, and unemployment.

It also states that the inequality (Gini), that is high in the country, had only a marginal improvement from 0.42 to 0.41 between 2002 and 2008.<sup>xxxv</sup> The current index tells us that



after 2008 inequality increased again returning to the 1996 figures (0.54). Mozambique is, according to the latest available data, the fifth most unequal country in the world.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

This analysis is generally shared. The World Bank in “Mozambique’s Systematic Country Diagnostic of 2021” reports that Mozambique can be proud of the aforementioned two decades with significant continuous growth but also refers to the limited progress in poverty reduction.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Accepting that the poverty rate decreased between 2008 and 2015, it noted that the overall number of people living in poverty increased by 2021 due to population growth and that inequality also increased.

#### (b) Fall and suspicion

In 2016, the discovery of debts assumed by Mozambique, but not publicly known or authorized, provoked a deep distrust in the government and led to the decline of its economic growth. A group of government officials apparently created three state-owned enterprises (SOEs) that took on more than \$2 billion in debt, equivalent to about 12% of gross domestic product (GDP) of Mozambique. Allegedly, the funds were to build shipyards, develop the tuna fishery and police the coast, which were never known to have taken place.

Mozambique was then the recipient of around 15 percent of foreign direct investment in sub-Saharan Africa. However, the revelation that several state-backed “hidden loans” were authorized without parliamentary approval resulted in significant negative effects.

It led to the interruption of the International Monetary Fund program and the withdrawal of international investors, donors and supporters. Mozambique plunged into a prolonged economic recession. Growth dropped to 3.3% in 2016–2019. The metical sharply devalued and inflation rose to 17.4% at the end of 2016.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

The hidden debt crisis also had a significant political importance, both internally and internationally, because in the end it was considered to reveal the “low quality of institutions” in Mozambique. The crisis marked the end of a relevant public investment process that had guaranteed development in previous years. Growth also influenced by the effects of cyclones slowed and turned negative for the first time in nearly three decades in 2020.<sup>xxxix</sup>

The World Bank considers that the recovery will be long. It is therefore<sup>xl</sup> relevant to the future the continuation of international investment in liquefied natural gas projects in Cabo Delgado. The departure of the first ship with liquefied natural gas for export took place on 23 November 2022. This can contribute decisively to the promotion of development in Cabo Delgado, where virtually nothing substantive has been done to date by the Northern Integrated Development Agency created in 2020, three years after the violent phase of the Conflict.<sup>xli</sup>

### (c) Constraints to the development

In summary, the World Bank refers several constraints to the development of Mozambique, of which it seems appropriate to highlight the following:<sup>xlii</sup>

Governance institutions. The weakness of governance structures and institutions evidenced by the hidden debt crisis, “with corruption, fiscal risk management, and growing domestic debt turning into major challenges for the government to address and threatening economic management and growth.” The World Bank mentioned that the development of liquified natural gas (LNG) calls for stronger institutions that can effectively manage the various stages of the process, as well as a greater need for local autonomy at Provincial level with the capacity to raise revenue and manage their own expenditure.

Human capital. The analysis considers that Mozambique “has neglected to invest in its people, resulting in the lowest levels of human capital in Africa and in the world.” According to World Bank data, despite the investments made, malnutrition, low life expectancy and low schooling mean that a child born in Mozambique today will be only 36 percent likely to be as productive as if she enjoyed full health and education, one of the worst performances in the world.

Inclusiveness. The Diagnostic Report refers that every year, around 500,000 young people enter the labor market for the first time. The growth of the services sector has offered an outlet for jobs outside the agriculture area, although the sector is still of “low productivity and focused on informal activities.” The exit from agriculture “has not been evenly distributed, with the southern region registering the greatest growth in industry and services, while the poorer central and northern regions are still dominated by agriculture.” Job creation and inclusive management of expectations and possibilities are therefore particularly relevant.

Conflict in Cabo Delgado. The conflict in Cabo Delgado gave more urgency to the issue of the state’s relationship with the provinces in “basic expenditure and provision of services” that remains a source of grievance in the central and northern regions and that fuels discontent and even violence. “To address social grievances and renew the social contract in the regions affected by unrest, inequities in social expenditures across provinces have to be undone and more efficient spending.”<sup>xliii</sup>

### ( 3 ) Relevant parameters

For a quantitative analysis, it seems useful to make a visit to some of the essential social parameters. We will focus our attention on three indicators: Population dynamics; development and governance.

Mozambique’s demographics are having a rampant growing. According to the latest

UN forecasts (medium variant), the population of Mozambique will increase from 5,959 million in 1950 to 31,255 in 2020, reaching 65,313 in 2050 and 123,647 million by the end of the century, corresponding to a total increase of more than twenty times since 1950. This is naturally having a profound impact on all sectors of public policy, from health, education, housing, or employment. Job creation for about half million people each year does represent a complex challenge.<sup>xliv</sup>

Mozambique has a very young population. In accordance with the medium variant<sup>xlv</sup> the number of people with less than 25 years was 64.7 percent of the population in 2020

Population (thousands)		
Aged	2020	2030
0 -14	13 772	16 982
15- 24	6 454	8 508
25-64	10 135	14 525
65+	894	1 170
Total	31 255	41 185

Source: World Population Prospects 2019: Volume I - Comprehensive Tables: 247

and will constitute 61.9 percent at the end of this decade, representing a high burden for those working and a continuous short-term job search.

In terms of the Human Development Index (HDI), with an Index of 0.446 Mozambique is almost at the bottom of the list, being the 185th out of 191 countries. Only 6 countries have lower rates (Mali, Burundi, Central African Republic, Niger, Chad, and South Sudan). Life expectancy at birth in Mozambique is 59.3 years, the average schooling rate is 3.2 and the gross national income per capita is 1198.<sup>xlvi</sup>

All neighboring countries have a higher development rate. Tanzania located just north of Cabo Delgado represents the most visible term of comparison. The difference is significant. Tanzania has a development index of 0.549 and is ranked 160th in the world. It has a life expectancy of 66.2 years, 6.4 years of average schooling and the gross national income per capita is 2,664 being more than double that of Mozambique.<sup>xlvii</sup>

In a wider analysis, in 1970 (still under the sovereignty of Portugal) Mozambique had an HDI of 0.205. Independence did not bring the promised and anticipated development and the index fell sharply to 0.153 in 1990, being the biggest drop in all of Africa countries.<sup>xlviii</sup>

After the 1992 peace process, there was a steady increase in the Human Development Index that reached 0.456 in 2019, consistent with Mozambique's economic growth. But from then on, the index began to fall, reflecting the difficulties mentioned earlier, having reached today a value of 0.446.<sup>xlix</sup>

As specifically for poverty, according to the most recent data from the World Bank,<sup>l</sup> and according to the income criterion of "less than 1.9 USD per day", in 2014 Mozambique had 16.7 million poor, that is, a poverty rate of 63.7% of its population.

The "World Inequality Ranking by Country 2022", consider Mozambique the seventh most unequal country in the world in which the bottom 50 percent share 8.30 percent of the National Income and the top 10 share 64.63 percent.<sup>li</sup> In terms of corruption the other face of inequality, the Index 2021 assigns the country the value of 26/100 (between a corruption maximum of zero and a minimum of hundred points). The world average is 43/100 and sub-Saharan Africa is 33/100. Mozambique is referred to as having the highest level of corruption among its neighbors being only surpassed by Zimbabwe with a level of 23. Tanzania with 39 points is a reference in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>lii</sup>

According to Freedom in the World 2021, the number of "Free" countries has decreased to the lowest value in a 15-year period in which this decline has been reportedly verified. On the contrary, the number of "Non-Free" countries has reached its maximum value. Mozambique has been included among those with the greatest decline in freedom over the past 10 years having lost 16 points and is currently considered only "Partially Free."<sup>liiii</sup>

With a score of 94.3 (from zero to one hundred twenty, the lower the better) Mozambique is considered a very fragile country in the situation of "on Alert". It has in 2021 a score of 93.9 and is the 22nd from the end among 179 countries, having been systematically worsened since 2006 when it was the 80th from the end with a score of 74.8. Between 2005 and 2021 it worsened in all sectors of the indexes being the worst rates the demographic pressure, provision of public services and the economic inequalities that worsened the most.<sup>liv</sup>

Finally, some references about Cabo Delgado. When one looks more closely at the Provinces mutual relationship, a situation of internal inequality is also identified.

Based on World Bank estimates, even during the years of steady growth in Mozambique, the poverty reduction rate achieved, was unequal between provinces and between rural and urban areas.<sup>lv</sup>

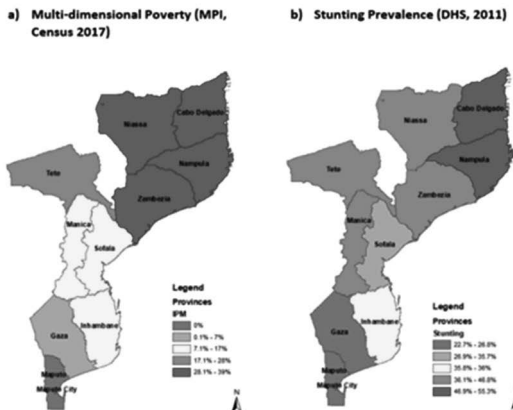
Using the international poverty line, poverty declined in Mozambique between 2002/03 and 2014/15. The pace of poverty reduction, however, showed a relative loss in rural areas. Poverty declined by 23.2 percent in urban centers and only 18.8 percent in rural

villages.

This imbalance was also observed among the provinces with the highest prevalence of poverty in the northern and central provinces: Niassa (67 percent), Nampula (65 percent), Zambezia (62 percent) and Cabo Delgado (50 percent).

In terms of multidimensional poverty and based on the 2017 Mozambique census, the referenced document states that northern provinces have the highest poverty rates. The Domestic Household Survey conducted in 2011 also confirms that the northern provinces also have the highest rate of stunting (Figure 1) and it should be noted that Cabo Delgado and Nampula are the most affected. And this at a time when the discovery of large mineral reserves had increased the local hope that the time for Cabo Delgado was coming to be contemplated.<sup>lvi</sup> Violence was going to hit the province in 2017 after a long period of unequal poverty and frustrated expectations.

**Figure 1. Multi-dimensional Poverty Index and Stunting Prevalence in Mozambique**



Source: The World Bank Mozambique: Northern Crisis Recovery Project

If we make a recapitulation of the factors analyzed so far, we have a somewhat depressing view of the situation of Mozambique, but certainly an indispensable one to consider possible solutions for the future, in particular for the violence in Cabo Delgado.

In short, Mozambique with a population in which more than 60 percent is under 25 years of age, is suffering a very rapid population growth and can quadruple its total population by the end of the century.

It has a low Human Development Index that is decreasing in recent years being surpassed only by 6 countries. More than half of the population (63.7 percent) live in poverty

and is simultaneously the 8th country in the world with the highest Inequality Index. Its Freedom Index has also been getting worse in recent years and is now considered a “partially free” country. It is one of the most fragile countries in the world being the 22nd from the end.

Mozambicans are surrounded by countries that generally have better rates and better standard of living. Cabo Delgado also has additional reasons to consider himself unjustly treated. It is part of the northern provinces with the highest level of multidimensional poverty in the country and together with Nampula have the highest rate of stunting in the country.

### 3. The conflict in Cabo Delgado

#### ( 1 ) A province ripe for conflict

It is in these terms that the Africa Report No. 303 of the Crisis Group considered in 2021 the Province of Cabo Delgado: a province ripe for conflict. Main stage of the national liberation war in which the Makondes played an essential role, the resource-rich province of Cabo Delgado, with most of its people impoverished and starving, is now home to another crucial conflict for the country's fate.<sup>lvii</sup>

Little affected by the 80's civil war, Cabo Delgado maintained a certain continuity of the mutual relations between its ethnic groups drawn up during the war of independence in which Makondes played a prominent role.<sup>lviii</sup>

João Feijó, a renowned Mozambican sociologist and researcher, notes that Makondes significant support to Frelimo “has made this ethnolinguistic group one of the great beneficiaries of the national liberation struggle,” emerging high “in the hierarchy of power, prestige and political and social recognition.”<sup>lix</sup>

Not only did they take high positions in the State Administration but they placed their allies in important roles at regional and local level, somewhat rewarding the role they had played in the struggle for independence.<sup>lx</sup>

During the period of growth that followed the signing of the 1992 Peace Agreements, Makonde predominance in the economy and politics of Cabo Delgado further developed. Businesses that included logging, mining and transportation often supported by state loans expanded. In the same period, the coast of Cabo Delgado also became a relevant point of entry and transshipment of heroin and other narcotics, reported as involving relevant people from the region and afar.<sup>lxi</sup> Meanwhile, tensions between provincial ethnic groups have increased since independence, notably between the Mwani and Makuas on the one hand and the Makondes on the other. The Mwani, alienated by the dominance of the Makondes, became Renamo sympathizers as well as a large number of Makuas, being both regarded

as a significant source of recruitment for the insurrection.

Frelimo's high-profile officials are referred to by the Crisis Group as having admitted that Cabo Delgado's "war economy" was not in fact altered after independence. "We paid a lot of attention to the development of the regions of the south and the central part of the country where the war with Renamo took place, but in so doing we also have to take the blame for having neglected Cabo Delgado." "What has happened is essentially a protest against socio-economic asymmetries and inequalities."<sup>lxii</sup>

## (2) Radicalism as an alternative route

To the growing frustration over inequalities in the national and provincial levels was added a significant change by the arrival of the Islamic confessions in Cabo Delgado.

In the late 1990s, Mozambican students who had been sent abroad (Egypt, Libya, Algeria, Sudan and Saudi Arabia) by the Islamic Council of Mozambique (CISLAMO) returned. This Salafist Confession Council, whose creation was proposed by Frelimo in 1981, aimed to soften its previous Marxist anti-religious policy, not least because Renamo had exploited this policy to its advantage. The creation of this organization had apparently been previously discussed and agreed with Saudi Arabia, having therefore been influenced by a wahabist approach. It was not the predominant religious trend in Mozambique, so many sheiks, imams and influential Muslims, favorable to Sufism, decided to create another national organization, which they called the Islamic Congress of Mozambique. The divergence between the two organizations persist so far.<sup>lxiii</sup>

The return of these young people, who had studied abroad brought a strengthening of a Salafist influence leading to the creation of separated mosques and madrassas, notably in northern Mozambique. This trend defied the traditional Sufi approach that had long dominated coastal enclaves, as well as remote areas in northern Mozambique, and whose practices had adapted to local customs over the centuries.<sup>lxiv</sup>

In a study titled "Islamic Radicalization in Northern Mozambique - The Case of Mocímboa da Praia," based on interviews and meetings held between November 2017 and February 2018, the authors identify as significant motivations for young people to join the Al-Shabaab group the following.<sup>lxv</sup>

Poverty, unemployment and low schooling. The interviewed referred their "need for survival," given that "the economy of Mocímboa da Praia is virtually destroyed" particularly outside the city. They mentioned that the economic system and the local authority are not able to respond to the demand for work or offer jobs in public services. More than half of the population lives below the poverty line, including many chronically underemployed young people. They consider the informal sector as the only alternative for the survival of

many particularly young people from Mocímboa da Praia, usually with low levels of education, without professional qualifications and having already the responsibility for large families. A local characterized the situation as follows. “(...) In colonial times Mocímboa da Praia and Ibo were known as the capital of Cabo Delgado... Capitals always have many opportunities... But since 1975 Mocímboa da Praia has become a district abandoned by the successive governments of Frelimo... Today in Mocímboa da Praia young people live from asking for alms and work in the informal market (...).”<sup>lxvi</sup>

The authors report that, according to their local sources “a significant proportion of the people who joined the Al-Shabaab group were poor unemployed young people, many of them from unstructured families, who dropped out of school or simply attended Koranic schools and developed their activities in the informal market.” Being unemployed and with professions that allowed them barely to survive, even working in the informal market, these young people joined the al-Shabaab group also in search of a community, guidance, and answers to their problems. Notably in the face of discontent “with the actions of the agents of the Municipal Council of the Village of Mocímboa da Praia, particularly collectors of market fees and municipal police.”<sup>lxvii</sup>

Search for adventure, camaraderie and creation of a new order. The authors of the article also identified another set of motivations, namely linked to the “search for adventure, camaraderie, purpose of life, identity.” The Al-Shabaab group offered these young people a new “family” and a new lifestyle around a certain “ideology.” It also provided a network of safety, support and community - emotional needs they were looking for. For young people, jihad was the “right extremism,” “to the extent that they came to see Islam as something important to challenge local authorities and build a new social and political order.” Marginalized and unable to have an impact on whatever it was, “for these young people to join the Al-Shabaab group was a way to challenge the leaders” of existing civilian and religious entities.<sup>lxix</sup>

Identity issues based on ethnicity. At the time of Mozambique’s independence in 1975, despite Frelimo’s ideological discourse on national unity, the authors referred that distrust between communities and deep ethnic divisions in the various regions of the country were and continue to be a significant obstacle in the process of building a de facto national identity. According to respondents to the study, the Mwani ethnic group feels excluded in terms of political representation and economic benefits. In this regard, a young local said: “Here in Mocímboa..., what is fashionable are the Makondes and young people who come from Maputo. We [mwani] don’t see anything... Our parents to live, have to work in the machambas of the macondes bosses... They’re bosses and we’re employees (...).”<sup>lxx</sup>



## (3) The conflict leads to an international crisis

In early 2007, some signs of aggressive behavior emerged in Makua areas to the south and southwest of the province. It was expressed by the aggressive behavior of young people who began to challenge established religious orders in these districts, accusing them of acquiescence towards the authorities. They also began trying to prevent children from participating in secular schools and accusing local religious leaders of hypocrisy and apostasy.

Local administrative and religious entities refer that despite their various attempts to point these events to the central authorities, the government has never developed a strategy to address this emerging problem that has been dragged on in time.<sup>lxxi</sup>

Expectations were, however, increasing from 2009 when it became publicly known the decision to launch large mining and hydrocarbon exploration projects in Cabo Delgado. In Montepuez to the west of the province, a ruby deposit was identified that year, followed by the public reference to the identification of gigantic reserves of natural gas in the north-east seabed of Palma. From 2010, the administrative authorities began the evacuation of residents on land assigned to the holders of the mining and hydrocarbon concession.<sup>lxxii</sup>

The evacuation of residents, however, had ethnic and social implications since it involved people already feeling discriminated. In Montepuez it involved the displacement Makuas, as well as the expulsion of artisanal prospectors who had this activity as the essential source of survival. The evacuation of residents in Palma' areas chosen for gas exploration, mostly Mwanis, created not only reactions of inconvenience and criticism, but accusations of lack of transparency and loss of indispensable livelihoods.<sup>lxxiii</sup>

The behavior of youth groups towards traditional religious and political authorities became more aggressive and the local authorities began to respond with the arrest of youth groups and the closure of their mosques. In 2016, the presence of armed elements was reported for the first time in remote areas of the Mocímboa da Praia district.

By that time, young militants in the province were trying to find a name for themselves. Some said they were members of Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'ah, which literally translates to "adherents of the words and actions of the Prophet and the community of his followers" to stand out from the local communities, which allegedly practiced a "degraded" Islam. That name never gained, however, traction. They then came to be known as Al-Shabaab<sup>lxxiv</sup> which means "youth" in Arabic and clearly reflects the average age of its components.<sup>lxxv</sup>

Organized violence in Cabo Delgado began in the port city of Mocímboa da Praia on October 5, 2017. About 30 fighters stormed the city's police stations, assaulted their armors and fought with security forces for several hours, causing more than a dozen deaths. To the residents (who recognized some of them) said they only wanted to attack the state and

not paying taxes. During the rest of the month, however, the militants organized additional attacks and invaded the coastal city of Olumbi, located about 70km north towards Palma, the gateway to the main gas project of the Afundi peninsula, then operated by the U.S. multinational Anadarko company. Security forces retaliated with mass arrests and counter-attacks, but in doing so further fueled local discontent. They began by detaining militants and suspected collaborators, even arresting hundreds of people.

From there on the violence spread gradually changing into an organized conflict with a growing polarization. By the end of 2018, al-Shabab fighters had managed to operate in Cabo Delgado's four main coastal districts. They then began to act in the interior, notably in Macomia, but also Nangade and Muidumbe, both with a significant Makonde population.

Faced with the difficulty in controlling the situation, the authorities hired the Russian Wagner Group to support the operations, but their operatives withdraw from the region apparently after suffering significant losses of their own.<sup>lxxvi</sup>

In early 2020, the militants became more organized and better equipped, constituting at least three geographically separate attack groups in the north, center and south of Cabo Delgado. They could now mount multiple operations against the security forces and state infrastructure in different areas.

In early April they attacked the town of Muidumbe area of high-density Makonde population, being only expelled by helicopter fire from the Dyck Advisory Group, a private South African military company meanwhile contracted to support Mozambican forces. In a major blow, a larger group attacked Mocímboa da Praia in early August driving away security forces and controlling the city for more than a week.

The conflict began to draw the attention of world leaders and prompted Total to start reducing its presence in the region. In late October, Dyck helicopters hit two boats carrying militants off the coast of Ibo district, showing the group's expanded naval capability.

On March 24, 2021 the city of Palma was invaded, leading to the escape of thousands of people. A few days later, Total announced the suspension of its land operations, part of them on the Afungi peninsula adjacent to the city. ISIS welcomed the attack on its media channel. On April 26, the company invoked force-force reasons, saying it was unable to guarantee its contractual obligations to the state.

#### ( 4 ) Mozambique accepts the need for external support

Since the beginning of the violence in Cabo Delgado, the Mozambican political and security posture has been to respond to actions considered to be "banditry" and only after a few months of "terrorism", but always using national means eventually reinforced by

externally hired means. They did not facilitate journalistic access to the region, and even less, requested external armed forces to participate with national ones, in the control of violence. The fact, however, is that the Mozambican security apparatus was not sufficient to overcome the situation. Thus, the initial option of the government was to contract elements of the Wagner Group to act in cooperation with national security entities in Cabo Delgado. After their withdrawal, it was decided to hire some helicopter support from the South African company Dyck Advisory Group to support the actions of the Rapid Intervention Unit of the National Police (IU).<sup>lxxvii</sup>

At the same time Maputo called for a limited support from some partners, to train specialized combat units composed of marines and commandos. Portugal took over the conduct of this type of training while the US also reactivated a training program for Mozambican forces. In addition, the European Union has set up a Training Mission in Mozambique to prepare 11 company-level units, including marines and special operations units. The first of these units is currently in a position to start their operational activity.

Neighboring countries, notably those of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), fear that insecurity could spread into the region, and along 2020 showed a willingness to help stabilizing the situation. But a long and complex dialogue was necessary before the Mozambican authorities accepted, in July 2021, to receive SADC forces in Cabo Delgado.

The external support had, however two components: Rwandan armed forces and police mission bilaterally negotiated and the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) established within the framework of the SADC structures.

The joint action has created a new dynamic on the ground. As usually, the insurgents dispersed and moved to safer areas, dividing into smaller groups for better self-support and began decentralized guerrilla actions. Some groups moved to the border with Tanzania while others departed to neighboring provinces having been identified in Niassa and recently even at the south of the Lúrio River, attacking villages within the neighbor Province of Nampula.

In summary, we consider that the insurrection remains active in a coastal strip of about 200km wide and 500 km long with the center of gravity along the N1 road that constitutes the jugular rout to access the northern cities of Mocimboa da Praia and Palma. However, the attacks have been kept about 50 Km away from Palma, where the Afungi peninsula and the exploration of natural gas are located even if the same has not happened in Mocimboa da Praia where attacks have been committed in several places of the district.

More than 800,000 people remain displaced and weigh unsustainably in the commu-

nities of the regions where they have settled, despite the humanitarian support received. It only seems possible their return to Cabo Delgado if they feel secure in their former areas of residence and having basic living conditions. Without this, the current bad situation of a displaced person is probably considered better than that of its return.

It turns out, however, that the reconstruction work in Cabo Delgado is far from having advanced significantly and the Northern Integrated Development Agency (ADIN) created by the Government in 2020 exactly for that, has been reporting insuperable financial and organizational limitations.<sup>lxxviii</sup>

In a recent visit to the region, President Filipe Nyusi offered amnesty to insurgents during a public presentation of fighters who had surrendered, a position he has publicly defended in previous circumstances, but there is not yet a public and coherent system covering norms, procedures, and resources able to systematically manage these cases. It is fundamental that this process is established and disseminated, to allow a concerted action to remove from the insurgency at least those who have repented or having not committed serious harm are liable to a rapid reintegration into society. And to help them to return to an acceptable social life.

It may be that the “bonanza” of the gas will allow a closer look to Cabo Delgado. The Minister of Finance of Mozambique at the autumn meeting of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, was quoted as expecting a decision of Total Energies to restart by the end of March 2023<sup>lxxix</sup> and the first ship with gas to export, produced offshore, already departed from Cabo Delgado.

#### 4. Gaining the peace: A holistic and integrative project

There is no doubt that much has been done by Mozambicans to resist to this conflict and it would be unfair not to recognize it. Civil society organizations, little mentioned in this text, have also been of indisputable value.

However, the social context of Mozambique that we analyze in its various parameters is complex and depressing. A few years after its independence in 1975, a long fratricidal war caused immeasurable human, economic and social erosion. The 1993 Peace Agreement opened the door to a multiparty system, but not to power sharing. Frelimo has practically monopolized the state until today.

The following decade was one of auspicious economic growth, but the number of poor was not reduced neither the patent inequalities were decreased. The crisis of the “hidden debt” raised distrust in international donors and drastically reduced international investment, causing growth to fall to negative values, worsened by the effects of cyclones and Covid.

In Cabo Delgado poverty and inequality were higher and the overall situation worse than in neighbor provinces or foreigner regions, such as Tanzania.

It is not surprising that the analysis carried out leads to the conclusion that central roots of the conflict in Cabo Delgado developed from the feeling of social injustice, lack of opportunities, unfulfilled expectations, and distrust in authorities. Furthermore, the conflict takes place in an ethnically polarized society, in which a radical religious creed has emerged with a rigorist approach praying the need of utmost violence to change apostates and impious deviations and offering a sense of legitimacy to the use of terrorism and extreme violence to an inflamed region.

“Agency”, “Structure” and “Society” approaches to overcome the conflict need to converge if we pretend to achieve a lasting solution. People’s reasons and grievances must be handled, and law and security imposed by legal means to enforce peace if necessary. But this only, will not resolve the conflict. It is necessary good governance and reform of structural and cultural sources of violence. Solutions and policies need to be worked out and implemented with the participation of the several strands of the society. Top-down concepts have to meet bottom-up aspirations and proposals. Too much time, effort and blood have been unnecessary wasted in Mozambique.

What systematically have been failing in conflict resolution attempts, is the implementation of a top-down approach centered in one single element: stop the war to make a peace agreement, that leads to elections. That’s not good enough. The pragmatic view of the past refutes this simplistic approach. Human conflicts are too complex to be resolved in a parceled way. They require a multisector approach. A Plan in these circumstances must have several combined strands that only make full sense if conceptualized and executed together and in syntony. And where every action in any strand must be developed taking into account its impact on the rest.

We cannot make an emergency plan to support displaced people without knowing what they want and what we are going to do with them. Settling in new places, coming back home, and in which time? And in each case, if we have or not, a socio-economic plan.

It is therefore necessary an overall vision or plan that should be holistic and integrative, covering at least mutually interdependent areas, in which each of them cannot be seen in isolation and only has value if it is conceived and developed together with the other. In the case of Cabo Delgado, it looks necessary at least:

**The support to the displaced.** It is not yet known an overall plan in the Mozambique case, nor even a concept to help displaced persons to consider their options in the short, medium and long term. Support certainly have an emergency phase, but it cannot be just an emergency. A displaced person with no means of subsistence, nor time managing

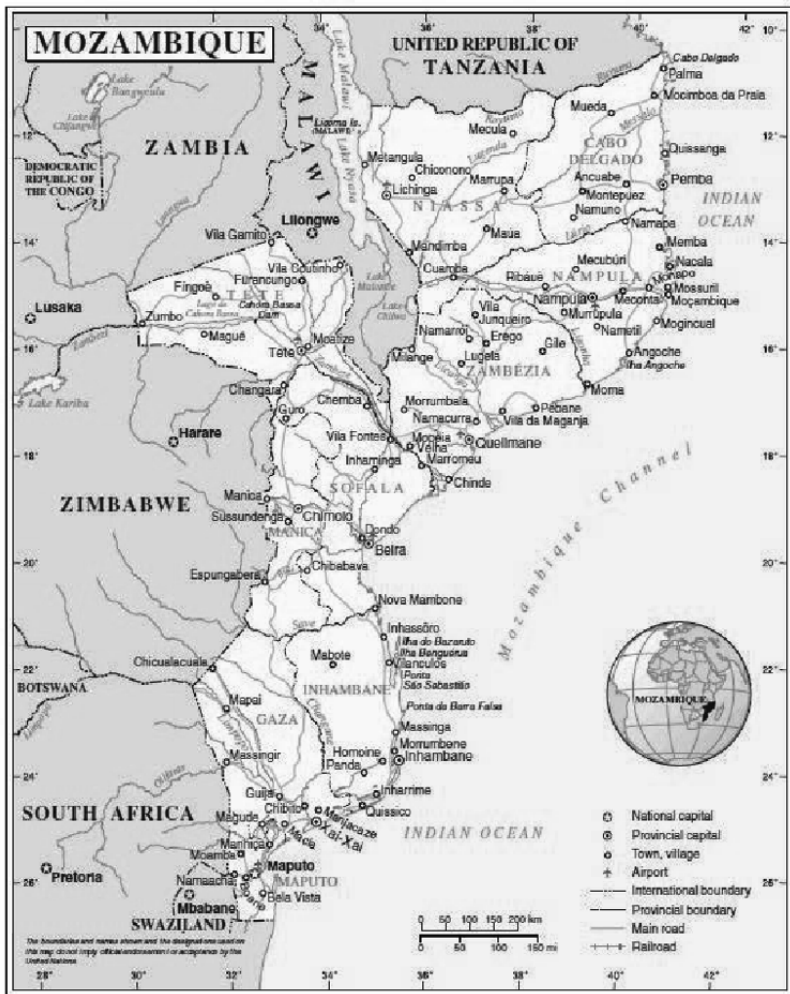
expectations or options for his next future, becomes a total dependent and a source of instability. The implementation of this part of the overall plan has to be integrated with the pace of stabilization in Cabo Delgado, that is, with the security and development plans. In case the return to a given area is not feasible in a medium/long term, the integration of displaced persons into local communities should proceed in accordance including, for example, housing, schools, lands to farm or other way of sustenance.

**Reduce violence and promote peace.** The reduction of violence is indispensable, but what is necessary is the construction of peace. The use of force to end violence is simply a part of the solution. Extreme care is necessary to handle force under the law and to avoid indiscriminate or illegal actions, as it has been reported. Force must go hand in hand with security, pacification and social development. In the sense of Galtung's "positive peace," that is, eliminating the structures and cultures of violence. Security and good governance are indispensable elements of pacification, which in turn is linked to social and economic development. The contribution of people is indispensable to the realization of peace. Cabo Delgado's situation seems to be as needed of horizontal collaboration as of vertical one and there seems to be a wide margin of improvement to be achieved at this level.

**Promoting economic and social development.** Development should be defined in participation with people and integrated into the security maneuver. Investment decisions cannot be made in areas where security is not provided for. The investments only make sense if they are directed at the population needs and fairly overcoming the interethnic mistrust so well known, for so long, in Cabo Delgado. A young population without development, without jobs, without a future and without expectations, will naturally be expected to adopt expeditious means to survive. If nothing is done, as mentioned earlier, the conflict will reignite as soon as the security forces are reduced.

**Restoring trust and reconciling people.** Historical examples recommend this attitude. Many young people joined the rebellion deliberately and as a (unique) way of fighting iniquities, others as a way of living when there was no other process to obtain an income to survive, others still deluded by promises of a "new world" that has not materialized and are therefore repentant. It is important to withdraw people from the rebellion in a positive way by telling and proving them that there is a future and that they may still be part of it. Social economic development is indispensable, as is exemplary governance. But there must also be, from the outset, a defined policy of reconciliation that is known and based on clear social and legal processes. A Policy whose implementation is lacking in Cabo Delgado, although there is plenty of goodwill, unfortunately without substance.

Map of Mozambique



Source; UN Map in <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/525524>

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