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The conflict in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique: jihad, marginalization and gas

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Abstract:

The most visible cause of the conflict in the province of Cabo Delgado is jihadist terrorism, and specifically the group known locally as Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a. ASWJ was founded in 2007 by Salafist students dissatisfied with the Islamic authorities in Mozambique. Throughout its first decade of life it radicalized, grew and began in 2017 to take up arms against the security forces and civilian population coming to take territorial control of important areas of the province. Although curbed with the help of foreign military forces, ASWJ has successfully charted a narrative of calling for jihadist struggle fueled by political and socioeconomic marginalization, ethnic and religious inequalities, and the resource curse. In 2010, significant natural gas fields were discovered in Cabo Delgado, the third largest reserves in Africa, which are managed by a consortium of foreign companies.

Keywords:

Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, Jihadism, Islamic State, Natural gas, Rwanda, SADC.

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Introduction

In the last decade, sub-Saharan Africa has become a fertile space for the advance of global jihadist activity that acts with the primary, but not only, objective of imposing Salafist rigorism. The Spanish Africanist (and current ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain in South Africa), Raimundo Robredo, explains that many of the continent's conflicts have their origins in the exclusion of a particular ethnic group from the wealth or power extracted from the region in which they live. The war Biafra in Nigeria between 1967 and 1970 was one such conflict, in which the Igbos wanted independence in order to benefit from the oil in their subsoil.

We see the same pattern in the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, as rich in minerals as it is distant from the capital Kinshasa. And it is also repeated in the conflict we are discussing here, Cabo Delgado, in northern Mozambique. Significant reserves of natural gas have been discovered in this province, the exploitation of which is controlled from the distant capital, Maputo. When abundant resources and distance from the capital are combined with ethnic or religious divisions, conflict is inevitable. This pattern often leads to another common feature of many of Africa's conflicts. Almost all are low-intensity conflicts in which an insurgent group uses asymmetric warfare techniques that make a purely military response relatively ineffective. It needs to be combined with political, economic and social elements to have an impact, which in turn requires strong and capable institutions that simply do not exist in many cases (Robredo Rubio, 2024).

Joseph Hanlon, a leading Mozambique specialist, argues that the roots of the Cabo Delgado conflict are a complex mix of history, ethnicity and religion, which has been fueled by poverty, growing inequality and the 'resource curse' (Ewi *et al.*, 2024).

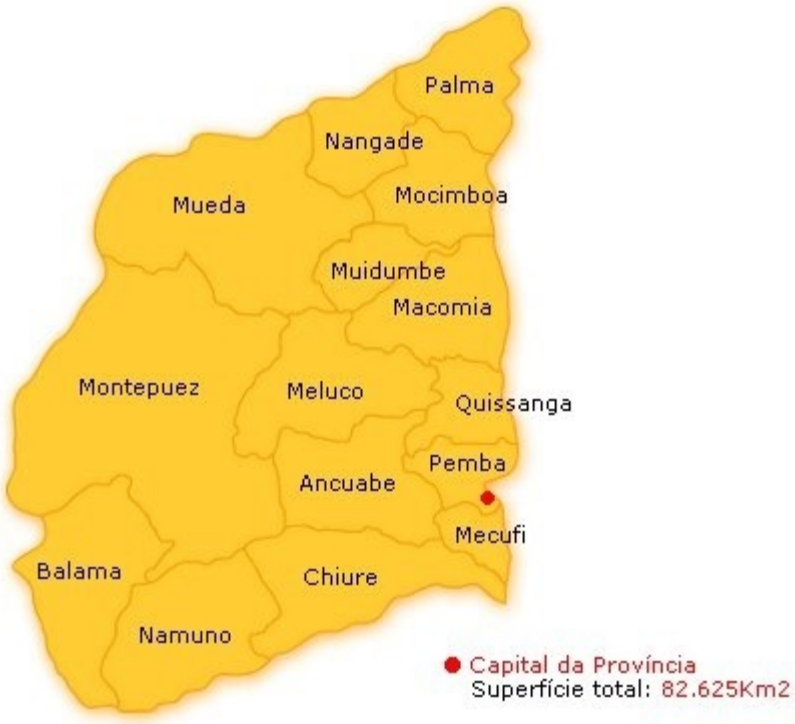
Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a: jihadism in Cabo Delgado. Current situation of the conflict

The most overt or visible cause of the conflict in Cabo Delgado is jihadist terrorism, specifically the group known locally as Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a (ASWJ)[1] . ASWJ emerged in 2007 in Cabo Delgado, the country's northernmost province. It was a splinter group of young Salafi preachers and students dissatisfied with the authorities of the Islamic Council of Mozambique, the official religious institution recognized by the Mozambican government. At least in the beginning, it was not an armed group, but a marginalized heterodox Muslim community. Gradually, it consolidated itself, especially in Mocímboa da Praia and Macomia, and succeeded in gaining followers from the most disadvantaged social strata in Cabo Delgado.

Eventually their goal became the implementation of *Sharia law* in the areas under their control. The discourse was successfully taken up by poor fishermen Mwani and miners in Montepuez, who had been expelled from the ruby mines. These men, with few opportunities and aggrieved by the expropriation of the mines, were easily recruited by

[1] Although ASWJ is also referred to in some occasions and contexts as Al Shabaab, ISCAP (Islamic State Central Africa Province) or Islamic State of Mozambique, in this analysis we will refer to the group by its original name.

the group. They also had connections to illicit trade networks, as many of them had worked in the underground economy. These links proved useful in financing militarization and the escalation towards violence. Another factor that favored the group's consolidation was the historical grievance of the Mwani against the Makonde, a Christian ethnic group living in the interior of Cabo Delgado that has traditionally been linked to power (Mora Tebas, 2022).



In its first decade of life, ASWJ was apparently content to live in isolation from mainstream society, focusing on the creation of parallel institutions and insulating its community from the corruption of secular governance and a degenerate Islam. Thus, Islamists in Cabo Delgado rejected public health and education and refused to pay taxes. They asked supporters of their cause to withdraw their children from Western schools and enroll them in Islamic schools and madrasas (Ewi *et al*., 2022).

From around 2014, the group began to have a formal presence in Mocímboa da Praia and Macomia through mosques and permanent madrasas. From 2016 onwards, expanded informally to other districts, notably Ancuabe, Montepuez and Quissanga (Heyen-Dubé and Rands, 2021). Eventually, heavy government repression and the multiplication of clashes with the Mozambican security services pushed the organization

to militarize. On 5 October 2017, ASWJ launched its first offensive against police stations in the coastal town of Mocímboa da Praia, a strategic port of Cabo Delgado. This began the cycle of violence that has continued to escalate ever since. As of September 2024, some 5766 fatalities have been recorded since ASWJ began its terrorist activity in Mozambique (ACLED, n.d.).

Jihadist activity was consolidated in 2018, thus embarking ASWJ on a protracted political-military activity aimed at controlling the province through the use of guerrilla tactics and radical political ideology, including violence against civilians. The ultimate goal was to weaken the legitimacy and presence of the state. The situation was further aggravated by the insurgents' expressed allegiance to the Islamic State in 2019, suggesting a possible strengthening of links with foreign jihadist networks (Bonate, 2024).

The Cabo Delgado conflict took a further turn and attracted the interest of the international community in August 2020, when ASWJ captured the town of Mocimboa da Praia. The jihadists had in fact already briefly taken control of it in March 2020 (Neethling, 2021). Moreover, a few months later, in June 2020, the ASWJ attacks began to be claimed by the Islamic State franchise ISCAP, the same regional franchise that began claiming attacks in northeastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from that same summer. An earlier UN report in January 2020 already noted that the Somali branch of Islamic State was running operations in both the DRC and Mozambique[2]. Two years later, in approximately May 2022, the jihadists operating in Cabo Delgado began to refer to themselves as the Islamic State of Mozambique, thus differentiating their terrorist activity, at least nominally, from that of ISCAP and thus acquiring the supposed status of its own province within the Islamic State matrix (ACLED, 2023).

Although Mozambican attacks regularly appear in the newsletter *Al Naba* of the Islamic State and other jihadist propaganda outlets, there is little evidence that Mozambican insurgents are receiving further arms or other material support (International Crisis Group, 2023). Claims of influential and significant links with other jihadist groups are unproven and come from reports that infer direct dependency relations from a declaration of ASWJ allegiance to the Islamic State and a declaration of support by the latter (Heyen-Dubé and Rands, 2021). There is no clear evidence that ASWJ (or ISCAP or Islamic State in

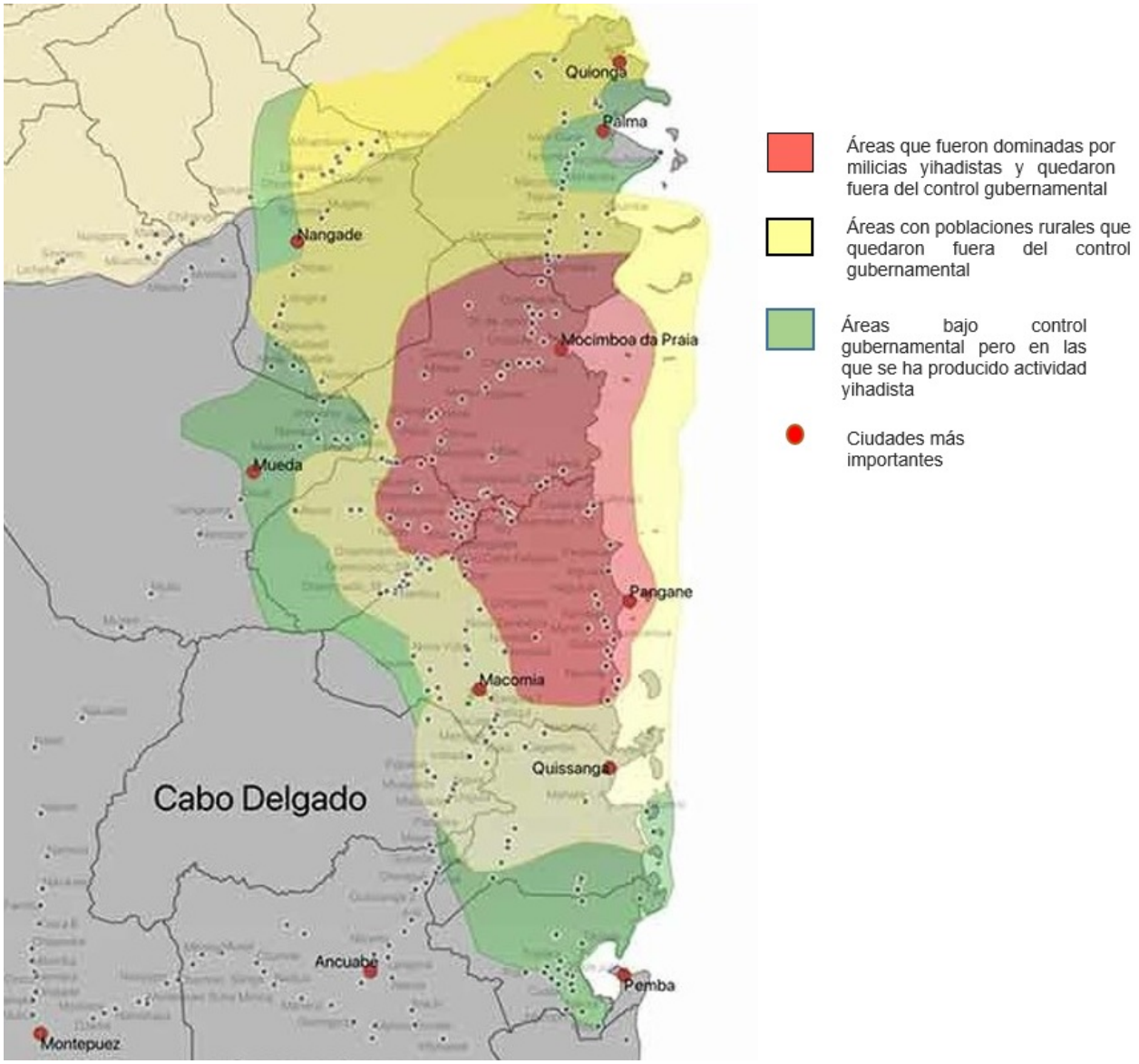
[2] Southern African Jihad. The Cabo Delgado Insurgency (2020). Available at: https://stability-operations.org/news/news.asp?id=522081

Mozambique) receives orders from the 'central' Islamic State or significant external funding. The spiritual leader of the group is Abu Yasir Hassan, a Tanzanian national, and the head of operations is Bonomade Machude, a Mozambican national. Foreign terrorist fighters originate primarily from Tanzania and Kenya and to a lesser extent from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Uganda (United Nations, 2023). The group is currently estimated to consist of between 250 and 350 troops (United Nations, 2024).

The biennium of terror

The 2020 and 2021 biennium was the period of the highest intensity of terrorist activity. As mentioned above, in the summer of 2020 ASWJ captured the port city of Mocímboa da Praia. Since then, the insurgents expanded the territory under their control to large areas along the main roads connecting Mocímboa da Praia to the provincial capital, Pemba, in the south of the province. Other towns such as Macomia, Muidumbe and, at the end of March 2021, Palma, also fell under ASWJ control (Renon, 2021). In the case of Palma, around half a thousand jihadists attacked this coastal city where the liquefied natural gas plant that Total Energies, together with other partners, is building on the Afungi peninsula, south of the city. In total, 1193 people died or disappeared (Perry, 2023) and the French hydrocarbon giant had to halt work on a project in which around $20 billion has been invested. At its peak, during the first half of 2021, violence had displaced close to a million people in Cabo Delgado (International Crisis Group, 2024).

With the capture of Mocímboa da Praia and the other adjacent territories, the jihadists secured a steady flow of revenue from the illicit trade in minerals and drugs. Mocímboa da Praia is a key transit point for narcotics, mostly from Afghanistan and Pakistan, which make their way to Johannesburg or Cape Town before being shipped to Europe, the United States and other destinations. Access to these resources enhanced their recruitment capacity, allowing them to offer relatively high wages to the unprotected local population (Renon, 2021).



The increase in violence and territorial expansion led to the deployment, in 2021, of international forces in the country to help the Mozambican government fight the insurgency, mainly the Rwandan army and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in Mozambique.

2024: deterioration of the situation

With the help of SADC security forces and the Rwandan army, the group's terrorist activity began to wane from late 2021. However, during 2024, the tempo of terrorist operations has increased, attacks have intensified and ASWJ has again attempted to expand the theatre of operations of the conflict, forcing Mozambican and international forces

deployed to cover a larger front while reducing the SADC mission's troop levels. The latest tactics practiced by ASWJ are becoming more sophisticated and better calculated and executed, as demonstrated by the 10 May attack on Mozambican and South African forces in Macomia. The jihadists are organized into three main groups of approximately 100 armed elements each, which occupy and attack various districts throughout the province. These groups later split into medium-sized cells of between thirty and fifty troops, which concentrate their operations in coastal towns such as Quissanga and conduct raids in the south, in Chiure and Ancuabe, and are based in Macomia and around (United Nations, 2024).

From late December 2023 to 20 January 2024, ASWJ perpetrated at least fourteen attacks, mainly in the districts of Mocímboa da Praia, Macomia and Muidumbe, causing dozens of deaths and abductions. On 22 January, the UN declared that the attacks in Macomia and Muidumbe had led to the displacement of 5343 people and a food shortage crisis. The jihadists also managed to occupy the strategic village of Mucojo in district of Macomia, the first major settlement held by the group since it was driven out of the town of Mbau (Mocímboa da Praia) in late 2021 (International Crisis Gorup, 2024).

A few months later, on 10 May, a hundred or so jihadist militants successfully attacked the strategic town of Macomia, located on the main road linking the northern and southern districts of Cape Delgado province. The insurgents engaged government and South African troops in clashes that lasted nearly two days. The attack came days after the SADC mission had just withdrawn from the town (International Crisis Group, 2024b). However, ASWJ has suffered a major setback to its attempted assault on Mbau. On the first occasion, on 29 May, around a hundred and a half attackers were repelled by the Rwandan army. The terrorists hoped to repeat the success of their surprise attack on Macomia on 10 May, but Rwandan forces reacted quickly to the assault and defeated them. A Rwandan spokesman told the media that at least 70 insurgents had been killed. On 8 June, a smaller force tried to attack Mbau again, but this time only managed to burn several houses before retreating. On 19 June, the jihadists launched a third attack on Mbau, killing at least three civilians (ACLED, 2024a).

In reaction to the increased intensity of terrorist activity, Rwandan forces launched a major offensive, including aerial bombardment, in district Macomia in the summer of 2024. For their part, insurgents clashed with Mozambican and Tanzanian troops in district Nangade

(ACLED, 2024b). In addition, the jihadists have continued to operate off the coast of Mocímboa da Praia and on 9 August abducted some seventy fishermen in three trawlers. They were taken to Quiterajo, in Macomia, where they were held by men some fishermen recognized as residents of Mocímboa da Praia. After three days they were released unharmed. The fishermen claimed that Tanzanians were among the insurgents, that they had several bases in the forest Catupa and that they had been seen driving stolen vehicles in the town of Macomia in May. The insurgents also reportedly confessed to the fishermen that they had suffered losses in the recent offensives (ACLED, 2024c).

After several weeks of heavy bombardment in August, the Rwandan-led offensive on the coast of district Macomia appears to be over, or at least to have stopped. However, Rwandan forces have continued to engage the jihadists in the town of Mocímboa da Praia. On the night of 31 August, about ten armed insurgents infiltrated the town and opened fire on Rwandan forces, killing one Rwandan soldier and wounding several others. Prior to the above incident, on the night of 20 August, insurgents burned and looted several houses in the village of Mbau, about 30 km from Mocímboa da Praia (ACLED, 2024d).

The weight of marginalization in the conflict

ASWJ has successfully generated a powerful narrative of dissent that is religious in nature, but from a focus on socio-economic and political marginalization. Jihadists have proven resilient, adaptable and able to expand rapidly - within specific geographical boundaries - by taking advantage of the widespread disenchantment with the central government among local youth. The political, economic, religious, ethnic and geographical isolation of Cabo Delgado province from the rest of the country has created the ideal circumstances for the insurgency to flourish (Heyen-Dubé and Rands, 2021).

The different historical trajectories of northern and southern Mozambique continue to prevail in the country's socio-economic and political landscape. Maputo is located in the far south, while Pemba, the capital of Cabo Delgado, is 2500 km by road from the country's capital. Since independence in 1975, the country's main political leaders have been mainly from the south, although paradoxically the current president, Filipe Nyusi, is the first president of northern origin and a native of Cabo Delgado. In practical terms,

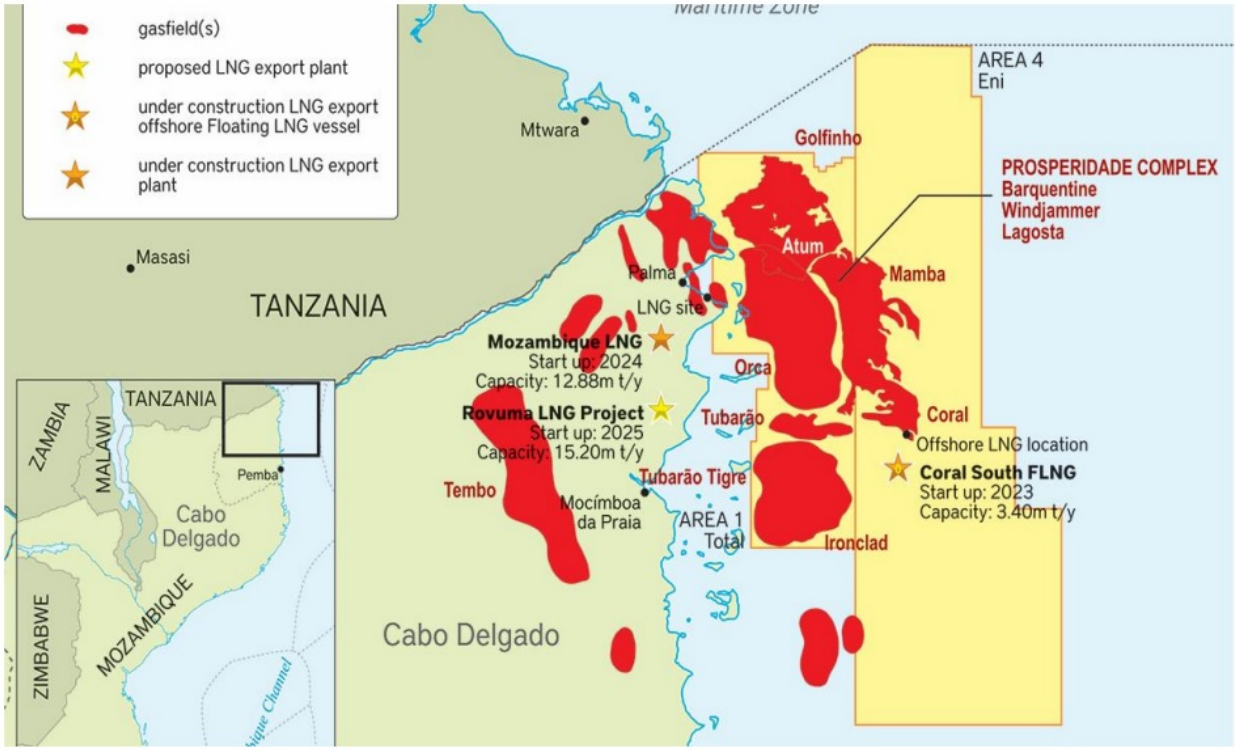
Cabo Delgado is an area that the central government in Maputo cannot effectively control or govern. From a socio-economic perspective, feelings of marginalization and exclusion prevail in Cabo Delgado. Education, health and sanitation infrastructures are of poorer quality in Cabo Delgado and unemployment is widespread, especially among young people (Neethling, 2021).

Poverty rates in Cabo Delgado contrast with its huge economic potential due to its significant natural gas reserves, which has generated significant investments in the area that have not contributed to reducing inequality and poverty among its population. Since the onset of violence in the region in late 2017, it is estimated that the conflict has led to the displacement, within Mozambique, of around 850 000 people from the four northern provinces of Cabo Delgado, Niassa, Nampula and Zambézia (Escola de Cultura de Pau (2024).

The umpteenth repetition of the resource curse

Over the last decade, major oil and gas discoveries have been made on the African continent. These include Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Ethiopia, Namibia and Mozambique, to name but a few of the most recent. The World Bank estimates that sub-Saharan Africa will account for 40 % of global oil and natural gas discoveries between 2010 and 2020 (French, 2024).

Prior to the discovery of gas at Cabo Delgado, multinational companies were already exploiting natural resources such as rubies, graphite, coal, titanium, phosphate, sapphires and timber. In 2010, significant natural gas deposits were discovered offshore and, in the Rovuma River, on the Afungi peninsula in Palma. These abundant untapped gas reserves place these fields among the largest in the world and the third largest in Africa (Di Salvatore and Gubeisi, 2024).



US companies Anadarko, Occidental and Exxon Mobil, France's Total Energies, Italy's Eni and other transnational companies, along with the Mozambican state, became the main holders of the fledgling gas industry in Cabo Delgado. Anadarko bought land in Mocímboa da Praia, Palma and Pemba (which later passed to Total Energies) for onshore drilling, to build a gas processing complex and for the construction of the logistics centre (Bonate, 2024). All these movements have led to the loss of homes, farmland and fishing grounds for hundreds of families, who have had to be relocated by the Mozambican government.

The gas plant built by Total Energies is valued at $15 billion. Start-up was planned for 2024, and production was expected to be 12.9 million tons per year. The gas project site in Rovuma, operated by ExxonMobil, is valued at $25 billion and is expected to produce 15 million tons per year. Italy's Eni and several Indian companies are also involved in the Cabo Delgado gas extraction projects (Renon, 2021).

However, work and investments have been stalled by AWSJ attacks on the gas projects. On February 24, 2019, two attacks took place about twenty kilometers from the Rovuma construction site. In one, six workers from companies contracted by Anadarko were injured. The other resulted in the death of a contractor working on an airfield for the gas projects. On 27 June 2020, a subcontractor's vehicle was attacked near Mocímboa da

Praia, with eight employees killed and three kidnapped. From March 2021 onwards, jihadists launched sustained attacks on the Afungi peninsula and in Palma resulting in several dozen fatalities, including some foreigners from subcontractors working for the Total Energies project, forcing the French company to evacuate some 2,000 staff (Renon, 2021). On 26 April 2021, taking into account the evolution of the security situation in the north of Cabo Delgado province, Total Energies and the companies participating in the consortium decided to withdraw all personnel from the project and declare a state of force majeure (Total Energies, 2023).

Over the past year, Total Energies has been weighing up the possibility of reopening the gas project. Early reports and satellite imagery indicate that work has tentatively resumed. But the company's own assessment of the security situation in the province is bleak. It knows that the gas project could again become a target of the insurgency (International Crisis Group, 2024A).

The intervention of foreign troops: apparent success and regional rivalry

The Mozambican Armed Defense Forces are one of the smallest and most poorly equipped armies in the region and failed to cope with the jihadist insurgency that broke out in Cabo Delgado from 2017 onwards. These shortcomings leave Mozambique dependent on external support to curb the jihadists (ACLED, 2024e).

Rwandan and neighboring southern African security forces have helped de-escalate the conflict in Cabo Delgado, which had already become a threat not only to Mozambique but to regional security. More than 3,000 troops from Rwanda and Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states, working with the Mozambican army, have dismantled key insurgent bases and recaptured significant territory held by ASWJ jihadists. The foreign forces have operated separately, each working in cooperation with Mozambican state security forces. Rwandan forces, working under a bilateral agreement with Maputo, have secured the Afungi peninsula, where Total Energies projects are located, and recaptured the strategic port of Mocímboa da Praia. SADC, invoking a regional mutual defense pact, has deployed troops in the center of Cabo Delgado and towards the provincial capital, Pemba, as well as in the district Nangade near the Tanzanian border. These troops have dislodged insurgents from some of their

strongholds but are struggling to fully secure these areas (International Crisis Group, 2022).

Nevertheless, the insurgency has not been extinguished, as ASWJ's jihadist activity in 2024 has shown. Many terrorists have fled to neighboring countries or simply mingled with the civilian population, waiting for the right moment to mobilize again. As discussed above, the insurgency threatens to intensify as foreign forces, such as those deployed by SADC, withdraw. Mozambique will continue to need external assistance to hold the territory that has been seized from the insurgents. The departure of this multilateral force will leave a security vacuum that terrorists are likely to exploit.

In January 2024, SADC declared that it would withdraw the force when its current mandate expires on July 15. Botswana and Lesotho withdrew in April, while Angola and Namibia withdrew in the summer. South Africa, whose 1,495 troops make up two-thirds of the mission, also planned to withdraw on the originally scheduled date. But, by surprise, Pretoria announced on April 23 that it would keep its defense forces in Cape Delgado until the end of the year. In contrast, Rwanda announced in April that it was keeping its 2,500 troops in Cabo Delgado and would also increase the number under a bilateral agreement with Maputo. In addition, Tanzania plans to maintain 400-500 troops, mainly to prevent fighters from crossing the 860km border between the two countries (International Crisis Group, 2024a).

The main apparent reason for the withdrawal of SADC troops is the lack of funding for the mission, which has relied heavily on contributions from member states. South Africa was the largest contributor, contributing some 45 million dollars per year. The European Peace Facility's donation of 15 million euros for non-lethal equipment, while welcome, was insufficient to sustain large-scale ground operations or peacebuilding projects. The African Union, for its part, provided equipment, but only disbursed about two million dollars through the African Peace Facility. In addition, SADC is launching an ambitious military operation in eastern DRC, designed to partly replace the withdrawing UN mission that has become its priority. On the other hand, throughout these three years of deployment, SADC forces' relations with the host country have been strained and Mozambique has made no secret of its preference for relying on the Rwandan Security Forces (International Crisis Group, 2024a). Moreover, it should not be forgotten that in

the conflict in eastern DRC, now SADC's top priority, Rwanda is fighting on the opposite side of the conflict to South Africa and southern partners.

Mozambique's President Filipe Nyusi gave the Rwandans the main task of securing Total Energies' gas processing plant in Afungi, leaving minor functions to SADC. Mainly due to the French connection, the EU provided some twenty million euros to fund Rwandan operations in 2022. But funding for the Rwandan military intervention has remained opaque beyond the twenty million euros donated by the EU (Fabricius, 2024).

The Rwandan intervention in Mozambique has been surprising both for its effective results and for the limited prior relationship between two countries that do not share a colonial power, common borders or belong to the same regional integration organization. Mozambique is a founding member of the SADC, led by South Africa, which groups the countries of the southern region of the continent, and Rwanda is part of the East African Community. Its successful mission in Cabo Delgado has once again revealed Rwanda as a regional actor with the capacity to intervene beyond its area of influence in the Great Lakes. Within a month, Rwandan soldiers regained control of Mocimboa da Praia. The Rwandan intervention, however, was not to the liking of South African President Cyril Ramaphosa because it was negotiated at the same time as SADC was finalizing a military mission in the same area (Castel, 2021). Moreover, relations between the South African and Rwandan governments have not been good since the death of dissident Patrick Karegeya in Johannesburg on January 1, 2014, attributed to the Rwandan secret services (El País, 2014).

Rwanda's president, the charismatic Paul Kagame, believes he can take the place of SADC by training Mozambican soldiers and deploying them in areas previously secured by South African troops. Rwanda's mission in Mozambique has drawn little operational criticism, as Rwandan troops are disciplined and have a good relationship with civilians. However, neighboring countries accuse Rwanda of intervening in Cabo Delgado primarily to promote its own economic interests. Rwanda, through Crystal Ventures, the investment arm of the ruling party, is involved in several businesses in Mozambique such as mining, construction and private security. In countries where Rwandan troops have intervened, the fund has invested in mining and other projects. The agreement between Kigali and Maputo remains opaque, its terms are known only by the Rwandan president and his Mozambican counterpart (Donelli 2014).

The role of the European Union

The EU has intervened at different levels to help Maputo respond to the instability in northern Mozambique, working through an 'integrated approach' combining humanitarian, development, peacebuilding and security assistance (including the provision of military training and non-lethal equipment), as well as political and diplomatic engagement, among other things. In this framework, the EU funds and trains some 1600 Mozambican soldiers, with the aim of protecting the civilian population, helping to restore security in the Cabo Delgado region and eventually having the national army take over from foreign troops in northern Mozambique. To complement this effort, the EU has earmarked 89 million euros in non-lethal equipment and supplies for the units training its mission. In 2022 the EU also mobilized fifteen million euros for the SADC, twenty million euros for the Rwandan Security Forces and twenty-eight million euros to support humanitarian efforts in Mozambique (International Crisis Group, 2023).

The European Council extended on May 14, 2024, the mandate of the EU Training Mission in Mozambique until June 30, 2026, with a budget envelope of more than 14 million euros for this period. In addition, it has decided to adapt the mission's strategic objectives to the new circumstances, thus favoring its transition from a training model to an assistance model, combining advice, mentoring and specialized training in support of the Mozambican armed forces. As a consequence of this change, as of September 1, 2024, the mission was renamed the EU Military Assistance Mission (EUMAM) Mozambique (EUMAM Mozambique) (European Council, 2024).

Conclusions

The current conflict in Cabo Delgado is not at its peak and the Mozambican army's collaboration with international military forces has proven effective in driving the jihadists out of the territories they came to occupy in 2021, but the upsurge in the insurgent offensive during 2024 that occurs in parallel to the departure of SADC mission troops reveals that ASWJ should not be given up. Although the main core of attackers during 2024 does not appear to number more than three hundred, their asymmetric warfare techniques make it difficult for a purely military response of several thousand troops to bring the conflict to an end.

The threat of terrorists taking advantage of the downsizing of the international mission and the weakness of the Mozambican forces to rebuild their ranks and intensify their attacks in frequency and scale is closer to a fact than a hypothesis. The ability of the Rwandan armed forces to replace the work of the SADC mission, either by filling in themselves or by training Mozambican troops to take over, is not likely to bring the conflict to an end.

Mozambique and its regional partners should start thinking about how to achieve peace by other means than military operations alone. Working towards increasing the socio-economic well-being of Cabo Delgado's citizens, improving their integration into the country's governance to reverse decades of political marginalization, and involving them in decision-making over the management of mineral and energy resources and the benefits that accrue would help to defeat the jihadist narrative.

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ANNEX

Tables: Conflict Chronology and Geopolitical Indicators

Ch. 7 **Cabo Delgado (Mozambique)**	**THE CONFLICT IN CAPE DELGADO, MOZAMBIQUE: JIHAD, MARGINALISATION AND GAS.**
DATE	**EVENTS**
2007	Founding of Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a (ASWJ) as a Salafist student group in Cabo Delgado.
2010	Discovery of important natural gas fields offshore and in the River Basin Rovuma (Cabo Delgado).
2014-2016	Period of ASWJ expansion through the establishment of mosques and its own madrasas.
2017	First ASWJ attack in Mocímboa da Praia and the beginning of its terrorist activity.
2018-2019	Consolidation of ASWJ's terrorist activity.
2020-2021	Period of peak ASWJ activity and expansion with the takeover of territories.
2021	Mozambique army cooperation with the Rwandan Security Forces and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) military mission begins.
2021/2023	ASWJ withdrawal.
2024	Deterioration of the situation and reactivation of ASWJ's armed activity.
	Withdrawal of the SADC military mission.

GEOPOLITICAL SCOREBOARD	
Area: 799 380 km^2.	
GDP: $50.6 trillion (2023).	
GDP structure	**Agriculture:** 23.9%.
	Industry: 19.3%.
	Services: 56.8%.
GDP per capita: $1500 (2023).	
GDP growth rate: 5% (2023).	
Business relations (Exports): $9.2 trillion (2023).	
Business relations (Imports): $11.1 trillion (2023).	
Population: 33 350 954.	
Age structure	**0-14:** 44.7 %.
	15-64: 52.4 %.
	Over 65: 2.9%.
Population growth rate: 2.54%.	
Ethnic groups: Makhuwa, Tsonga, Lomwe, Sena and others.	
Religions: Christian (60 %), Muslim (20 %), other (20 %).	
Literacy rate of the population: 63.4%.	
Population below the poverty line: 46.1%.	
GINI index: 50.5.	
Military spending: 1.5% of GDP (2023).	

Source: The World Factbook. https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/mozambique/