EVOLVING PATTERNS OF INSURGENCY IN SOUTHERN AND WEST AFRICA: REFOCUSING THE BOKO HARAM LENS ON MOZAMBIQUE

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Abstract

Insurgency has gained prominence in Africa, especially in West, East, and Central Africa. It is usually associated with marginalisation, poverty, and inequality and often has religious links and bases. Insurgency frequently originates in communities situated along the borders of a country but soon spreads to neighbouring countries due to the poor response from the concerned state. The literature reveals that when state institutions ignore insurgent groups, they utilise that window of time to network with terrorist organizations such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS) to solicit funds, arms and ammunition and training of new recruits and existing members. This was the case with Boko Haram, which was initially ignored by the Nigerian government only for it to become a security threat to the entire West African sub-region. An Islamic group, *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jammah* (ASWJ) has recently emerged in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado Province with the aim of creating an Islamic state within the region. Drawing from the Boko Haram experience in West Africa, this article critically assesses the short- and long-term security threats that this group poses to Mozambique and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and explores the strategies that could be deployed to combat the insurgency before it becomes a fully-fledge security challenge.

KEYWORDS: Insurgency, Mozambique, SADC, Cabo Delgado Province, the Boko Haram experience.

INTRODUCTION

On March 24 2021, *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama* (ASWJ), also known in Mozambique as al-Shabab (no established links to the armed group of the same name in Somalia), launched its hitherto most daring operation in the Mozambican town of Palma. The attack killed dozens who were victims of indiscriminate gunfire and people and buildings. A sizeable number of people died as they were trying to flee from danger. ASWJ is a local jihadist group in Cabo Delgado in the Northern part of Mozambique.[1] This group, which the Mozambican government initially ignored, has gained momentum through various attacks on soft targets and government establishments. While this has drawn the Southern African Development Community (SADC) attention, no concrete strategies have been adopted to address this menace. This article investigates the origins of the ASWJ and explores the responses from various actors, including the Mozambican government, SADC, and other external actors. It draws lessons from the Boko Haram experience to highlight the implications of the Mozambican government and SADC's failure to tackle the ASWJ early, which is likely to create a state of insecurity within the region. The paper adopted desktop research, and the article relied on existing secondary data such as articles, books, reports, and publications of research institutes on insurgency in Africa, the Boko Haram insurgency and the ASWJ in Mozambique. Given the emerging nature of the ASWJ and its close resemblance with Boko Haram, it is necessary, at a theoretical level, to delve into more expansive literature that analyses the motivations for the rise and growth of Boko Haram to offer what the scenario could be in Mozambique if concerned players repeat the doomed local and international approaches that were employed to quell Boko Haram.

The first part of the article lays a foundation by reviewing existing literature on the concept of insurgency and its cross-border dimension in Africa. The part following that delves into the ASWJ insurgency in Mozambique and the Boko Haram insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin region with a view of drawing the similarities and differences from their origin, activities, leadership, networking strength and attacks. The third section of the article segues into the assessment of state responses to ASWJ in Mozambique. Some of these laxities are identified in the way Mozambique is handling the ASWJ, and the SADC leadership not paying attention as well. The concluding section suggests a holistic approach to ending the insurgency in Mozambique.

INSURGENCY FROM A CROSS-BORDER DIMENSION IN AFRICA

Insurgency, otherwise known as the commonest form of armed conflict, poses the greatest threat to global peace and security in the 21st century.[2] Armed conflict, before and during the Cold War period, was viewed as interbellum between independent states.[3] However, since the Cold War ended, the experience of armed conflict has transformed into the emergence of non-state actors against their nation-state.[4] The United States Department of Defence conceptualises insurgency groups as organised movements that aim to overthrow a legitimate government through revolutionary means and armed conflict.[5] This definition indicates that insurgent groups utilise unlawful means to achieve an end, often political, social, religious, or ideological. The major goal of insurgency is to challenge and overthrow a constituted government for the control of power, resources or for power sharing.[6]

Traditionally, however, insurgencies aim at replacing an existing order with one that is commensurate with their ideological, political, economic, or religious objectives.[7] "Insurgency is a struggle to control a contested political space, between a state (or a group of states or occupying powers), and one or more popularly based, non-state challengers".[8] There are at least two forms of insurgency: classical and contemporary insurgencies. While the latter focuses on replacing the existing order, the former often thrives towards the removal of foreign invaders from their territorial space or seek to fill an existing power vacuum.

The emergence of insurgency in Africa has been blamed on the porosity of African borders and its mismanagement by African leaders.[9] Africa is increasingly becoming a breeding ground for various insurgent groups due to the weak structure of many African states who are unable to enforce laws within their territory and effectively police their borders.[10] "The high level of insecurity on African borders is largely due to the way they are administered and managed, and less to do with how colonialists drew them"[11], which is a general belief. Herbst in his book "States and Power in Africa", argued that states and institutions in Africa are not necessarily created to promote social welfare of their citizens but in a way work to massacre them.[12] Scholars have delved into the discourse on nationalism and citizenship as it concerns the borderlands and its inhabitants.[13] Border communities on both sides host people with the same ancestral ethnic origin and linguistic ties but divided by virtue of the boundary lines that separate them and tend to give territorial identities to sovereign states across various regions in Africa. This could explain the rapid spread of insurgent activities across borders riding on the back of religious extremism. The question then would be the response of African states to

this sad reality so far. This is where the theory by Herbst remains valid. Thus, cross-border insurgency in Africa has mostly been a resultant effect of porous borders which gives room for free flow of Small Arms and Light Weapons and illegal border crossing of individuals and rebels and criminal elements.[14]

Insurgents seek havens in neighbouring states for settling and training their combatants, stockpile necessary resources and enjoy a level of safety.[15] Once these groups have fully stabilised themselves on foreign soil, they cease to be a solely domestic affair but draw attention from regional governments as their nefarious activities no longer affect a single country but spill over into neighbouring states. Notably, the most damaging effects of these insurgencies around the globe have been the high rate of humanitarian crises in the form of internal displacement, refugee influx, food insecurity, epidemic, as well as gender and sexual based hostility and violence.[16]

Examples of insurgent groups in Africa are the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Northern Uganda, National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad in Northern Mali, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in Mali, the M23 Rebels in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Al-Shabaab in Somalia, the Boko Haram in Nigeria and, of late, the ASWJ in Mozambique. Many of these insurgent groups have over the years manifested as a sub-regional threat leading to a state of insecurity in multiple states.[17] For instance, the LRA in Northern Uganda spread its tentacles across four countries, namely, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, and South Sudan.

The LRA operated for more than twenty years unleashing terror in multiple communities across four African states. In the process, many civilians were brutalised, tortured, mutilated, and killed. Children were conscripted as child soldiers. Statistics indicate that the LRA abducted over 20,000 children and is responsible for the displacement of over 1.9 million people from diverse communities that straddle the Ugandan border.[18] The LRA is responsible for the death of many civilians.[19]

In the Lake Chad Basin, the Boko Haram insurgency started in North-Eastern Nigeria and soon spread into neighbouring countries such as Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. Various remote and immediate factors have been adduced to the emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Such factors include, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and on the extreme religious extremism.[20] Religious extremism was able to ride freely based on the prevalence of other factors such as poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment of the teeming youth within the region.

This has made it extremely difficult for the Boko Haram sect to be tamed given its value-based approach, and this menace has heightened the state of insecurity in the country and the Lake Chad Basin.

In the SADC region, ASWJ insurgency started in North-Eastern Mozambique and has spilt over into neighbouring Tanzania. As itemised above, the causal factors are similar to the causes of insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin, but the specificities would be discussed in the succeeding section. What should be noted about both case studies is that they have created a state of insecurity within both regions which results in a high toll of humanitarian crisis, distortion in daily community life, and on the extreme, destruction of lives and property.

The term insurgency remains an ambiguous concept that has been used interchangeably with concepts such as violent extremism, religious extremism, and on the extreme, terrorism. To clarify the term as used in this paper, insurgency refers to ASWJ and Boko Haram while established networks such as the Islamic State (IS), Al-Qaeda among others are noted as terrorist organisations given that they are referred to as such in many of the existing literature and the press. The succeeding section investigates the similarities and dissimilarities of the manifestation and responses to the Boko Haram insurgency, which soon had a spill over effect within the Lake Chad Basin region and the ASWJ in Mozambique which is the main focus of the study.

A COMPARATIVE DISCOURSE OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY IN THE LAKE CHAD BASIN AND THE ASWJ IN THE SADC REGION

i. Remote and Immediate Causes

The Boko Haram insurgency started due to several factors prevalent in the region. According to Salaam, these include

> *"poverty and social injustice; illiteracy and the educational disparities between the northern and southern regions; ingrained cultures of corruption; the lack of professional law enforcement capacity; the availability of illegal weapons; the intelligence failure or inability of the security network to prevent and end conflicts; the sublime structure of the Nigerian government, especially in leadership posting and resource distribution; and the porous borders and socio-economic ties across borders"*[21]

These factors could also be adduced to the emergence of insurgency the insurgency in the Niger Delta part of Nigeria. In Northern Nigeria, "poverty and collapsed governance" which were common-place in Northern Nigeria, were mainly blamed on local elites versed in

Western education and culture.[22] For instance, those whose standard of living has been affected because they live below the $1.90 international poverty line in North-Eastern Nigeria as of 2016 was 44% (this is the second highest after the North-West).[23] What then makes the difference between the Niger Delta issue and insurgency in the North-East is that while the latter is a form of resource-based conflict making it easy to address, the former is value-based thus, making it difficult to tackle. It is motivated by the conviction that the Nigerian state is being taken over by social vices, and "the best thing for a devout Muslim to do was to 'migrate' from the morally bankrupt society to a secluded place and establish an ideal Islamic society devoid of political corruption and moral deprivation".[24] In other words, North-Eastern Nigeria is deeply rooted in Islamic doctrines. Religious extremists who have utilised the opportunity within the region to propagate their religious ideology make the situation worse.

The root of religious extremism in Nigeria extends "as far back as the highly successful jihad of Sheik Usman dan Fodio of Sokoto in the first decade of the nineteenth century".[25] In post-independent Nigeria, the Maitatsine uprisings in Northern Nigeria manifested the lingering effects of Islamic fundamentalism.[26] Other causes are Northern Nigeria's history of Islam and the importance given to the Sharia legal system in some Northern States are other causes.[27] As such, those agitating for establishing a Jihadist state argue that their crusade is against the taint of Western (i.e. non-Muslim) ideas on Islamic purity.

The preaching of Yusuf since he became the leader of the Boko Haram sect in 2002 was popular in Maiduguri and even received acceptance in Yobe State, Chad, and Niger, especially among the youths.[28] At this point, governments in the Chad Basin saw the potential threat the group posed as trivial. The sect has subsequently metamorphosed under different names such as the "Nigerian Taliban, Yusufiyyah sect, and Boko Haram".[29] While Boko Haram is structured along similar lines to the Taliban in Afghanistan, it has had no links or dealings with them.[30] The residents of Maiduguri gave the sect the name Boko Haram meaning western education is forbidden. A splinter group, Islamic State in West African Province (ISWAP) emerged from Boko Haram in 2015. Therefore, what seems to be a substantial challenge for subsequent Nigerian governments is that insurgency is knitted with politics in pursuit of religious purity.

On the other hand, there has been divergent views about the origin of the ASWJ. These include poverty and inequality despite the abundance of natural gas in Northern Mozambique

where the insurgency is ensconced. For example, Fernando Lima, a journalist, and political commentator based in Mozambique averred those religious impulses are a cover for the growing disturbance. Lima cites poverty, inequality, and the government's lack of reassurance that it will reverse this situation as the main causes for the growing agitation.[31] Other factors include radical Islam linked to Kenya and Tanzania preachers such as Adbul Chacur.[32], the influence of Mozambican students who have studied in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Sudan. Others subscribe to external origin like the influence of Kenyan militants suppressed in Tanzania, importation of Jihadist views from abroad and so on.[33] Cabo Delgado has the highest number of people aged 5 to 25 who did not attend school, the population is predominantly Muslim, and cultural practices like early marriage and polygamy are common.[34] These bear striking resemblances to some of the conditions that supported the rise of Boko Haram.

Forquilha and Pereira identified contextual factors like social, economic, and political exclusions as contextual causes and sustenance of insurgency in the country.[35] The authors opine that these factors bolstered anti-state narratives in places outside Mocímboa da Praia and Cabo Delgado. They buttress their points with porous border with Tanzania, the existence of electronic and informal money transfer platforms, the coming on board of the IS in 2019, which exposed the ASWJ to more advanced training, weapons, and propaganda tools. The second reason they gave for why the insurgent group operated beyond Mocímboa da Praia is institutional factors. These include the state's response like mass arrest and destruction of Mosques which gave boost to anti-government narrative in other districts of Cabo Delgado, Nampula and Niassa.

Other root causes identified include poverty, relative deprivation in comparison with elites in the country's capital, Maputo and other parts of the country, and perceptions of marginalisation among certain ethnic groups and Muslim factions in Cabo Delgado.[36] Such conditions enabled Boko Haram to thrive in North-Eastern Nigeria and Al-Shabaab to gain a foothold in Kenya's North-Eastern province.[37] The region is blessed with precious gemstone and natural gas, but these resources have not transformed into poverty alleviation for the local populace.[38] For instance, in 2014/15, the average poverty rate in the Northern region (which comprises the provinces of Cabo Delgado, Nampula, Niassa, and Zambezi) was 54.75% which stood far higher than the average in other regions.[39] Cabo Delgado was a spot for local mining of gemstones, but the signing of agreement of mining between the government and

foreign companies led to the side-line and the dislocation of the people from the mining sites.[40] Although multinational corporations in the region gave employment opportunities to the locals, but this was short of the expectation of what the latter expected.[41] The recent discovery of gas in Rovuma Basin and the employment of workers from outside the area as it is claimed that the local population does not have the necessary skills further inflamed sentiments as young ASWJ members feel that they will not benefit from this development.[42]

ii. Geographical Location and *Modus Operandi*

Boko Haram has its stronghold in North-Eastern Nigeria, which is a region seen as the most marginalised and underdeveloped in the country. The sect has a unique mode of dressing and typically wears turbans and full beards and lives in communities.[43] They sometimes stay in non-occupied areas (for instance, Sambisa Forest) and often come to towns and villages to attack and loot. Equally, they strategically operate from mountainous areas for defence purposes. This makes it difficult for them to be sighted and attacked by the military. Their nefarious activities have had a spill-over effect on neighbouring countries of Chad, Cameroon, and Niger[44] thus, making the border communities bear the brunt of the dastardly acts of Boko Haram. According to an empirical study conducted by one of the authors, community members noted that members of the sect attack them at will and at any time of the day, leaving them with destruction of farmlands and property. Also, many lives have been lost to various attacks by the sect, and many kidnapped in the process.[45] It is worthy of note to state that ISWAP is an affiliate of the IS, and it targets the Nigerian military and agencies of government while the Abubakar Shekau faction targets any Muslim that does not follow its tenets.[46]

When Boko Haram was in its infancy, the Nigerian government regarded it as a criminal rather than an insurgent group. As Boko Haram gained momentum, it began attacking soft targets and government infrastructures like markets and police stations.[47] Over time, the sect spread its wings and developed into a fully-fledged insurgent group. The *modus operandi* of Boko Haram and ISWAP have taken the form of suicide bombings, kidnappings, attacks on villages, looting, televised executions, among others. The attacks perpetrated by these groups could not have been this sophisticated without their international affiliations and funding. The leaders of Boko Haram and AQIM collaborated to train Boko Haram members and supply them with weapons to protect Muslims.[48] This enabled them to manufacture bombs for use by suicide bombers. Boko Haram was funded locally (through levy, robbery, and looting) and

later received international support like funding, supply of arms and training[49] which the Nigerian government and countries in the Chad Basin did not take serious actions about on time.

Boko Haram became more sophisticated and started using the internet fora for advocacy and recruitment as well as information sharing. Adopting the methods utilised by Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram used the fora to expand the group's legitimacy among the jihadi community[50]. This has been effective in propagating its ideology and activities to the global community.[51] Currently, the group has affiliation with Al-Shabaab and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa, and the group was also in Mali in 2012 to fight in solidarity with terrorist groups.[52] ISWAP's affiliation has been mentioned above. These attest to the porosity of the borders.

On the other hand, the ASWJ began as an Islamic sect in the district of Balama like a decade before the 2017 attack later shifted to armed Jihadism.[53] Before the first attack it launched, the sect withdrew from the society to practice its brand of Islam (which includes having its way of praying, hatred for Western education and Christianity and moving around with knives to symbolise *Jihad*), but the October 2017 attack meant it shifted its position towards imposing its doctrines on the society.[54] After the October 2017 attack, the group carried out attacks at night and targeted small villages and by 2018, it attacked during the day. In 2019, it graduated to attacking small towns, military outposts, police stations and vehicles on roads.[55] It declared allegiance to the Islamic State in the same year.[56] By 2020, it was able to overrun district capitals and even made videos obviously declaring Jihadist agenda.[57] Therefore, it could be said that the ASWJ attacks have taken both local and international dimensions.

The sect exists and operates from Cabo Delgado that has a history of porous land and maritime border.[58] The coast in the region has been a smuggling and trading route to transport illegal wildlife products from Africa to Asia and to 'import' cocaine from some Asian countries through Mozambique to Europe.[59,] and it has been claimed that the group has raised funds through this means.[60]

The ASWJ has been linked to international terrorist groups such as the Al-Shabaab, which operates in Somalia and Kenya.[61] The group at its inception had links with fundamentalist Islamic cells in Kenya, Tanzania, Somalia, and other countries in the Great Lakes region.[62] Young people from these countries are members of the ASWJ who find their way to Mozambique to join and fight with the group.[63] They also had links with Islamic leaders in

Saudi Arabia, Libya, Sudan, and Algeria.[64] The group circulated propaganda videos and pictures through flash drives and social media displaying how the world is corrupt, the purported military operations of the group, and how Muslims are persecuted all over the world.[65] This propaganda aims to encourage people to participate in the cause for Jihad.[66]

From another point of view, evidence shows that ASWJ's activities have spilt over into Tanzania and that it has links with other Jihadists.[67] Given the provincial borders on Tanzania, it is suspected that the youth have been radicalised by Tanzanian Al-Shabaab members.[68] Tanzania has been a recruitment and transit place for terrorists and other criminals consequent upon the weak border security as they easily move from and into Tanzania.[69] This means that insurgencies in Northern Mozambique have included both Tanzanians as perpetrators and victims.[70] The aforementioned suggest that international Jihadist groups might be taking advantage of the situation in the province to use it as a launching ground for activities in SADC.

iii. **Government Response**

The Nigerian government's response to Boko Haram includes the declaration of a state of emergency in some local governments, suspension of mobile telephone services in some locations (that was some years ago but no longer in operation), closure of borders, economic measures to reduce poverty in the North East and the country in general, and a military response through formation of a Joint Task Force (JTF), and de-radicalisation programmes, among others.[71] The state has also passed several Acts and adopted a National Counter Terrorism Strategy.[72] The JTF was formed in June 2011 by Federal Government in Maiduguri consisting of the military (Air Force, Army and Navy), the Nigerian Police Force and the Department of State Security (DSS).[73] In 2011, 30,000 security officers forming part of the JTF were deployed to implement the state of emergency and curfew declared by the government in tensed conflict zones.[74]

The JTF personnel were deployed at different times with different code names based on the enormity of the security threat that existed at the time. The first JTF to be deployed was code-named 'Operation Restore Order I'. Following that was 'Operation Restore Order II and III' and many others.[75] And recently, the name changed to Operation *Hadin Kai* (means cooperation) on April 30, 2021.

Scholars have argued that Nigeria started giving serious attention to the Boko Haram issue after the United States threatened to blacklist Nigeria and Nigerians for terrorism in January 2010[76] hence, the treatment by the Nigerian government as a terrorist group. At that time, the Boko Haram already had a solid base and support both in personnel and all kinds of support.[77] This complicated government interventions as they had to re-strategise constantly. This is reflected in the code names that regularly changed due to the demands at a particular time. The change of name has not translated to the defeat of Boko Haram. Similarly, a significant error committed by the Mozambican government is to regard the insurgency solely as an act of criminality or banditry. For instance, as of July 2019, there had been 130 convictions in Cabo Delgado Province, but none of them was categorised as terrorist acts but rather viewed as murders, arson, and assault.[78]

The fact that the government either covered up or ignored the ASWJ's activities aggravated the situation. The press and those trying to carry on research about the activities of the group have been prevented from visiting and covering events in the region, and those that managed to get there have been arrested and detained.[79] Two journalists, Amade Abubacar and Germano Daniel Adriano were unlawfully arrested and detained while interviewing villagers on attacks.[80] These make the narrative sold by government that there are no insurgents difficult to challenge. However, there has been mass arrests and destruction of Mosques by the government, a response which only gave boost to anti-government narrative in other districts of Cabo Delgado, Nampula and Niassa.[81]

iv. **Regional and International Responses**

At the sub-regional level, the LCBC (Lake Chad Basin Commission) formed the MNJTF (Multinational Joint Task Force) in 1998, which was reactivated in 2012.[82] It comprises troops from Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and Benin Republic. The MNJTF received financial support from the AU, US, UK (United Kingdon), the EU, and France.[83] International partners and member nations also contribute military and intelligence surveillance, capabilities, and training.[84] The MNJTF was mandated to conduct military operations to prevent an increase in Boko Haram's activities, conduct patrols, prevent the transfer of weapons/logistics to the sect, and search for and free abductees.[85] It also adopted psychological strategies to encourage defection from the sect.

The challenges confronting the MNJTF enabled Boko Haram to continue its cross-border activities for some time. It did not become fully operational until 2015 due to deadlines being missed for the deployment of troops. Political, financial, and logistical issues also added to the delay.[86] In 2015 and 2016, MNJTF reclaimed territories seized by Boko Haram in Nigeria and also weakened the activities of the group, but the sect has since gained momentum in carrying out attacks as it was responsible for not less than 615 combat associated deaths within the first eight months of 2019.[87] A further challenge was the tendency for participating countries to protect their territorial integrity, with the result that the MNJTF was sometimes unable to pursue insurgents across borders.[88] as well as the threat by Chad to pull out of the MNJTF. Nonetheless, the MNJTF has succeeded in undermining Boko Haram's ability to launch multiple attacks.[89] Some of these interventionist approaches did not adequately achieve their purposes because of corruption, low morale in the armed forces and weak political will.

On the other hand, SADC has agreements among member states to facilitate the intervention of the regional body in security matters that affects any of its members. These agreements include the SADC 1992 Treaty, the SADC Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security of 2001 and a host of others.[90] These agreements give the SADC the responsibility to intervene by assisting any member state confronted with security challenges.[91]

Several reports show that Zimbabwe and South Africa have deployed troops to Mozambique. However, Zimbabwe has denied the allegation while South Africa remain silent on the issue. They have only noted that the country is willing to assist Mozambique intelligence-wise or military-wise upon request.[92] It is important to note that the South African Navy has been conducting anti-piracy control in the Mozambique channel since 2011 and has also set up a forward operating base at Africa Richards Bay, South Africa, in response to the insurgency.[93] This is in a bid to forestall piracy by the insurgents, given that the region is a coastal region that harbours the major shipping routes.

DEALING WITH AND CHARACTERISATION OF INSURGENCY IN MOZAMBIQUE: AN APPRAISAL

The causes of extremism and armed conflict in Mozambique are complex and cannot be separated entirely from the country's history. The colonial legacy of denying certain public goods from some demographics continues to this day.[94] Now that Mozambique is under native governments, those denied public goods are found in provinces such as Cabo Delgado

who find themselves far from the levers of power. Insurgency in Mozambique has a long history, right from the time the country got independence. For example, apartheid South Africa and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) were against the socialist government of Mozambique that had close ties with liberation movements. For this reason, the settler regimes armed the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO) as a proxy against the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) government. Economic difficulties emboldened anti-state sentiment, and that is why FRELIMO has been occasionally forced to negotiate with armed and rebel groups. It is also noteworthy that the prominence of neoliberal orthodox Mozambique, like many other African countries, disinvested in education, and outlying provinces such as Cabo Delgado have been the principal victims.

World Bank estimates suggest that about 3 million Mozambicans "are projected to face high levels of food insecurity across the country due to the combined effects of the conflict in the North, weather shocks, and COVID-19 mitigation measures, which have restricted economic activity."[95] Food insecurity is an ominous addition to Mozambique's dire situation. In March 2021, before the onslaught on Palma, a food distribution procedure turned violent when would-be recipients of food accused distributors of hoarding food and keeping for their families and friends, disregarding a ticketing system put in place.[96] This is symptomatic of a deeper political and economic malaise in Mozambique that exacerbates a feeling of despondency in victims. Alienation and disillusionment usually fuel the rise and prominence of insurgency. The situation in Mozambique makes the country a veritable breeding ground for an extremist group.[97] The first armed attacks in Cabo Delgado happened at a time when the Mozambican government was locked in negotiations trying to end the tension that reputed following the 2014 elections. Since the country gained independence, poverty, corruption, and the state's failure to fulfil its responsibilities have resulted in insurgency ranging from RENAMO rebels to the current attacks by the ASWJ.[98] This resonates with the Nigerian experience where lack of basic resources under state auspices provided conducive opportunities for anti-state agitators to attract disillusioned citizens. In order to stymie the expansion of insurgency groups, legitimate powers need to have the right characterisation of such groups. Logistical readiness is also a factor that is crucial in keeping surveillance in hotspots.

A major error committed by the Mozambican government was to regard the insurgency activities initially solely as acts of criminality. The fact that the government either covered up or ignored ASWJ's activities exacerbated the situation. The Africa Programme at the Center

for International and Strategic Studies assembled experts on Mozambique from different fields to discuss the likely trajectory of insurgency in Cabo Delgado. They all converged on the notion that two main factors will determine the magnitude of the conflict: insurgency capacity and government strategy.[99] However, government strategy depends on how it characterises the insurgency. A wrong initial characterisation of the insurgency automatically led to wrong strategy, which in turn worsened the security situation in the affected region leading to the recruitment of vulnerable citizens and the flight of many others. The moment the sect identified with an extremist ideology was the time when the government should have acted decisively. Failure to do so resulted in a move to attack soft targets. An example is the attack on the police station in Mocímboa da Praia district.[100]

This pattern is like what occurred in relation to Boko Haram in Nigeria. Failure to crush the group in the initial stages gave it time to strategise and attack government installations and infrastructure. Furthermore, Boko Haram carried out attacks on communities, resulting in many deaths and injuries. In short, before the government realised what was going on, the sect had grown to the point where it was able to network with international terrorist organisations for support in cash and kind, including arms and ammunition. Some of their recruits were sent out of the country for training by the IS. Boko Haram was thus not only able to confront the Nigerian military but had the capacity to take on the MNJTF.[101]

The ASWJ seems to have gained ground. It has expanded its base through social and familial networks, and its links to criminal syndicates are possible.[102] While it has not been established whether it has networked with international terrorist organisations such as IS and Al Qaeda, attacks continue. The suggestion that the IS, through its Al-Naba newsletter, "warn[ed] South Africa to not get involved in the current conflict in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province"[103] lends credence to the argument that if ASWJ is not formally in cahoots with the IS, then the two enjoy intersecting interests that are likely to morph into formal association. There has been rising number of fatalities and displacements, and military and government facilities have been bombed or burnt down.[104] This has created instability within the province that, given the Mozambican military's insufficient and ineffective response, is likely to spread to other provinces. This is similar to how Boko Haram spread its tentacles. An attack on a police station in Mocímboa da Praia district in 2017 focused SADC's attention on the ASWJ.[105] However, the Mozambican government trivialised this as an act of criminality, resulting in SADC taking a passive approach[106]. This attitude was at variance with what the circumstances on the ground demanded; this included evidence that ASWJ was

building networks in neighbouring Tanzania and possibly had links with terrorist groups operating along the east coast.[107]

In soliciting assistance from external parties and individual SADC members, the Mozambican government also exposed the distrust that exists among SADC member states and in a way, indirectly admits on Mozambique and its immediate region (SADC)'s incompetence towards combating the menace of ASWJ insurgency. The government sought assistance from private security firms in Russia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa.[108] Only two years after the terrorist attacks started did the Mozambican government see the need to approach SADC officially for assistance. However, the meeting of SADC's Organ on Security, Defence, Politics and Security Cooperation in Zimbabwe on May 19 2020 did not produce a concrete counter-insurgency strategy.[109] Its anodyne statement only "strongly condemned the armed attacks and acts of sabotage perpetrated by the terrorists and armed groups in some districts of Cabo Delgado Province"[110] It is equally important to note that researchers and journalists are not allowed into the conflict zone, and there is speculation that there have been questionable arrests of suspected insurgents who are detained without trial and killed extra-judicially.[111] State-sponsored terror on innocent Mozambicans is likely to drive them into the hands of insurgents. Thus, all those enlisted by the government of Mozambique have to correctly characterise the identity of the people they meet.

Mozambique has counter-terrorism legislation passed in 2018 which stipulates that anyone who commits, plans, prepares or participates in terrorist acts, as well as personalities who travel or attempt to travel to be a member of a terrorist organisation will all be punished.[112] Mozambique belongs to the Partnership for Regional East Africa Counterterrorism, and it has security synergy with Malawi, India, Russia, Tanzania, Uganda, and the UK.[113] Tanzania has the prevention of terrorism act and, like Mozambique, there is no strong collaboration with SADC on countering terrorism.[114] Despite the legal structures on terrorism, a confluence of factors, starting from domestic ones such as underdevelopment, poverty, and historical difficulty to annihilate the RENAMO insurgency in Mozambique, to regional ones such as lack of trust in SADC to foil insurgency, and the reluctance of bigger military powers such as South Africa will continue to hobble the fight against ASWJ.

In May 2020, SADC convened the Extraordinary Organ Troika plus the Republic of Mozambique Summit of Heads of State and Government at which those present condemned all acts of violence by terrorists and armed groups in Mozambique. SADC also undertook to

help Mozambique to deal with the growing disturbances. Before the March 24 2021 attacks, the United States government, in concert with the Mozambican government, launched the Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) programme through which for two months American marines would teach some members of Mozambique's security forces way of stopping the spread of terrorism and violent extremism.[115] Slight over a week after the JCET was announced, the insurgents launched their assault on Palma. This bold timing was an indictment on SADC's efforts up to that time and a warning that the US-Mozambique initiative did not discourage the insurgents.

After the 2021 assault, SADC Extraordinary Double Troika Summit of Heads of State and Government directed an immediate SADC Organ technical deployment to the Republic of Mozambique, and the convening of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Ministerial Committee of the Organ by April 28 2021.[116] The technical deployment was tasked to report to the Extraordinary Organ Troika Summit to be held in the Republic of Mozambique, on April 29 2021.[117] The deployment of a technical team was an encouraging shift that demonstrated SADC's commitment to more than just rhetorical condemnation of insurgency in Mozambique. It also demonstrated Mozambique's belated admission that SADC should play a role in that country's security situation. Up to this time, Mozambique has been loath to let SADC in.[118]

The scope of violence by insurgents in Mozambique has grown since 2017. The rise and spread of Boko Haram in Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin form a salutary lesson to the government of Mozambique and southern Africa. There are similarities of the impulses that cause insurgency in the two scenarios; economic exclusion, state-sponsored corruption, and underdevelopment drive desperate citizens into armed and extremist outfits that posture themselves as enemies of corrupt and ineffectual governments. The coincidence of alienation and religious fervour give disillusionment a value bent. Thus, tackling insurgency in Mozambique requires a multipronged approach that addresses structural, ideological, and moral issues. Thus, as SADC and other transnational initiatives gird to help Mozambique, they should also offer candid advice and counsel to state actors that have not catered satisfactorily to some of their citizens.

CONCLUSION

The ASWJ extremist group and its attacks have been mishandled to the point where it has gained much ground, resulting in the displacement and death of innocent citizens. The

existence of this group not only impacts on Mozambique but has the potential to cause regional instability in SADC. While the sect seems to have established a firm base, it is not clear if it has succeeded in spreading its tentacles across the borders of Mozambique into the region, as was the case with Boko Haram. By the time the Nigerian government and much later, the MNJTF carried out counter attacks against Boko Haram, the movement had already received significant support from international terrorist networks in the form of funds, arms and ammunition, and combatants who infiltrated the country's porous borders in the Lake Chad Basin. This has made the fight against Boko Haram a difficult task. SADC should learn from this and act accordingly.

Given the current situation, SADC has a short window of opportunity to act and confront the ASWJ in the small space it occupies before the group gains the capacity and military base to confront the regional security forces. The ASWJ should not be underestimated as its activities may have a spill-over effect on any or all SADC member states. Hence, a collective effort is required within the region to fight the insurgency in Mozambique.

Notes

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6. Siegel, *Theories of Criminology,* 363.
7. Gompert and Gordon, *Counterinsurgency,* 32.
8. Kilcullen, 'Counter-insurgency Redex,' 112.
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10. Herbst, *States and Power in Africa,* 8.
11. Okumu, *Africa's Problematic Borderlines*, 22.
12. Herbst, *States and Power in Africa*, 7.
13. Asiwaju, *Partitioned Africans*, ……; Mulindwa, 'The Interstate Border, 606.
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16. Okunade, *Border Communities*, 30.
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25. Agbiboa, 'Relative Deprivation', 145.
26. Hickey, 'The Maitatsine Uprisings', 251-256.
27. Faluyi, Khan, and Akinola. 'The Boko Haram', 77.
28. Onuoha, 'The Boko Haram', 159-160.
29. Onuoha, 'The Islamist Challenge', 55.
30. *Ibid*
31. *Al Jazeera*. 'Northern Mozambique'.
32. Matsinhe and Valoi. 'Northern Mozambique', 13.
33. Morier-Genoud, 'Insurgency in Mozambique', 397.
34. Matsinhe and Valoi, 'Northern Mozambique', 13.
35. Forquilha and Pereira, *Cabo Delgado*.
36. Fabricius, Mozambique's Jihadist Insurgency.
37. Okunade, *Border Communities*, 245, 260.
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39. Alden and Chichava, *Cabo Delgado,* 4.
40. Alden and Chichava, *Cabo Delgado, 5*.
41. Alden and Chichava, *Cabo Delgado,* 6.
42. Fabricius, 'Mozambique's Jihadist Insurgency'.
43. Onuoha, 'The Islamic Challenge', 56.
44. Okunade and Ogunnubi, 'Border Communities', 690.
45. Okunade, *Border Communities*, 169, 208.
46. Institute for Economics and Peace. *Impact of Terrorism*, 16.
47. Onuoha, 'The Islamist Challenge' 56.
48. Onuoha, 'The Boko Haram' 172.
49. Faluyi, Khan, Akinola, 'The Boko Haram', 77.
50. Meehan and Jackie, *Boko Haram*,' 18.
51. Abada, Akale, Udegbunam, and Ononogbu, 'The Multinational Joint Task Force,' 41.
52. Faluyi, Khan and Akinola, 'The Boko Haram', 77.
53. Morier-Genoud, 'Insurgency in Mozambique', 396 and 401.
54. Morier-Genoud, 'Insurgency in Mozambique', 400.
55. Morier-Genoud, 'Insurgency in Mozambique', 396.
56. *Ibid*
57. *Ibid*
58. Alden and Chichava, 'Insurgency in Mozambique', 1.
59. Alden and Chichava, 'Insurgency in Mozambique', 5.
60. Fabricius, 'Mozambique's Jihadist Insurgency'.
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62. Habibe, Forquilha, and Pereira, 'Islamic Radicalization', 11.
63. Habibe, Forquilha, and Pereira, 'Islamic Radicalization', 20.
64. Habibe, Forquilha, and Pereira, 'Islamic Radicalization,' 10; Morier-Genoud, 'Insurgency in Mozambique', 406.
65. Habibe, Forquilha, and Pereira, 'Islamic Radicalization',17.
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79. Human Rights Watch, *Events of 2019*, 406.
80. *Ibid*
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86. *Ibid*
87. Institute for Economics and Peace. *Impact of Terrorism*,16.
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90. Vhumbunu, *Insurgency in Mozambique.*
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94. Coelho, *Politics and History in Mozambique*, 20-30.
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97. Chikohomero, *SADC and Mozambique*.
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102. Columbo, 'Northern Mozambique at a Crossroads', 7.
103. Gerber, "ISIS' Warns South Africa'.
104. Chikohomero, *SADC and Mozambique*.
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107. Fabricius, 'Mozambique's Jihadist Insurgency'.
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109. *Ibid*
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