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## From the Enemy-centric to People-centric Approach: Views and Attitudes of Mozambicans Living in Johannesburg towards SAMIM's Counterinsurgency in Cabo Delgado

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### Abstract

The Southern African Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) has been relatively under-researched in view of its conception among Mozambicans. This study used views, insights and attitudes of Mozambicans in Johannesburg, South Africa on the relevance of the SAMIM's counterinsurgency efforts in Cabo Delgado. While the deployment of the SAMIM's forces serve to minimise the effects of terrorism and set a platform on which addressing the root causes of insurgency and is motivated by the desire for lasting peace, the findings of this study revealed that it falls short of addressing high levels of poverty, marginalises the views of disgruntled Mozambicans, and cannot address regional disparities between the southerners and northerners in Mozambique. Consequently, the participants argued that the SAMIM's approach holds no prospect of denying insurgency the necessary sustenance and support to survive. The study recommended leveraging the use of local assemblies and incorporating views of marginalised and disgruntled Mozambicans within the SAMIM's counterinsurgency strategy to address structural violence that abets and sustains insurgents in Cabo Delgado.

**Keywords:** *Banditry, Lasting peace, Mozambicans, SAMIM's counterinsurgency, Terrorism.*

## **Introduction**

Insurgencies of the kind African countries have struggled to counter over the years, at staggering costs and danger of organised violence spreading in large proportions of the continent as jihadist groups continue their search for new havens, is the greatest security threat the continent faces. As the current trends continues, the wave of insecurity threat across the continent exerts a huge toll on local population. According to Makonye (2020) and Chilaka (2021), the most affected countries, although in a differing degree, include Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia. Many national governments in the affected countries have launched several kinetic military operations (Maiangwa & Tar, 2021). Some studies have examined, though not exhaustively, the challenges emerging from the management of insurgencies in Africa and complexities of coordinating regional cooperation on counterinsurgency. For instance, Varin (2020) says that counterinsurgency is usually framed militaristically and is becoming counterproductive as it is proving to be less capable of stemming the threat of insurgency in Africa.

This incapability of not stemming the threat of insurgencies is raising new fundamental questions of how African governments can improve their capabilities. The practical challenge, then, is how to overcome limitation of conventional counterinsurgency intervention and prevent violent jihad groups from finding havens where they can reorganise and thrive (Adela, 2021; Charbonneau, 2021; Mesok, 2022). Hence, these difficulties encountered by different African governments in countering insurgency using the kinetic military approach are reviving interests in alternative approaches to counterinsurgency on the continent. One way of doing this is by drawing on the insights, views, perceptions, and arguments of the empirical realities of ordinary citizens both locally and in diaspora.

Consequently, the current study explores the views, insights, and attitudes of Mozambicans in Johannesburg, South Africa on the relevance of the ongoing Southern African Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) counterinsurgency efforts in Cabo Delgado. The Southern

African Development Community (SADC)<sup>1</sup> heads of state and government in an extraordinary Troika Summit of Botswana of November 27, 2020 decided to deploy a Standby Force to fight terrorism in Cabo Delgado (Svicevic, 2022). While the SAMIM's counterinsurgency in Cabo Delgado has usually been framed as militaristic and enemy-centric, Mozambique's President Filipe Jacinto Nyusi on September 7, 2022 was quoted as saying that the Islamist militant movement in northern Mozambique is spreading to new territories despite the efforts being made by local and international military forces to contain it.<sup>2</sup> The foregoing view of President Nyusi seems to be contradicting SAMIM's deployment of military force and probably reviving interests in alternative approaches to counterinsurgency. However, President Nyusi's view seems to be raising new fundamental questions on how insurgents can be countered in Mozambique. Hence, the study explores the views, insights, and attitudes of Mozambican migrants in South Africa with the aim of promoting a shift in the SAMIM's military-centric to people-centric counterinsurgency approach.

## **Counterinsurgency Approaches in Cabo Delgado**

Before exploring the views, insights, and attitudes of Mozambicans towards SAMIN's fight against terrorism in Cabo Delgado, it is critical to clarify the meaning of counterinsurgency and how it is understood in the study. The *U.S. Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (2021:12) describes counterinsurgency as a "blend of comprehensive military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat any form of insurgency". The components of any counterinsurgency campaign include political, societal, military, economic, legal, informational, and intelligence aspects (Cassidy, 2008). Counterinsurgency, therefore, signals a movement away from exclusive reliance on killing the 'enemies' towards targeting the people for political support. Contemporary counterinsurgency theory emphasises the role of civilian efforts of re-integration and reconstruction in insurgency-stricken areas. Hence, in

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<sup>1</sup> SADC countries include Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, United Republic Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.voanews.com/a/mozambique-struggling-to-contain-violence-in-troubled-northern-regions/6735287.html>(Accessed on 10/10/2023)

this study, counterinsurgency is understood to be a blend of all comprehensive civilian and military efforts used to contain insurgency and address its root causes simultaneously. It involves a careful balance between constructive dimensions (building compelling and legitimate government) and destructive measures (destroying the insurgent movements).

There are conventionally two principal philosophies of counterinsurgency. Firstly, there is ‘population-centric’ one which puts emphasis on the populace as the sea in which the insurgents swim. This philosophy holds that if the population and its surroundings are adequately controlled, the insurgents will be denied the necessary sustenance and support to survive. The foregoing philosophy can be summarised as “first protect the population, and all else will follow” (Moore, 2007:20). Secondly, there is ‘enemy-centric’ dimension philosophy which is perceived to be similar to conventional warfare. According to the author, this perspective of counterinsurgency stresses the military conquest and total defeat of the insurgents. This dimension of counterinsurgency focus is on the physical defeat of the insurgents. In the current study, it is argued that the enemy-centric approach seeks to defeat the enemy first before anything else (Kilcullen, 2012).

While both people-centric and enemy-centric approaches are important in fighting terrorism, this study explores how the people-centric component of counterinsurgency can be utilised as an alternative in fighting insurgencies in Cabo Delgado. This is because the approach puts emphasis on ‘direct and indirect’ non-military ways of securing the population’s support, thereby isolating insurgents. Hence, it is topical to explore the views, perspectives, and attitudes of Mozambicans towards the combustible issue on the fight against terrorism in Cabo Delgado. Although military action against militants will undoubtedly be on the cards, the people-centric approach recognises that the centre of gravity is the population. Although terrorism in Cabo Delgado has been going on since 2017 (Svicevic, 2022), interventions so far have not been informed much by political and democratic processes of winning hearts and minds, but it has been fought militarily. This has also been exemplified with the SAMIM’s approach.

By deciding to deploy a standby armed force in Cabo Delgado, Sithole (2022) states that the SADC Mission was agreeing to exclusively rely on isolating and fighting the terrorists by military means. Although the deployment of a standby force is justified within the framework of the SADC Mutual Defense Pact and in line with the United Nations’

“responsibility to protect principle”, the SAMIM’s military approach was ruling out other alternatives (people-centric approach). Consequently, on August 9, 2021, SAMIM launched a kinetic military operation in Cabo Delgado with troops from Lesotho, Botswana, South Africa, and Tanzania (ISS, 2021). This standby force is said to be a coordinated response that incorporates tough cross-border intelligence to manage jihadist infiltration so as to prevent fears of acts of terrorism spilling over to other neighbouring states. While the main aim of deploying the SAMIM’s military was to prevent human catastrophe, Hanlon (2020), Obaji (2021), Varin (2021), and Sithole (2022) argue that the decision to deploy armed forces in Cabo Delgado was also aimed at preventing the risk of non-African solutions in the Southern African region. This is because the SADC was aware that lucrative natural resources that had been discovered in Cabo Delgado were prompting fears of the “Iraqification” (militarisation and foreign agenda) of Mozambique.

Although the intention of the SADC’s heads of state to deploy a standby force in Cabo Delgado is to be lauded, Hanlon (2020), Sithole (2022), and Makanda (2023) criticise, asserting that it has not borne any fruit as espoused by the Mozambican President Nyusi. For instance, on September 7, 2022, President Nyusi was quoted as saying that the Islamist militant movement in northern Mozambique was spreading to new territories despite efforts made by government and regional forces to contain it. The spread of insurgents to other regions of Mozambique amid SAMIM’s military forces has made Varin (2021) to liken Cabo Delgado situation to that of Somalia, Kenya, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria where a militaristic approach has been counterproductive. Therefore, it can be argued that, just like in other terrorist-infested states, the SAMIM’s military operations are yet to stem the threat of insurgency in Mozambique. As argued by Whittall (2021), the SAMIM’s military focus is on the physical conquest and total defeat of the insurgents. In this regard, SAMIM’s efforts might be overlooking the social, economic, and democratic political processes of winning the hearts and minds of Mozambicans so as to be able to isolate insurgents in Cabo Delgado. It can also be said that the SAMIM’s approach targets insurgents living among common Mozambicans rather than addressing the possible root causes of insurgency such as poverty, marginalisation, expropriation, and lack of jobs (Whittall, 2021). According to Demuyne and Weijenberg (2021), Cabo Delgado province is one of the poorest in the country despite harbouring one of the richest natural gas reserves in the world. The region has gas reserves worth more than 50 billion USD which

foreign energy companies have been extracting without any of the profits benefiting local populations. This is a result of the country having low-quality political governance, unscrupulous elite, weak institutions, and polarised social identities (Demuyne & Weijenberg, 2021). This might be one of the reasons some of the residents of Cabo Delgado may have resorted to violent extremism.

Therefore, one fundamental question is, what else can SADC do to counter insurgents in Cabo Delgado? Hence, this study is one of its kind that makes attempt to offer a critical survey of the work done in the context of the role of ordinary Mozambicans (home and in diaspora) in the fight against insurgency in Cabo Delgado. Existing literature reveals the growing debate about the nature of insurgency in Cabo Delgado, including who the insurgents are, where they come from, and their underlying needs. For instance, Ndawana (2023) underscores the causes and drivers of the insurgency in Cabo Delgado province and focuses on the challenges and prospects of SADC's response and the way forward. Makonye (2023), however, draws possible links of the terrorist groups in Mozambique with the ISIS of Iran and Iraq as well as Al Shabab of Somalia among other terrorist groups including Boko Haram of Nigeria. According to Makonye, the Ansar al-Sunna recruits from its adherents including forcefully recruiting the general populace in Cabo Delgado. This poses a serious threat to the economic viability of Mozambique among other issues. Njelezi (2022) is concerned with the *modus operandi* of the insurgents in Cabo Delgado. According to Njelezi (2022), the insurgents in Cabo Delgado employ guerrilla, terrorist, and subversive actions in carrying out terrorism. With regard to counterinsurgency, Mangena and Pherudi (2019) investigate the nature of the challenges that the Mozambique government encounters in addressing violent extremism. For Mangena and Pherudi (2019), Mozambique's wholly militarised approach to addressing violent extremism in the province, marred by human rights abuses, is possibly worsening the situation in Cabo Delgado.

While the foregoing scholarship is vital in giving insights about the nature of insurgencies, it is myopic to not include the voices of the actual Mozambicans and their roles in countering the insurgents in Cabo Delgado. Scholars have overlooked the voices of the actual Mozambicans probably because of their bias towards relying on the views of military and economic experts while excluding the views of those who have been rendered vulnerable by acts of terror. This means that most scholars who have paid attention to terrorism in Mozambique

have seen no value in recognising that the vulnerable (those who have been displaced by acts of terrorism; displaced women; people with disabilities; and refugees) possess 'voices' in relation to their experiences of terrorism (and therefore agency). Unlike studies that have excluded the voices of local Mozambicans, this study maintains that vulnerable groups can deepen the discourse on counterinsurgency. Therefore, by utilising the views of the Mozambicans living in Johannesburg, this study aims at creating a framework that may inform the blueprint and execution of comprehensive counterinsurgent strategies at national regional and global levels.

It would have been more credible to travel to Mozambique to collect the views of Mozambicans on the subject under investigation, but the overwhelming majority of the people displaced by war in Cabo Delgado are internally displaced. However, few of them migrated to neighbouring countries such as Malawi and Tanzania. Also, there are reports indicating that some of Mozambicans who migrated from Cabo Delgado to Malawi and Tanzania due to terrorism have now crossed several borders to South Africa. It is difficult to estimate the total number of Mozambicans who migrated to South Africa due to insurgency in Cabo Delgado. However, this study is of the view that some Mozambicans who have been living in South Africa have been affected by the insurgents in Cabo Delgado and are aware of the nature and operations of the insurgents in Mozambique. While the foregoing point is salient, studies done on the Mozambicans living in South Africa have paid no attention to the role of Mozambicans within the SAMIM mission in Cabo Delgado. Most studies on the Mozambicans living in South Africa have mainly focused on mass migration of Mozambicans to South Africa due to lack of economic opportunities in their country and demands for cheap labour in the former. Some studies have mainly focused on the perceptions, experiences of life, and discrimination that Mozambicans face in South Africa. Others studies like that of Lazzarini (2022) focus on informal sectors that most Mozambicans are involved in while in South Africa. Isike (2022), in his study, uses contact theory to explain how Mozambican migrants and South Africans have developed a space of interaction also known as a convivial dome, where the 'we' and 'they' divides are either submerged or renegotiated through contact to foster concord among them.

This study acknowledges the efforts made by the foregoing studies in understanding the survival strategies of Mozambicans in South Africa. However, there is a need for empirical studies like this one, the study that

explores how the views, insights, and attitudes of Mozambican migrants in South Africa can deepen the discourse on counterinsurgency in Cabo Delgado. Their views can inform the SAMIM mission in understanding better what it is that keeps insurgency going and what can be done to counter it. Consequently, it may promote a shift in the SAMIM's military counterinsurgency to a people-centric approach.

## **Methodology**

This study was conducted among the Mozambicans living in Johannesburg, South Africa. Johannesburg was chosen because it hosts great numbers of migrants in South Africa given its richness in job market (Makanda, 2021). The data for the study were garnered through semi-structured interviews from 60 (40 men and 20 women) adult Mozambicans (aged 18 to 60). One may argue that 60 participants for the study of this magnitude may be too small a sample. However, given the narrative nature of this study, 60 participants gave a glimpse of the thinking of Mozambicans on the topic under investigation (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012).

Taking note of their gender and professional diversity (lecturers, students, religious leaders, street vendors, and business persons), the participants for the study were purposively selected. The diversity of participants is hoped to have responded to the topic in an in-depth manner. While all the participants' views were equally important, the study became biased towards the views of Mozambican lecturers, students, religious leaders, and business persons. The bias was occasioned by the fact that some of the interview questions demanded specific background and knowledge of what is going on Cabo Delgado and the SAMIM's counterinsurgency in Mozambique. This does not mean that we discredited the views of other participants such as street vendors and farm or domestic labourers who were more preoccupied with their immediate daily needs and not counterinsurgency in Cabo Delgado.

Since some Mozambicans in South Africa were difficult to identify and knowing where they 'harbour' was not easy, a snowball sampling technique became vital in this study. The snowballing technique helped the study to unearth more and more participants. Most Mozambicans eke out a living at the so-called 'labour markets'. The random stratified sampling technique was used to gather information on issues such as:

- i. the participants' information on the nature and causes of terrorism in Mozambique;
- ii. the participants' understanding of insurgency and counterinsurgency in Cabo Delgado;
- iii. the views on what participants consider to be the best approach in countering terrorism in Cabo Delgado; and
- iv. participants' information on their purported role in countering insurgents in Mozambique.

Prior to the interviews, all the participants were asked if they were willing to participate; permission to audio-record their views was also sought. All the interviews, upon the interviewees' consent, were conducted in the comfort of the interviewees' homes. This consequently made the participants to be at ease. It is also important to note that the study was conducted upon the issuance of an ethical clearance certificate and after the consent of the participants. All the names used in the study are pseudonyms to protect the participants' identities and for confidentiality. Interviews were later transcribed, analysed, and presented as themes. To neutralise the concentration of pure qualitative data, existing documents and secondary sources such as various peer-reviewed journals were also used.

### **Views and Insights of Mozambicans on SAMIM's Counterinsurgency in Cabo Delgado**

The main aim of this study was to explore how the views, insights, and attitudes of Mozambican migrants in South Africa so as to deepen the discourse on counterinsurgency in Cabo Delgado. Asked on what they thought were the real causes of terrorism in the area, 50% of the participants said the main root cause of the insurgency was the discovery of rubies and natural gas. Another 40% mentioned social exclusion and poverty due to economic marginalisation of the locals due to the bad governance of natural resources in the area. Six percent (6%) of the participants thought that terrorism in the region is a result of the availability of illicit arms. Four percent (4%) of the participants said that it was a result of Islamic fundamentalism.

While existing scholarship revealed that scholars have overlooked the role of Mozambicans in South Africa on understanding the kind of strategies being used to bring peace in their terror-prone country, the above participants' views point to two interlinked causes of terrorism in Cabo Delgado. Firstly, the discovery of a huge ruby deposit and a giant

gas field in Cabo Delgado in 2009-2010 raised hopes of better living conditions for Mozambicans in general and the inhabitants of Cabo Delgado in particular. Secondly, the participants' views reveal how majority of people in Cabo Delgado are poor as a result of marginalisation amid availability of rich minerals in the region. What can be said here is that the discovery of natural gas in the region gave people from Cabo Delgado hopes of economic emancipation. However, these hopes were quickly dashed as they feel that they are socially excluded. Rich in natural resources, Cabo Delgado has remained one of the country's poorest provinces, with a large illicit economy. Consequently, most participants reported that the discovery of gas in the region has increased their poverty levels and marginalised them further. The above results also confirm why acts of terrorism in Cabo Delgado started a few years after the discovery of world's biggest natural gas in the Rovuma Basin off the coast of Mozambique. From the foregoing participants' views, the findings of this study reveal that different natural resources, as a vehicle for survival, have a tendency to invite conflicts regarding the way they are allocated and distributed as espoused in the works of Hendrix and Salehyan (2012), Auty (2017), and Koubi (2019).

Arguably, at this point, it can be said that the participants saw the discovery of natural gas reserves and increasing poverty levels of people of Cabo Delgado to be two key interlinked causes of terrorism in the region. This corroborates the argument made by Njeleza (2022) who argues that insurgent leaders in the region were using natural resource curse as their recruitment drives. Resource curse refers to a paradoxical situation in which a country underperforms economically despite being home to valuable natural resources (Badeeb, Lean, & Clark, 2017). For instance, Zhang and Brouwer (2020) submit that it is paradoxical that many African countries such as Angola, Nigeria, Sudan, Mozambique, and the DRC are rich in oil, diamonds, or other minerals, and yet their peoples continue to experience the highest level of poverty and low quality of life in the world. This is contrasted with East Asian economies such as Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong that have achieved western-level standards of living despite having no exportable rich natural resources. Njelezi (2022) opines that, in Cabo Delgado, the resource curse strategy attracts new recruits and instrumentalises them to come out in large numbers and fight for a just cause to redeem their region from poverty. From the participants' views, the findings of this study reveal that the resource curse recruitment strategy has made what was initially a small radical group to grow bigger and become a major

menace in the country. While the participants' views see resource curse as the key cause of terrorism, the SAMIM's military dynamics of counterinsurgency in Cabo Delgado reinforce the traditional assertion similar to that of conventional warfare and stress conquest and total defeat of the insurgents.

### **Ordinary Mozambican Collaboration with Government**

In relation to the role of the SAMIM military intervention, the study found it important to investigate firstly, what the participants considered as the best approach in countering terrorism in Cabo Delgado. Asked on whether they thought the SAMIM military intervention was going to end terrorism in Mozambique, 60% of the participants said it will not. Thirty-five percent (35%) of the participants said that, if it is handled well, the SAMIM intervention will avert the situation. Views such as "that there was no way that military intervention was going to address poverty in Cabo Delgado and regional disparities between the Southerners and northerners in Mozambique" were common among the 60% of the participants. Some said the SAMIM intervention "is just like other military operations that are in Mozambique to protect businesses owned by multi-national corporations who are involved in the gas sector". However, views such as "SAMIM wants to see that sustainable peace is realised in the Cabo Delgado and entire SADC region" were common among 35% of the participants. Five percent (5%) of the participants were not aware of the SAMIM intervention in the region.

The participants (60%) who said that military interventions alone won't end the insurgency in Cabo Delgado said that several militaries from Rwanda, United States, France, and Portugal have tried to avert the situation without any success. In May 2021, Portugal and Mozambique signed a military cooperation accord to help confront a growing jihadist threat by beefing up training, notably of Special Forces (News24, 2021). Both the United States and France tried to intervene by contributing troops to patrol the coast of Cabo Delgado (Hanlon, 2020). According to Hanlon (2020), the US government believed that counter-narcotics efforts were needed to disrupt some of the transnational organised crimes that were funding jihadist movements. The French intervention in Mozambique entailed a military maritime cooperation agreement and training of Mozambican forces so that they are able to fight the Al Shabab. Nhamire (2021) says that the European Union (EU) later went on to set up an EU military training mission in Mozambique (EUTM

Mozambique). The aim of the mission was to train and support the Mozambican armed forces in protecting the civilian population and restoring safety and security in Cabo Delgado. Nhamire (2021) adds that the Mozambican government also signed agreements with the Russian Wagner Group mercenaries, the Dyck Advisory Group (DAG), and the Rwandan army to help ameliorate the problem.

The narratives of the participants (60%) who said that military interventions are doomed to failure re-affirm the obvious failure of both the Russian Wagner Group and the South African Dyck Advisory Group (DAG) military companies that the Mozambican government had hired to fight terrorism in Cabo Delgado. Both companies had to leave the region after delivering very limited and controversial results. This category of participants suspected that, just like the Russian Wagner Group and the South African Dyck Advisory Group (DAG) military companies, SAMIM may be a partisan force being deployed to fight rebels and cannot address the underlying causes of terrorism in Cabo Delgado. “SAMIM is meant to eliminate terrorists so that those who want to loot our country’s natural gas can do so without any hindrances,” one Mozambican said. Some participants were afraid that “the rebels are going to retaliate” due to the presence of SAMIM and other foreign militaries in Cabo Delgado. What can be said here is that, according to this category of participants (60%), the SAMIM military intervention was a quick-fix solution that cannot address the underlying causes of terrorism such as disgruntlement due to social exclusion in Cabo Delgado. While it can be said that the deployment of the SAMIM serves to minimise the effects of terrorism and set a platform on which the root causes of insurgency can be addressed, statements such as “the militaristic nature of the SAMIM will deny locals a chance to voice their disgruntlement and not to participate in counterinsurgency”. For instance, one participant said:

If SAMIM wanted to address terrorism in the region, it needs to partner with local organisations to address legitimate grievances, setting up a commission of inquiry into the drivers of violent extremism, and developing a national strategy to deal with all aspects of the crisis and not to be strategically located near gas reserves.

Within the category of participants (60%) who said that the SAMIM intervention is going to fail, some participants questioned the main interest of SAMIM. Hence, a participant narrated that, just like other

military interventions, the SAMIM's counterinsurgency operations were being used selectively to protect foreign and multinationals' mining interests within the Cabo Delgado gas reserves at the expense of Mozambicans. According to the foregoing participants' views, the SAMIM's counterinsurgency in Cabo Delgado risks discriminating and alienating locals. Therefore, since one of the causes of terrorism in Cabo Delgado is poverty due to marginalisation, the SAMIM's counterinsurgency operations may fuel more terror attacks. "There was no way that military intervention was going to address poverty in Cabo Delgado and regional disparities between the Southerners and northerners in Mozambique," added another participant.

While counterinsurgency in Cabo Delgado has been framed militaristically, studies done by Adesote and Ajayi (2021) and Cocodia (2021) reveal that, due to multi-causal factors, the use of military was proving to be less capable of stemming terrorism in Nigeria and Mali respectively. Similarly, Ndawana (2023) and Makonye (2023) contend that, although there were a number of military operations from different states in Cabo Delgado, their efforts were not bearing fruits. Further, President Nyusi was quoted as saying that the Islamist militant movement in northern Mozambique was spreading to new territories despite efforts by government and regional forces to contain it.

Thirty-five percent (35%) of the participants, who argued that the SAMIM intervention may bring positive results, said that it was going to weaken the activities of insurgents. According to this category of participants, by weakening insurgents, the SAMIM intervention was going to create conditions necessary for the people-centric component of counterinsurgency in fighting insurgents in Cabo Delgado. Such views corroborate those of scholars such as Tonheim and Swart (2015) who argue that the elimination of armed rebel groups and militias (violent groups) sets some necessary conditions for peace negotiations. Similarly, the views of 35% of the participants assail the enemy-centric approach of counterinsurgency theory; that is, defeating the enemy first and all else will follow.

This finding reveals that, despite the lack of support for the SAMIM military intervention by 60% of the participants, 35% argued that SAMIM stands a better chance to bringing an end to insurgency because it has better military tools, personnel, expenditure, and capacity to intervene in comparison to the Mozambican government. "SAMIM's counterinsurgency follows considerable developments of security instability in the region as a result of terrorism in Cabo Delgado.

Instability in Mozambique is a security threat to the entire SADC region,” said another participant. Another participant said: “Chronic volatile terrorism in Cabo Delgado was posing a direct impact on the already complex SADC’s illegal immigration situation. To secure the region from threat of terrorism, SADC has an obligation to militarily intervene in the Cabo Delgado.” Accordingly, the foregoing participants’ views reveal that, if SADC cannot militarily intervene, Mozambique and the entire region risk probably becoming a safe haven for a number of insurgent groups. The views of the foregoing category of participants corroborate those of Ndawana (2023) who asserts that, although SADC delayed intervening in the conflict in Cabo Delgado, it has brought some improvements to the situation, although its results are yet to be consolidated.

While the study maintains that the dominant interest of the SAMIM’s counterinsurgency in Mozambique is to find sustainable solutions as espoused by 35% of the participants, through the views of 60% of the participants, the study brings into view that there exist other selfish interests of a few SADC elite (and those of some multinationals) that shape the current military intervention in Cabo Delgado. For instance, Makanda (2023) and Sithole (2022) argue that South Africa has contributed the highest number of military personnel within the SAMIM operations because of its elite and business interests. Some of the motivation that might be informing South Africa’s contribution to SAMIM includes protection of contracts that have been awarded to South African companies in constructions on the liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals that are proposed to be constructed in the Afungi peninsula area in Cabo Delgado. Also, there are several South African banks that have invested in Mozambique LNG.

What then can be said here is that the views of the foregoing participants reveal how the SAMIM military interventions may be aimed at protecting other interests of multinationals in the gas industry. This probably justifies Demuyne and Weijenberg’s (2021) argument that most interventions in Cabo Delgado were aimed at serving the interests of those who have invested in Mozambique’s gas reserves rather bringing sustainable peace to the region.

## **Incorporating People Approach within SAMIM Mission in Cabo Delgado**

As argued previously, the insurgency in Cabo Delgado is fuelled by legitimate economic and political grievances that must be addressed to build peace (Sithole, 2022). While this study acknowledges the roots of insurgency in Cabo Delgado, one of the causes, as stated by the participants, is the resource curse. Therefore, it can be said that the SAMIM military intervention may not be able to address the long-standing sense among residents of being marginalised and poor amid mineral riches in the region. Asked on what was the best strategy in addressing terrorism in Cabo Delgado, all the participants argued that SADC should prioritise addressing economic and political grievances of Cabo Delgado residents rather than depending exclusively on military intervention. This is why 60% of the participants opined that, despite the presence of different international military forces, insurgency continued unabated and it was spreading across the country. One participant argued:

The presence of foreign military operations in Cabo Delgado was exacerbating the armed retaliation and guerrilla tactics of the insurgents. By targeting to eliminate insurgents, SAMIM was going to make insurgents to mutate their acts into guerilla tactics.

Another participant said:

Ever since military operations began in Cabo Delgado, insurgents have started to target unarmed locals, women, destroy crops as a way of striking a balance to the action of military forces. Therefore, the deployment of SAMIM's military forces was going to exacerbate the situation.

"I think the best strategy is for SADC to come up with ways of addressing economic and political issues and take the steam out of militant recruitment that exploits citizen disillusionment; resource curse," said one participant.

According to the views of the foregoing participants, while the deployment of military forces should be prioritised when it comes to protecting civilians, liberating locals from the existing inequalities, poverty, and exclusion holds key to addressing terrorism in Cabo Delgado. The foregoing participants' views corroborate those of Bussotti

and Coimbra (2023) who opine that, by focusing exclusively on the use of military, the SAMIM's operations may agitate and scatter the actions of insurgents' attacks all over the country. This assails those of President Nyusi's assertion that insurgent attacks were spreading to new territories in Mozambique despite the deployment of local and international military forces to contain it. Bussotti and Coimbra (2023) add that the SAMIM's operations risk being overtly politicised to protect private interests in the Mozambican gas industry. Hence, the participants were in favour of political route that should be framed on addressing divisive politics that has historically marginalised some communities in Mozambique. For instance, the national government forcibly removed artisan miners from ruby fields in Montepuez in 2014 to the advantage of commercial interests, stirring unrest (Alberdi & Barroso, 2021). The foregoing forced removal is yet to be addressed by the government. Artisanal mining was a source of livelihood for majority of people of Montepuez. Those who were relocated due to massive development of natural gas infrastructure in Cabo Delgado have been forced to seek alternative sources of livelihood but in vain. Due to lack of alternative sources of income, they have resorted to terrorism in the area (Nhachote, 2021). Hence, most participants in the study were of the view that the best counterinsurgency should emphasise local autonomy so that all Mozambicans will feel that their social, political, and economic interests are represented rather than the deployment of military forces.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study used the views, insights, and attitudes of Mozambicans in Johannesburg to explore the relevance of the ongoing SAMIM's counterinsurgency operations in Cabo Delgado. Overall, the results reveal that the participants identified poverty, inequality, and social marginalisation as some of the key triggers of insurgency in Cabo Delgado. While Cabo Delgado is home to the world's richest gas reserve, the findings of these study reveal that the region is underperforming economically and has one of the highest levels of poverty in Mozambique and Southern Africa in general. The results also support the idea that natural resources, as a vehicle for survival, have a tendency of inviting conflicts regarding the way they are allocated and distributed (Koubi, 2019). While the discovery of gas and rubies had raised hopes of economic emancipation for Cabo Delgado, the participants argued that the discovery of natural gas and rubies had increased the poverty level

and marginalised Cabo Delgado further. Consequently, insurgents found a loophole and have used resource curse as a strategy to attract new recruits and instrumentalise them to come out in large numbers and fight for a just cause to redeem their region from poverty. Hence, this supports the arguments that terrorism in Cabo Delgado started a few years after the discovery of biggest natural gas reserve in the region.

Another important finding was the participants' belief that, just like previous interventions, the SAMIM military intervention holds no prospect of addressing insurgency in Cabo Delgado. While the deployment of the SAMIM forces serves to minimise the effects of terrorism and set a platform on which the root causes of insurgency are addressed and is motivated by the desire for lasting peace, the participants said that it falls short of addressing high levels of poverty, marginalises disgruntled Mozambicans from participating in peace processes, and cannot address regional disparities between the southerners and northerners in Mozambique. This justifies the reason insurgency spreads to new territories despite the presence of several national and international militaries that are meant to contain it. This gives credence to the argument made in support of the use of the population-centric perspective of counterinsurgency. Hence, this finding reveals that, if the views of the disgruntled population of Cabo Delgado are incorporated within the SAMIM's counterinsurgency, it holds the prospects of denying insurgency the necessary sustenance and support to survive. This can be achieved by making attempts to liberate locals from the existing inequalities, poverty, and social exclusion; this is what makes insurgency to thrive in Cabo Delgado.

These findings have significant implications for the reframing of counterinsurgency approaches, especially given Mozambicans' beliefs regarding the root causes of insurgency in Cabo Delgado. One way of doing this is by considering the views and insights of those who bear the brunt of insurgency in Mozambique and the views of ordinary Mozambicans, be it in diaspora or at home. On this basis, SADC should leverage the use of local assemblies and incorporate the views of marginalised and disgruntled Mozambicans within its SAMIM's counterinsurgency strategy in Cabo Delgado. The local communities should reflect the demographics of Cabo Delgado community and other Mozambicans by banding together the representatives of disgruntled groups, local leaders, the women, the youth, and the elders. By banding together and garnering the views of the foregoing groups, the SAMIM

mission will lay a foundation on which structural violence that abets insurgency in Cabo Delgado can be eradicated.

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