Cabo Delgado and the International Reponses

Abel Esterhuyse, PhD
Department of Strategic Studies

. . . to reflect on international reponses to the emergency in Cabo Delgado.

- Understanding the complexity
- Drivers of international responses.
- Military and humanitarian assistance.
- Why international support is critical.

Setting the scene . . .

- Insurgencies always centre on **grievances** that are exploited by a small group of people, that develop into war; and only end when the grievance is resolved.

- Nearly all insurgencies involve **foreign actors** supporting different sides.

Strategic Clarity of the drivers:

- Neglect and lack of good governance.
- Underdevelopment & unemployment.
- Gas discoveries and the management of expectations.
- External actors and interests & rise of radical Islam.
- Organised crime.
- Role of PMCs and Mozambiquan security forces.

Operational ambiguity & lack of operational intelligence.

- Displaced population.
- Little media coverage.
- Technology and infrastructure.
- Force-to-space ratio.
- Geographical realities

We know

- "… multiple players, multiple issues, multiple grievances and multiple dimensions"

- "The Cabo Delgado insurgency and counter-insurgency is still in its infancy, and is very diffuse."

- "The complex nature of the problem does not lend itself to simple solutions which national policy-makers could easily adopt."

We don't know

- What is the nature of the operational realities?

- What is the endstate required?

- What processes are to achieve that endstate – over time?

- What is the role & possible contribution of the international role-players in achieving the endstate.

Hendricks, C and Van Nieukerk, A, *Strategic Options for Managing Violent Extremism in Southern Africa: The Case of Mozambique*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Maputo, Oct 2021.

Prioritise and re-establish security – to stem the progress of the militants and address key humanitarian issues.

Restore the legitimacy of the Mozambique government in Carbo Delgado.

Restore good governance & address the legitimate economic and political grievances in Cabo Delgado.

Establish a comprehensive intelligence network & improve the overall communication with the people of Cabo Delgado.

Exploit the crisis to address broader challenges, deal with corruption, and improve local governance in Mozambique.

Questions **sovereignty**.

- Mozambiquan sensitivity vs maintaining control over the COIN response.

Questions about the **terms** of international involvement:

- 'Well, you're not going to get that unless we have boots on the ground, or rather, you're not going to get this unless we can mentor you and we can be closer and we can understand what it is that you want us to do with our equipment.''

Questions of **internationalisation:**

- Foreign involvement will allow local fighters [and ISIS] to present the conflict as part of a global war against the 'infidels''.

Questions of the **spillover effect**;

- How the emergency and the responds is to affect the region and countries in the region.

CABO DELGADO

MOZAMBIQUE

Questions of the **sources / framing** of the conflict:

- Lack of good governance vs an affirmation of the narrative of an externally fomented conflict.
- Emphasis on "ISIS" as an effort to portray the violence as fuelled by external forces, and to de-emphasise the role of local drivers - the extent of foreign involvement is largely unknown.

Questions of international legitimacy and recognition:

- March 2020: US designation of *Islamic State of Iraq and Syria-Mozambique* (ISIS-Mozambique) as a "foreign terrorist organization" / Abu Yasir Hassan, a "specially designated global terrorist".

https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/9/mozambique-conflict-question-foreign-intervention

https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/ignoring-the-roots-of-mozambiques-war-in-a-push-for-military-victory/

Multilayered international involvement and responses

PMC

Government & Commercial response as protection for international companies.

Amnesty International report vs "rescue operations".

SADC

Emphasis on process.

Questions about capacity and interoperability.

Role-definition - assistance to FADM or COIN?

Maritime dimension.

"… very expensive" calling for international assistance.

"… to stay in Mozambique indefinitely."

Support from outside Africa

Mostly Western

Military Training.

Development and Humanitarian Aid

Intelligence

Rwanda …

Tied to French interests

Personal contacts and relationships.

Focus on military assistance and operations.

Western withdrawal from Afghanistan & French / European withdrawal from Mali

Perception in jihadist circles – veteran fighters that are looking for a new adventure.
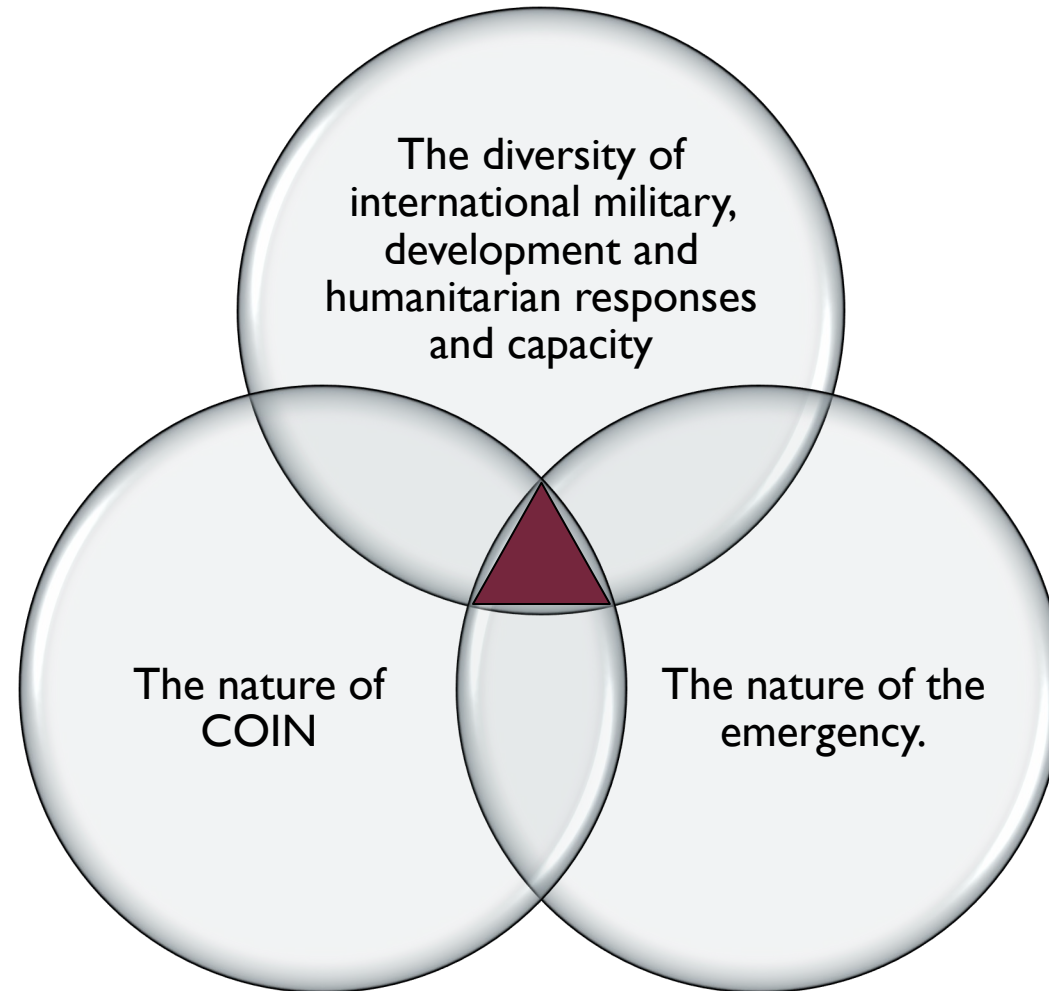
International preferences

- Light footprint & aversion for boots-on-the-ground
- Intelligence-driven approaches
- Technology rather than people
- Preference for air power & UAVs/drones
- Assistance with resource; including lethal and kinetic

Critical concerns:

- Reluctance to supply materiel to the military without the institution going through significant training and reforms.
- Reports of abuses committed against the population by security forces and potential leaks of government weapons into militants' hands as a result of alleged graft and indiscipline.

Concerns about systemic corruption

Complains about visas and role of customs.

Agencies and coordination?

The Northern Integrated Development Agency

- "…to coordinate humanitarian assistance and support economic growth and youth employment in the provinces of Cabo Delgado, Niassa and Nampula".

The National Fund for Sustainable Development

- "… responsible for procurement related to any funded projects, assisted by the UN Office for Project Services.

Processes – direct delivery to population vis-à-vis state bureaucracy.

To conclude.

Preference for an African solution – SADC

Non-African responses - small-scale, under the radar, assistance, training and intelligence support.

To be done in a way that it does not worsen the situation.

Caution rather that deliberate.

Containing the insurgency vs defeating the insurgency.

Loosing the war in search for military victory!