



**iStock™**

Credit: rarrarorro

iStock/rarrarorro  
1386085813

# MOZAMBIQUE'S FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM, FREEDOM AND SOCIO- ECONOMIC JUSTICE

## Part I

Estacio Valoi and David Matsinhe



# CONTENT

<i>Executive Summary</i>	3
<i>Introduction</i>	4
<i>The Fragmentation of Violence</i>	8
<i>The Paradox of Plenty: Gas Wealth and Local Poverty</i>	16
<i>Manufactured Insecurities and Organised Irresponsibility</i>	20
<i>FRELIMO'S Regime: Personalised Rule and the Outsourcing of Sovereignty</i>	21
<i>Charting a Path Beyond the Paradox of Plenty</i>	25



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*The conflict in Mozambique's northern province of Cabo Delgado, which has raged since 2017, is conventionally understood as a jihadist insurgency. This report argues that such a narrow framing is dangerously insufficient.*

The crisis is more accurately diagnosed as a profound “decivilisation process”, that is, a process of social breakdown,<sup>1</sup> and violent regression of the state driven by a toxic confluence of three systemic failures. The conflict is the product of a fractured state that has failed to secure a legitimate monopoly on violence; a neocolonial extractive economy that deepens historical marginalisation; and a development model that manufactures catastrophic risks with organised irresponsibility.<sup>2</sup>

The primary failure is that of state formation. The Mozambican state never completed the state formation process of establishing a legitimate monopoly over the means of violence and taxation.<sup>3</sup> The national army, the Forças Armadas de Defesa de Moçambique (FADM), is a hollow institution, crippled by decades of political neglect, endemic corruption, and logistical collapse. Its operational incapacity and frequent human rights abuses against the very population it should protect have stripped it of legitimacy, transforming it into just one more predatory actor in a crowded field. A chaotic array of coercive forces has filled this vacuum.

Secondly, this crisis of the state is built upon a foundation of profound socio-economic injustice, a dynamic best understood as a modern iteration of the “global colour line.”<sup>4</sup>

The multi-billion-dollar Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) projects, led by multinationals such as TotalEnergies, have not alleviated the region's historical marginalisation but have instead carved a new, more brutal dividing line between a protected, globalised extractive enclave and an impoverished local periphery. This has manifested as a classic “resource curse,” where the promise of immense wealth has only exacerbated inequality and conflict. This has created a fertile ground for radical ideologies that promise an alternative identity and a path to dignity through resistance.

Thirdly, the entire catastrophe has been accelerated by the logic of a “risk society.”<sup>5</sup> The decision to pursue mega-projects in a volatile and neglected region unleashed a series of “manufactured risks”—social displacement, environmental degradation, and intensified conflict—that were systematically downplayed. The subsequent security collapse is a manifestation of “organised irresponsibility,” a system in which both corporate and state actors are structured to evade accountability for the devastating consequences of their decisions. As findings have demonstrated, the potential negative impacts were known beforehand, as per the analyses and assessments presented – namely in the reports of TotalEnergies itself and of independent entities – but these were incomplete, failing to conform with

1 The concept of a “decivilizing process” is borrowed from Norbert Elias, *The Civilising Process*, Blackwell, 2000.

2 The concepts of the “global colour line” and “risk society” are respectively drawn from W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk.*, A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903; and Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, Sage Publications, 1992.

3 This analysis of state desintegration draws on Norbert Elias, *The Civilising Process*, Blackwell, 2000.

4 The concept of the “global colour line” is borrowed from W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk.*, A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903.

5 The concept of the “risk society” is borrowed from Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, Sage Publications, 1992.

TotalEnergies' obligations regarding due diligence, transparency, environmental and social impacts and human rights.<sup>6</sup>

This is the first part of a two-part series reporting on the counter-terrorism laws and operations' impact on human rights and

democratization in Mozambique. Part I will provide a general analysis of the underlying causes of the conflict with a focus on the socio-economic costs of the war while Part II will provide a deeper analysis on the armed groups and the impact of the laws on key civil and political liberties.

## INTRODUCTION

*The cascading crisis in Mozambique's northernmost province, Cabo Delgado, represents one of the most complex and tragically misunderstood conflicts on the African continent today.*

Since 2017, it has been conventionally framed through the simplifying lens of a jihadist insurgency, a local grievance metastasizing under the banner of the global terror. While this narrative contains elements of truth, it is a dangerously incomplete obscuring the deeper, interlocking pathologies of state failure, neocolonial extraction, and manufactured catastrophe that have made the province a crucible of violence. To comprehend the conflict is to look beyond the immediate spectacle of insurgency and into the post-colonial Mozambican state, its fractured identity, and its precarious position within the global political economy.

This report argues that the crisis in Cabo Delgado is not merely an insurgency but a manifestation of a profound process of social breakdown. This process, a violent regression from the ideals of modern statehood, is driven by the convergence of three systemic failures. First, the conflict is a direct consequence of the Mozambican state's historical inability to complete the foundational task of state formation: the establishment of a stable and *legitimate* monopoly over the means of violence and taxation. What is witnessed in Cabo Delgado is not a state fighting an insurgency, but

a fractured political entity whose claim to sovereignty has been hollowed out, leading to a violent fragmentation of power where force has become the common currency among a vast array of actors: state, private, foreign, and insurgent alike. As sources have noted, "the Mozambican Defence Forces (FADM) was in the midst of divisions, frictions between chiefs, generals, and (the then) President Filipe Nyusi, because they mainly lacked logistical issues. There were spies among them who provided information to the terrorists, (creating) a framework of contradiction, confusion and intrigue among police and military leaders."<sup>7</sup>

A chaotic array of coercive forces has filled this vacuum. The state's outsourcing of its core sovereign function to foreign private military companies, first the Russian Wagner Group and then South Africa's Dyck Advisory Group (DAG), introduced new cycles of unaccountable violence, with DAG being credibly accused of war crimes for its indiscriminate attacks on civilians. The state's ambivalent sponsorship of local militias—the state-backed *Força Local* and the mystical *Naparamas*—has further fragmented coercive power, institutionalising non-state violence. The most significant challenge to

6 [https://totalenergies.com/sites/g/files/nytnzq121/files/documents/2023-05/Mozambique\\_LNG\\_report.pdf](https://totalenergies.com/sites/g/files/nytnzq121/files/documents/2023-05/Mozambique_LNG_report.pdf)

7 'Vice-Chefe de Estado Maior General critica estratégia de combate ao terrorismo em Cabo Delgado', STV YouTube Channel, 5 October 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bW2aAOoe2oA>, accessed August 2025.

Mozambican sovereignty, however, is the intervention of the Rwandan Defence Force (RDF). While effective in securing the gas-rich districts, the RDF operates as a parallel state, exercising a more efficient monopoly on violence than the FADM and subordinating it, thereby cementing the hollowing out of the Mozambican state.

Second, this failure of state formation is inextricably linked to a persistent logic that structures the global economy, a modern iteration of the “global colour line.” The arrival of multinational corporations to exploit Cabo Delgado’s vast liquefied natural gas (LNG) reserves has superimposed a new, starkly visible dividing line upon the region’s long history of marginalisation. This line separates a globalised, extractive elite and their domestic political partners from a forgotten local periphery. The resettlement process for communities displaced by the LNG projects has been characterised by broken promises, inadequate compensation, and the destruction of traditional livelihoods, thereby violating Mozambique’s obligations under international and regional human rights frameworks, including the Kampala Convention. The Kampala Convention establishes the state’s primary responsibility to prevent arbitrary displacement, protect and assist internally displaced persons (IDPs), and seek durable solutions.<sup>8</sup> As research by Justiça Ambiental (JA) has found, “From the outset, the consultation and resettlement plan was flawed and more than half of the people who were forced to relocate are still awaiting compensation.”<sup>9</sup> For the youth of Cabo Delgado, this has engendered a profound feeling of being outsiders: citizens of a resource-rich nation on the brink of prosperity, while their lived reality is one of

dispossession and violence.<sup>10</sup> The insurgency has masterfully exploited this psychological wound, offering not just economic incentives but a powerful alternative identity rooted in resistance and a promise of justice.

Third, the entire catastrophe has been accelerated by the logic of a “risk society.” The decision to pursue capital-intensive, high-impact LNG projects in one of the world’s most fragile and underdeveloped regions was a high-stakes gamble. It unleashed a cascade of “manufactured risks”<sup>11</sup> such as social dislocation, environmental degradation, and intensified political competition that were both foreseeable and systematically ignored. The subsequent security collapse and humanitarian disaster are not unfortunate side effects but the predictable outcomes of a system of “organised irresponsibility,”<sup>12</sup> in which both corporate and state actors are structured to maximise profit and power while offloading the catastrophic consequences onto the most vulnerable populations.

The March 2021 attack on Palma, which halted the \$20 billion LNG project, was a stark illustration of the “boomerang effect,” where the manufactured insecurities of the periphery rebounded to strike at the heart of global energy interests, triggering the very international intervention that now defines the conflict.<sup>13</sup> This attack shocked the international community at a time when Total had organized its supply of the town of Palma by sea to bypass insurgent attacks on land access routes. It also changed the course of the war in Cabo Delgado, leading to the Islamic State claiming its presence in another African country, and leading to Total’s shutdown of operations claiming

8 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), Article 3.

9 Justiça Ambiental (JA)

10 The concept of “double consciousness” is borrowed from W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk.*, A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903.

11 Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, Sage Publications, 1992, p. 19-24

12 Ibid., p. 34-35.

13 The concepts of “organized irresponsibility” and the “boomerang effect” are borrowed from Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, Sage Publications, 1992.

*force majeure*. On the 24th of March, the day Total was set to resume normal operations around Palma town given the absence of insurgent activities, insurgents attacked the town. They entered from three different sides and led a rampage of looting, killing and kidnapping that lasted several days hunting people in the town and surrounding forests. The government claimed that 30 had been killed but an investigation by an independent journalist concluded that 1,402 had been killed including 55 Total contractors.<sup>14</sup> The government also estimated that rebuilding the infrastructure damaged in the town would cost over \$113 million.<sup>15</sup>

The response to this attack was one of full securitization, information blackouts and regional interventions. Four years later, insurgents have increased their attacks at a level not seen since. Since January 2025 the insurgency has grown stronger and bolder in its attacks. September has been a particularly bad month with insurgents staging armed incursions into Mocimboa da Praia; which resulted in Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) temporarily suspending all activities. Attacks included the use of IEDs and military operations aimed mainly at civilian populations. Reports indicate that around 20,181 people, including more than 10,000 children, have been displaced across Cabo Delgado in the last month.<sup>16</sup>

These dynamics are unfolding within a profound political crisis. The FRELIMO regime, particularly under former President Filipe

Nyusi, has been hollowed out by personalised rule, systemic corruption, and the violent fracturing of its own elite consensus. As the Centre for Public Integrity (CIP) noted, "FRELIMO faces internal fragmentation and popular discontent, aggravated by poverty, inequalities and social exclusion."<sup>17</sup> The turn to Rwanda was a geopolitical transaction: sovereignty was traded for regime security, a deal underwritten by European Union funds aimed at protecting French-led energy investments. Close generals have stated that "Nyusi doesn't listen to anyone. He's with the Rwandans. We are all against it."<sup>18</sup> The fraudulent 2024 election and the brutal suppression of subsequent protests have only confirmed the regime's profound illegitimacy, a trajectory the new administration of President Daniel Chapo appears set to continue.

The Rwandan military has been protecting Nyusi since they arrived in Mozambique. They protected him and his family during the 2024 post-election demonstrations, both at the Presidency of the Republic of Mozambique in Maputo and on the streets of the city. They protect his houses around the country and escort him and his family members.<sup>19</sup> "As a head of state, he cannot be protected by a foreign force. It's illegal. It has nothing to do with our police statute, the military house statute. It is illegal because normally all former heads of state are protected by the FADM; The National Guard is for high-ranking individuals, such as active governors and active secretaries of state. However, when it comes to former presidents, it is always the

14 <https://acleddata.com/update-log/9-april-2024-update-new-fatality-estimate-2021-attack-palma-mozambique>

15 <https://acleddata.com/update/cabo-ligado-monthly-march-2021>

16 <https://reliefweb.int/report/mozambique/mozambique-conflict-and-violence-cabo-delgado-affecting-civilians-flash-update-1-29-september-2025>

17 Centre for Public Integrity (CIP) 'FRELIMO faces internal fragmentation and popular discontent, aggravated by poverty, inequalities and social exclusion' DW, 19 December 2024.

18 Generals close to Nyusi, *Moz24h*, <https://moz24h.co.mz/recordar-e-viver-2>, accessed September 2025.

19 Rwandan presence in Mozambique has been noted, and even more recently at the beginning of April 2025 in a shopping complex where the former president of the Republic of Mozambique, Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, accompanied by his wife Isaura Nyusi, the mounted guard protecting Nyusi was Rwandan, three open Land Cruiser vehicles loaded with Rwandan military personnel were not only stationed at Shopright in the city of Pemba, but were also escorting Nyusi, in violation of legal requirements.

military that escorts them. Before he left office, he ordered some of the military house (Bureau in the Presidency that coordinates security portfolios) to be cleaned up, and put his trusted Rwandans there, because there is trust between him and his friend (Rwandan president Paul) Kagame. Former President Armando Guebuza has the military house protect him, as does former president Joaquim Chissano, with an exclusive military escort. With Nyusi maybe it's internal trust<sup>20</sup> This may be due to mistrust within the universe of FRELIMO factionalism or a lack of understanding between the security apparatus and their "new Rwandan friends".

From this diagnosis, the current international strategy—a securitised approach focused on protecting gas infrastructure—is fundamentally flawed. It manages the symptoms of state failure while allowing the underlying problems to fester. A sustainable peace requires a radical shift in paradigm away from narrow security management and toward the comprehensive reconstruction of the social contract. The interplay of these three failures has created a pathological symbiosis. The state's weakness creates a vacuum for the insurgency; the insurgency's violence provides the pretext for foreign military intervention and the securitisation of corporate assets; and the promise of gas revenues provides the rationale for the state's survival and the foreign intervention's external funding.

This is not a linear conflict with a clear beginning and end, but a self-perpetuating system of violence and extraction. This report will deconstruct this system. Section Two will map the fragmentation of the monopoly on violence among state forces, private mercenaries, local militias, and foreign armies. Section Three will analyse the socio-economic drivers of the conflict, focusing on the LNG projects as a catalyst for radical alienation. Section Four will frame

the crisis as a case study in manufactured risk and organised irresponsibility. Section Five will provide a brief political analysis of the FRELIMO regime's decay. Finally, the conclusion will argue that any path toward a sustainable peace requires moving beyond a narrow counter-terrorism approach and toward a fundamental renegotiation of the social contract in Mozambique. This report concludes with a series of actionable recommendations structured around three pillars: 1) Re-establishing National Sovereignty; 2) Dismantling the Extractive Enclave Model; 3) Instituting Accountable Governance. Without a fundamental commitment to addressing these interconnected failures, Cabo Delgado will remain a potent symbol of how the pursuit of wealth, when divorced from social justice and legitimate statehood, leads not to progress but to a brutal regression into a more violent and fragmented state of human existence.

This is the first part of a two-part series reporting on the counter-terrorism laws and operations' impact on human rights and democratization in Mozambique. Part I will provide a general analysis of the underlying causes of the conflict with a focus on the socio-economic costs of the war while Part II will provide a deeper analysis on the armed groups and the impact of the laws on key civil and political liberties.

## METHODOLOGY

To comprehend a conflict as veiled and fragmented as that in Cabo Delgado demands a methodology that is itself multi-layered and reflexive. A simple chronicle of events would fail to capture the deep structural forces that define this crisis. This report, therefore, adopts a qualitative approach that fuses a long-term historical perspective with a critical sociological sensibility and diagnostic power.<sup>21</sup> The empirical foundation of this study rests on

20 Interview, Protection of High-Profile Individuals, Abacar Bau in Pemba in an interview in May 2025

21 This approach draws on Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, Blackwell, 2000; W.E.B Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903; Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, Sage Publications, 1992.

two pillars: an documentary review and a series of in-depth, qualitative interviews conducted between May and June of 2025. We systematically examined a vast corpus of secondary sources, including meticulously researched reports from international and local human rights organisations, academic articles, and media coverage. This was triangulated with primary source analysis, including government and corporate statements, legal documents, and social media posts from the region. The interview process was designed to capture a diverse cross-section of perspectives on the conflict. We conducted semi-structured interviews

with a range of actors, including: displaced persons from various districts of Cabo Delgado; former and current members of the Mozambican security forces (FADM and police); local community leaders and civil society activists; journalists and researchers with deep knowledge of the region; and sources with insight into the political and economic dynamics of the FRELIMO regime. Given the extreme sensitivity of the research and the significant risks faced by our interlocutors, all interviews were conducted under strict confidentiality protocols, and the identities of most participants have been anonymised to protect them from retribution.

## THE FRAGMENTATION OF VIOLENCE

*Fighting the Islamist insurgency is a group of state security forces, albeit ineffective and under resourced, foreign troops, local militias and private security companies.*

The Mozambican state's inability to secure a monopoly on violence is not a recent phenomenon. It is a deep-seated structural failure that has been exacerbated by the conflict in Cabo Delgado. The fact is that the army was in the midst of divisions and friction between chiefs, generals, and President Nyusi, mainly because they had logistical issues and there were spies among them who provided information to the terrorists, a situation of contradiction, confusion, and intrigue among the police and military leaders that our sources confirmed. The national army, the FADM, is a shadow of its former self, plagued by corruption and logistical failures. Military sources on the ground have described the level of infiltration the terrorists have and the lack of morale within the army. "Our colleagues sell information to the bandits."<sup>22</sup> This internal decay has rendered the FADM incapable of effectively confronting the insurgency. Another soldier recounted that

"no matter how many elements the army had in their attacks against the terrorist bases, the latter seemed to have all the information about 'how many of us there were, what equipment we brought.'"<sup>23</sup> Another military source described how "the terrorists knew the time the forces were having breakfast, how many were in the garrison so that they could attack, kill soldiers and take military equipment."<sup>24</sup> The situation has become so dire that soldiers have reported instances where insurgents knew their commanders by name. As one paratrooper recounted: "In the middle of the fight, the terrorists shouted at us and told us they wanted our commander, who was there with us; they said his name and everything. The terrorists shouted, 'We don't want to kill him, but to take him to train us.'"<sup>25</sup>

This corruption directly impacts the army's capacity to conduct counterinsurgency

<sup>22</sup> Interview with military sources on the ground, paratrooper combat line, June 2020.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with military sources on the ground, paratrooper combat line, June 2020.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with military personnel, Pemba, 2024; Interview with TOTAL driver, 2019.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with paratrooper military personnel, Pemba, November 2020, January 2021, October 2022.

operations. From October 2020 to late 2025, there has been confusion within the FADM that contradicts the official narrative (as reported by the state media and some private newspapers) claiming that the army is succeeding. They report on its bravery, patriotism, and selfless spirit in defending national sovereignty against attacks by Islamic insurgents. These have turned out to be nothing more than propaganda while the attacks spread.<sup>26</sup> For example the former Commander-General of the Police of (PRM), Bernardino Rafael, reported that the FDS had invaded one of the most famous terrorist bases, the "Syrian Base" located in the district of Macomia, with terrorists killed.<sup>27</sup> Former Interior Minister Amade Miquidade, speaking from Maputo, also spoke of their deaths. According to military sources on the ground, on the front line of combat paratroopers, last June 2020, the FDS fell into an ambush while attempting an attack on the Syrian Base, which our sources argue had been carefully planned, but were betrayed by information given to the insurgent. The sources came to this conclusion because, no matter how many elements the forces had in their attacks against the terrorist bases, the latter seemed to have all the information about "how many of us there are, what equipment we were carrying."<sup>28</sup>

Claims of success in fighting the terrorists continue to be contradicted by reports from the ground. In April 2025 terrorists attacked Cambaco, Mozambique's largest hunting

area within the Special Reserve of Niassa.<sup>29</sup> As one reserve inspector at The Niassa national reserve (Reserva Nacional do Niassa RNN), stated, "Did you know that insurgents occupied Cambaco? The terrorist attacked, and they are in the central office itself. It's been almost five days since they've been there. One of Cambaco's representatives was kidnapped; they are using him as a shield. So I see that no force of ours went there."<sup>30</sup> Even those in the tourism sector are on high alert. As one tour operator in the Reserve said, "At the moment, we are fine. But we are attentive."<sup>31</sup>

The state's response to this internal crisis has been to outsource its security responsibilities to a patchwork of external actors (see table below). The deployment of the Russian Wagner Group in 2019 was an absolute failure, and their replacement, the South African Dyck Advisory Group (DAG), was accused of war crimes. The race for profits in the mineral sector in Cabo Delgado has also given rise to the creation of other international/national private security companies with collusion or partnerships with leaders of the Mozambican political nomenclature. Numerous companies protect multinational corporations and extractive interests. In this universe of private security the companies that are most active are G4S, Chelsea, and GARDAWORLD.<sup>32</sup> Increasingly, foreign security companies have been forced out giving way to engagements that profit Mozambican politicians. At Syrah Resources, a graphite mining company in

26 <https://cjimoz.org.mz/news/quadro-confuso-e-de-desconfianca-entre-as-fds/>, <https://www.dw.com/pt-002/movimentos-extremistas-contidos-em-cabo-delgado-governo/a-73540621>

27 'Moçambique: O que levou à demissão do ministro do Interior?', DW, 10 November 2021, <https://www.dw.com/pt-002/mo%C3%A7ambique-o-que-ter%C3%A1-originado-a-exonera%C3%A7%C3%A3o-do-ministro-do-interior/a-59776798>, DW – 10/11/2021, accessed August 2025.

28 <https://cjimoz.org.mz/news/quadro-confuso-e-de-desconfianca-entre-as-fds/>

29 <https://aimnews.org/2025/04/25/terrorists-attack-hunting-area-in-niassa-reserve/>

30 Interview with Mano Jumbo, Reserve Inspector at RNN, 24 May 2025.

31 Interview with tour operators in the Reserve, 24 May 2025.

32 At times, it was necessary to resort to force or behind-the-scenes maneuvering to remove certain foreign private security companies or those that did not belong to or have FRELIMO members as partners. At Gemfields, old companies such as ARK and KWIRK were removed, and security companies such as GARDAWORLD, owned by General Alberto Chipande, a reserve officer and member of the political commission, currently also on the State Security Council, and its associates and other companies opened in partnership with Chinese businessmen or citizens, were brought in.

Balama, private security sources stated that “it used to be protected by Chelsea security guards, but now it is possibly also with the company GRADAWORLD, owned by General Alberto Chipande.”<sup>33</sup> These facts were also reconfirmed by our research team. ARKHE Solutions initially protected the British mining company Gemfields/Montepuez Rubi Mining (MRM) for about five years or more since 2015, but mysteriously the contract was terminated or not renewed, giving way to GRADAWORLD, both in Montepuez and in Palma, where it was replaced by ISCO Segurança Limitada, “composed of Rwandan and Mozambican security personnel”.<sup>34</sup> The LNG project led by Total is also working with two Rwandan-linked companies called ISCO Security and Radarscape, which Mozambican corporate records show to be an indirect subsidiary of Crystal Ventures’ international arm, Macefield Ventures. Apart from the Mozambican armed forces, other state forces have been illegally “privatized,” to protect mining companies, including the police’s Rapid Intervention Unit (UIR), Forest and Wildlife Forces, and the FADM.

The fragmentation of violence is not limited to the state and its foreign partners. The conflict has also seen the emergence of local militias, such as the state-backed *Força Local* and the mystical *Naparamas*. While these groups have had some success in defending their communities, their presence further complicates the security landscape. It raises questions about the state’s long-term ability to re-establish a monopoly on violence. Both forces were created by the FRELIMO regime. The Local Force is predominantly composed of former guerrilla fighters from the Mozambique Liberation Front-1964

and 1974 (Frelimo), their families, or friends. Naparamas are Mozambican warriors who emerged in the 1980s in the context of the Mozambican Civil War. Combining traditional knowledge, mystical elements, and a sense of community, the Naparamas served as self-organized groups opposed to the presence of the then rebel-movement Renamo. Although historically aligned with Frelimo, the role of the Naparamas in the current security situation remains uncertain: “sometimes they are friends, sometimes enemies, even persecuted by their creator - FRELIMO. As the popular expression goes, ‘FRELIMO knows how to use people, especially those from Cabo Delgado and Niassa.’”<sup>35</sup>

The return of the Local Forces, previously created by Nyusi and now reinforced by Daniel Chapo, seems to be an already failed attempt to accommodate this group of former combatants with benefits, while giving the main wing of the Association of Former Liberation Fighters (ACL) access to contracts, concessions, and big business deals, continuing to enrich itself.<sup>36</sup> There are further contradictions not only between the Naparamas and the Local Forces, but also with their central government. According to some analysts, “Nyusi, before Chapo, was advised not to have the Local Force, which on several occasions has also been repelled by both the army and the Rwandan Forces.”<sup>37</sup> For example, during the attacks on the district of Ancuabe, which lasted a week and took place in the last week of April 2025, the terrorists’ actions were confused by that of local militias, in particular the attack on the village of Nacuale.<sup>38</sup> “What we saw there were not terrorists—Al-Shabaab—it was the Local Force. The uniforms they wore

33 interview in Pemba in July 2025; <https://www.garda.com/en-zw/locations/mozambique/pemba> Chipande never had money to invest unless he granted land concessions, forced partnerships, and destabilized companies, as he did with a shrimp company. His comrades only accumulate concessions and seek partnerships.

34 Anonymous interview with Totalenergies employee, Palma, July 13, 2025

35 [https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/mundo/defesa-promete-perseguicao-ate-as-ultimas-consequencias-a-grupos-naparamas-em-mocambique\\_n1650319](https://www.rtp.pt/noticias/mundo/defesa-promete-perseguicao-ate-as-ultimas-consequencias-a-grupos-naparamas-em-mocambique_n1650319),

36 <https://cjimoz.org.mz/news/vendedores-de-patria-mocambique>

37 Anonymous Interview with analyst, Maputo, April 9, 2025

38 Anonymous Interview, with a Naparamas commander, April 5, 202

are from the Local Force. I myself took a hat from the Local Force and brought it here to the village" he emphasizes. Various sources in the village, as well as drivers, said that the FADM or the Rwandans only moved to Muaja five days after the terrorists had left the area.<sup>39</sup> An insider believes that "the relationship between the state groups such as the Naparamas could be decisive for the stabilization of the region. The future of the Local Force and other community militias will be a central theme in defense policies as Mozambique seeks to strengthen its sovereignty and territorial protection."<sup>40</sup> However, like FADM there is discontent within the Naparamas. "We are protecting the village, but without any support, whether monetary, food, or uniforms, we work with our own strength."<sup>41</sup>

The current security landscape is however dominated by the Rwandan Defence Force (RDF), which has been effective in securing the gas-rich districts of Palma and Mocímboa da Praia, since it was deployed in 2021. Rwanda's military presence, initially consisting of 1,000 troops, exceeded 3,000 by mid-2025.<sup>42</sup> The Rwandan strategic base in the district of Mocímboa is currently being remodeled and expanded, which illustrates that Rwanda has come to Mozambique, specifically to northern Mozambique, to stay and establish a permanent military base. The geopolitically strategic area of Mocímboa da Praia has access to the ocean and global shipping lanes which is why Rwanda and not the Mozambican army controls the port and the airport. Mocímboa is one of the points that connects not only the north to Tanzania, but also connects to the west of the country, descending to Awasse,

Moeda, Pemba, and the rest of Mozambique. Our source, reconfirms that it was from the port of Mocímboa that all illicit business was carried out, from timber smuggling, ivory and drug trafficking, to illegal fishing. From 2024 to June 2025, a member of the FADM in Mocímboa, said in an interview that "Security in Mocímboa is very tight, both in terms of message control and phone call control. It is not easy to take pictures; they think it is espionage."<sup>43</sup>

But even with surveillance, the terrorists continue to make their incursions. A resident of Mocímboa da Praia, corroborates this, stating that "In May 2025, the terrorists began to come here at least once a week. Last time, they passed through here they had new weapons and uniforms, then went on to attack trucks and steal rice on the road between here, Mocímboa, and Awasse."<sup>44</sup> "At Mocímboa airport, flights are controlled by Rwanda, which controls who comes and goes, with minimal access for Mozambican troops. Any problems that arise in that area involving Rwandan military personnel and some members of the population are not handled by the police but directly by the Rwandans themselves, with the approval of the administration."<sup>45</sup> Residents of Mocímboa report that "the Rwandan business is thriving, whether in stalls selling basic goods and products, or in the market built by the Rwandans called 'Uwani'." "Most businesses are now in Rwandan hands, from liquor stores to cattle breeding, to the new headquarters of the massive and growing Rwandan presence in Mocímboa da Praia. After all, Rwanda is here to stay!" Stated another source in Mocímboa.<sup>46</sup>

39 <https://moz24h.co.mz/terroristas-bloqueiam-estrada-entre-nsanja-e-muaja-em-ancuabe/>

40 Anonymous Interview with analyst , Maputo, April 9, 2025

41 Interview with Rafael António Luís, Muaja-Ancuabe, by telephone, May 18, 202

42 AIM News (March 6, 2025) and Moz24h (June 2025) (REFERENCE LINK <https://aimnews.org/2025/03/06/page/2/>, <https://aimnews.org/2025/08/28/mocambique-e-ruanda-reafirmam-compromisso-no-sector-da-defesa-e-seguranca/>) and Moz24h

43 Interview Xerife de Mocímboa da Praia, in 2025

44 interviews, Sheik, Mocimboa da Praia, 2025

45 Anonymous interviews with soldiers, Pemba, June 2025; Interviews, Sheriff, Pemba, from 2024 to April 2025

46 Interview Sheriff, Pemba, July 2025

However, the RDF's presence has come at a cost. As one FDS element protecting high-profile individuals in Pemba lamented: "We are the weak ones. Just look at those Rwandans; they invest in their security and operations, but ours lack material and experience in the matter. Rwandans have all the necessary equipment, while we don't, they make us look like clowns."<sup>47</sup> All the Mozambican soldiers we interviewed spoke with one voice, painting a consistent picture of deteriorating conditions. One soldier, whose account was emblematic of many, put it this way:

"Between us and the Rwandans there are no good relations... We are dying there in Muidumbi, on the other side now in Niassa which is a forest, but the terrorists already have a barracks, they use drones, they use serious things, they locate places, they set themselves up and we are blind, we are deceived with a small amount of money, but there is not enough logistics... there's a lot of hunger here... no one seems to be worried about it... it's already here under your nose – Pemba."<sup>48</sup>

The involvement of Rwandan forces carries an undercurrent of humiliation for Mozambican troops. As one member of the FADM put it:

"In our barracks, without respecting the established rules, they enter Mozambican barracks with complete disregard. They don't respect anything. They arrive and just walk in. When there are disputes between Mozambican troops involving Rwandans, everything goes in favour of the

Rwandans—even when one of them tries to harass your girlfriend. But when it's us Mozambicans trying to enter their barracks, it's a whole load of bureaucracy—we even have to dismantle our gun magazines and all that."<sup>49</sup>

The imbalance is not only operational but symbolic: Mozambican soldiers must submit to intrusive checks and bureaucratic hurdles when entering Rwandan-controlled spaces, while their counterparts move freely and without consequence. This asymmetry corrodes the dignity and authority of the national forces, embedding a sense of subordination in the very spaces meant to represent sovereign power. By June this year, Rwanda's military presence had increased. The Chief of Staff of the Rwandan Defense Forces (FDR) Army, Major General Vincent Nyakarundi, announced a new contingent of the Rwandan Security Forces (FSR) at the Kami Barracks, before their deployment to the province of Cabo Delgado in Mozambique.<sup>50</sup> "Rwandan forces in Mozambique have grown from 1,000 to about 5,000, and their operations have expanded to cover five districts, according to the Institute for Security Studies."<sup>51</sup> The contingent, composed of members of the RDF and the Rwandan National Police (RNP), will replace the forces previously deployed in the insurgency-hit province.<sup>52</sup> In 2024, the European Union continued to provide financial support to Rwandan forces operating in the province of Cabo Delgado, Mozambique. This support, channeled through the European Peace Facility (EPF), amounted to €20 million (approximately

---

47 Interview with military personnel (FADM officers protecting high-profile individuals in Pemba), March 2024.

48 Ibid.

49 Anonymous interviews with soldiers, Mocímboa da Praia, June 2025.

50 [https://en.igihe.com/spip.php?page=mv2\\_article&id\\_article=54285](https://en.igihe.com/spip.php?page=mv2_article&id_article=54285)

51 [https://adf-magazine.com/ADF\\_V18N1\\_POR.pdf](https://adf-magazine.com/ADF_V18N1_POR.pdf)

52 <https://moz24h.co.mz/rdf-army-chief-briefs-troops-ahead-of-new-deployment-to-cabo-delgado/>

US\$21.4 million).<sup>53</sup> They now also have the added support of the European Union, with US\$40 million disbursed in two tranches.<sup>54</sup>

On August 25, 2025, President Daniel Francisco Chapo announced that a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) had signed between Mozambique and Rwanda establishing rules of engagement that define the manner of action, limits, and restrictions of the forces involved, in the similar manner to what was agreed with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and its military mission SAMIM. However, this SOFA violates the Mozambican constitution if it is ratified without the consent and approval of the Mozambican parliament. Due to the lack of transparency since the first agreements signed by his predecessor Nyusi, the question remained as to what the president did not reveal.<sup>55</sup> The unannounced trip by Defense Minister Cristóvão Chume to Kigali the evening before the signing of the SOFA continues to raise questions inside and outside the corridors of power in Maputo. The Minister left urgently at nightfall on a flight from Pemba to Kigali and returned in the early hours of the morning. Officially, it was a three-day visit. But in practice, it was

an express trip, kept secret and shrouded in silence. The decision to keep such a sensitive dossier outside the country caused some discomfort among frontline generals. "We don't know what was discussed there. But the contracts have been coming from Nyusi," a military source told Moz24h on condition of anonymity. The cooperation between the two countries, identified the need to operationalize 23 instruments already signed between the parties, strengthening cooperation, especially in the political-diplomatic, defense and security, legal, trade and investment, industry, and agriculture areas.

Recently, Russia also signaled its readiness to support Mozambique's internal security, with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov announcing that Moscow is prepared to help strengthen the country's defence capabilities.<sup>56</sup> Lavrov, who last visited Mozambique in 2018, confirmed he had accepted an invitation from the Foreign Minister Maria dos Santos Lucas to visit the Lusophone nation, though no date has been set. Their meeting marked 50 years of "friendship and cooperation" between the two countries; a milestone celebrated on 25 June.

---

53 19 <https://aimnews.org/2025/03/06/eu-will-continue-to-fund-rwandan-presence-in-cabo-delgado/>; <https://mg.co.za/africa/2021-09-14-kagame-rwanda-is-paying-for-the-cabo-delgado-intervention/>

54 <https://aimnews.org/2024/11/20/uniao-europeia-concede-20-milhoes-de-euros-para-apoiar-exercito-ruandes-no-combate-ao-terrorismo-em-mocambique/>

55 <https://integritymagazine.co.mz/arquivos/47993?amp=1%E2%84%A2%EF%B8%8F>

56 'The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation', Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's statement and answers to media questions at a joint news conference following talks with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Republic of Mozambique Maria Lucas, Moscow, 22 July 2025, [https://mid.ru/en/press-service/photos/meropriyatihttps://aimnews.org/2025/04/25/terrorists-attack-hunting-area-in-niassa-reserve/ya\\_s\\_uchastiem\\_ministra/2037503](https://mid.ru/en/press-service/photos/meropriyatihttps://aimnews.org/2025/04/25/terrorists-attack-hunting-area-in-niassa-reserve/ya_s_uchastiem_ministra/2037503).

**Table 1: Matrix of Armed Actors in Cabo Delgado**

Actor	Estimated Strength	Primary Area of Operation	Funding Sources	Mandate / Objectives	Documented Human Rights Conduct
<b>State Forces</b>					
FADM	Unknown (low morale, desertions)	Province-wide, but often ineffective	State budget	Counter-insurgency, territorial defence	Extrajudicial killings, torture, indiscriminate attacks on civilians, and corruption
UIR / Police	Unknown	Urban centres, key infrastructure	State budget	Law enforcement, counter-insurgency support	Excessive force against protesters, arbitrary detentions, and human rights abuses
<b>Foreign State Forces</b>					
Rwandan Security Forces	Approx. 2,500-5,000	Palma, Mocímboa da Praia, Macomia, Ancuabe	Bilateral agreement, EU (European Peace Facility)	Counter-insurgency, securing LNG areas, stabilisation	Generally disciplined; some reports of tensions with locals, but fewer documented abuses than FADM
SAMIM (SADC)	Approx. 3,000 (withdrawn July 2024)	Mueda, Nangade, Macomia	SADC member states, the EU	Counter-insurgency, regional stability	Implicated in the mutilation of corpses, abuses during operations
<b>Private Military / Security</b>					
Wagner Group (Russia)	Approx. 200 (withdrawn late 2019)	Cabo Delgado	Mozambican government (secret contract)	Counter-insurgency	Ineffective; engaged in indiscriminate bombing; tensions with FADM

Actor	Estimated Strength	Primary Area of Operation	Funding Sources	Mandate / Objectives	Documented Human Rights Conduct
Dyck Advisory Group (SA)	Unknown (contract ended 2021)	Cabo Delgado	Mozambican government (Interior Ministry)	Air support for counter-insurgency	War crimes, indiscriminate firing from helicopters on civilians and infrastructure
ISCO (Rwanda) / Garda-World	Unknown	LNG project sites (Afungi, Palma)	TotalEnergies, Gemfields	Asset protection	Operate in fortified enclaves; contribute to the exclusion of local communities
<b>Non-State / Paramilitary</b>					
ASWJ / IS-M	250-350 (core fighters)	Macomia, Mocímboa da Praia, Palma, incursions into Niassa	Foreign sources, the illicit economy, raids, and extortion	Establish an Islamic state, overthrow the government	Beheadings, kidnappings, mass killings of civilians, destruction of property, and the use of child soldiers
Força Local	Unknown	Various districts	State-sanctioned, FRELIMO veterans	Community defence, support FADM	Some accusations of abuses and acting as a partisan force; clashes with Naparamas
Naparamas	Unknown	Namuno, Montepuez, Ankuabe, Macomia	Community support	Community self-defence against insurgents	Ambiguous; sometimes allied with the state, sometimes persecuted; clashes with Força Local; accused of killing officials

# THE PARADOX OF PLENTY: GAS WEALTH AND LOCAL POVERTY

*The violent upheaval in Cabo Delgado cannot be understood solely as a failure of security governance; it is fundamentally a crisis of social and economic justice, rooted in a history of marginalisation that the arrival of global extractive capital has supercharged.*

The concept of the “global colour line,” the hierarchical division of the world between a developed, exploiting core and an underdeveloped, exploited periphery, provides a powerful lens through which to analyse this dynamic. The massive Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) projects have not bridged the historical divide between Mozambique’s politically dominant south and its neglected north; instead, they have carved a new, more brutal division in Cabo Delgado. This line separates the immense, transnational wealth being unearthed from the profound poverty of the people who live on the land, fostering a collective feeling of alienation and dispossession that has become the insurgency’s most potent recruiting tool.<sup>57</sup>

Cabo Delgado is in this way a textbook example of the “resource curse,”<sup>58</sup> a paradox of plenty where an abundance of natural wealth is correlated with deepening poverty, inequality, and violent conflict. For decades, the province has been a source of valuable resources, including timber, rubies, and now, world-class natural gas reserves. Nonetheless, the province remains one of the poorest and

least developed regions in Mozambique. The discovery of offshore gas fields in 2010 and 2011, promising to transform Mozambique into a leading global LNG exporter, was heralded by the government and its international partners as the dawn of a new era of prosperity. For the local population, however, this promise has proven to be a cruel mirage.

The prevailing narrative among the communities of Cabo Delgado is one of profound exclusion. They perceive, correctly, that the multi-billion-dollar investments are designed to extract resources for export to wealthy markets in Europe and Asia, with the profits flowing to multinational corporations like TotalEnergies and a distant political elite in Maputo. This dynamic mirrors the colonial economic logic identified in the concept of the global colour line, where the wealth of a territory is systematically siphoned away, leaving the indigenous population with little more than social and environmental ruin. The insurgency’s rise is inextricably linked to this perception; a study by the Institute for Security Studies found that 45% of respondents in the region identified the

---

57 The concepts of the “global colour line” and “double consciousness” are borrowed from W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903.

58 Richard Auty, *Sustaining Development in Mineral Economies: The Resource Curse Thesis*, Routledge; ‘The Political Economy of Resource-Driven Growth’, *European Economic Review*, 2001; Jeffrey Sachs & Andrew Warner, ‘Natural Resource Abundance and Economic Growth’, NBER Working Paper No. 5398, 1995; ‘The curse of natural resources’, *European Economic Review*, 45(4-6), 2001; Michael Ross, ‘Does Oil Hinder Democracy?’ *World Politics*, 53(3), 2001; *The Oil Curse: How Petroleum Wealth Shapes the Development of Nations*, Princeton University Press, 2012; Terry Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States*, University of California Press, 1997.

discovery of rubies and gas as the leading root cause of the conflict.<sup>59</sup> The resources did not create the grievances, but they dramatically raised the stakes, making the region's long-standing marginalisation feel more acute and intolerable.

Meanwhile, the multinational corporations seem more concerned with minimizing costs and maximizing profits, to the extent that their relations with the state are implicated. Gas extraction occurs both offshore and onshore. Offshore, in the Rovuma Basin, are Area 1 of the \$24 billion Mozambique LNG Project (led by Total), Area 4 of the \$8 billion Coral LNG Project (led by Eni and ExxonMobil), and the \$30 billion Rovuma LNG Project, led by Eni, Exxon, and the China National Petroleum Corporation. Onshore, the Afungi LNG Park is under construction on the Afungi Peninsula (covering an area of 70 square kilometers), where infrastructure to support the LNG projects will be located. TotalEnergies is developing the construction of the Afungi plant, which will house massive LNG processing facilities and supporting infrastructure, with land use rights shared by the Mozambique LNG and Rovuma LNG projects.<sup>60</sup> Hundreds of families were resettled starting in 2019 to allow for construction, which was halted in 2021 due to a violent insurgent attack but resumed in 2023.

ENI's Coral Norte project has become a flashpoint in Mozambique's LNG sector, exposing the frictions between state sovereignty and corporate interests while leaving TotalEnergies and ExxonMobil in a state of caution. The \$7.2 billion investment,

slated to begin production in 2029, was forced into a revised development plan that increased Mozambique's share of domestic gas—gas that the government, lacking distribution infrastructure or new power plants, intends to sell as LNG on international markets.<sup>61</sup> This move, though lawful under the 2014 hydrocarbons framework, undermines ENI's marketing strategy by creating competition with its own LNG flows. CEO Claudio Descalzi's repeated appeals to President Daniel Chápo have failed, underscoring Maputo's new assertiveness in extracting concessions. ENI's frustration has reverberated across the sector: TotalEnergies, still under force majeure since 2021, is unwilling to restart operations until its own terms are secured, while ExxonMobil delays a final investment decision on Rovuma LNG, wary of regulatory unpredictability.<sup>62</sup>

Escalating cost overruns compound the broader economic stakes. TotalEnergies has already budgeted an additional \$5 billion, raising Mozambique LNG's total cost to \$25 billion, a burden rooted in both the COVID-19 crisis and the protracted insurgency in Cabo Delgado.<sup>63</sup> Negotiations with the government now centre on increasing production capacity beyond 13.1 million tons annually to offset revenue losses, but no agreement has been reached. For Mozambique, the insistence on greater domestic gas allocation reflects a drive to assert economic agency and capture more value from its resources. For international oil companies, it signals heightened risk, as shifting regulatory demands and security volatility combine to stall investment timelines. In this standoff,

---

59 Alastair Nelson, 'What are the roots of the Cabo Delgado conflict?' Institute for Security Studies (ISS), 2021.

60 StopMozGas. "O caos da reassentamento continua no sítio de gás de Afungi." 14 de maio de 2025 <https://stopmozgas.org/pt/artigo/o-cao-da-reassentamento-continua-no-sitio-de-gas-de-afungi/>

61 'ENI's setbacks at Coral Norte leave TotalEnergies and ExxonMobil in limbo', *Africa Intelligence*, 30 July 2025, <https://www.africaintelligence.com/southern-africa-and-islands/2025/07/30/eni-s-setbacks-at-coral-norte-leave-totalenergies-and-exxonmobil-in-limbo>, 110496775-eve, accessed August 2025..

62 Ibid.

63 'Mozambique LNG overspending sparks debate at TotalEnergies', *Africa Intelligence*, 06 May 2025, <https://www.africaintelligence.com/southern-africa-and-islands/2025/05/06/mozambique-lng-overspending-sparks-debate-at-totalenergies>, 110444762-eve, accessed August 2025.

Mozambique's LNG future hangs in the balance between the state's determination to redefine the terms of extraction and the cautious retreat of corporate giants recalibrating their global portfolios.<sup>64</sup>

The physical manifestation of this new "colour line" is the LNG project on the Afungi Peninsula. The site, operated by a consortium led by TotalEnergies, has been transformed into a hyper-securitised enclave, a fortified island of global capital sealed off from the surrounding Mozambican reality. This enclave functions as a barrier that is both physical and psychological. It separates two worlds: inside, the orderly, protected, and globally connected world of the LNG project; outside, the chaotic, insecure, and impoverished world inhabited by the local communities.

This exclusion is most acutely felt by the communities directly displaced by the project. The construction of the Afungi facility and its associated infrastructure required the resettlement of hundreds of families, primarily from agricultural and fishing communities, such as Quitupo.<sup>65</sup> Systemic failures have plagued the resettlement process. Despite corporate commitments to adhere to international best practices, reports from organisations like Justiça Ambiental and Human Rights Watch, as well as testimonies from affected residents, paint a picture of broken promises, delayed or wholly inadequate compensation, and a profound disregard for the social fabric of the communities.<sup>66</sup> Families have been moved to new settlements, such as Quitunda village, but have lost access to their ancestral farmlands and, crucially, to the sea, which

has been the basis of their livelihoods for generations.

The case of the farmers in Alto Gingone, near Pemba, who were displaced for the construction of a logistics base, is another notable example. Years after being forced to cede their land, many were still fighting for the compensation they were promised, with the responsible entities deflecting blame and offering sums far below what was agreed upon. Chief Piripiri explained the ongoing struggle:

"To this day, we still don't have a good resolution. The population goes to the Pemba Port Authority (Portos de Cabo Delgado (PCD)), to the Municipal Council, and to the Secretary of State. The case is in the Secretary of State's office who during the last months of 2024 had been meeting with the PCD where they agreed to pay the price of 40 meticais per m<sup>2</sup>, the population agreed with this amount in a meeting that was held on May 23, 2025."<sup>67</sup> However, the situation stalled. As Chief Piripiri noted, "There is a document that says that the PCD no longer agrees to pay the agreed 40 meticais per meter and can only pay the old price, which is 7.5 Meticais. The point is that no one spoke directly with the population. I heard this at the meeting, and I still haven't informed the Community about the consensus that the others reached!"<sup>68</sup>

The human cost of this is devastating. Chief Piripiri lamented that "60 of those people who should have been compensated have

64 'Mozambique LNG overspending sparks debate at TotalEnergies', *Africa Intelligence*, 06 May 2025, <https://www.africaintelligence.com/southern-africa-and-islands/2025/05/06/mozambique-lng-overspending-sparks-debate-at-totalenergies>,110444762-eve, accessed August 2025.

65 'Like We Were Animals': The Human Rights Impacts of an LNG Project in Mozambique, Human Rights Watch, 2020; 'What I Saw Is Death': War Crimes in Mozambique's Forgotten Cape, Amnesty International, 2021.

66 'O Gás que Sufoca: Relatório sobre as violações de direitos humanos e ambientais no processo de reassentamento em Cabo Delgado', Justiça Ambiental, 2020; 'The Mozambique LNG Project: A Development Failure in the Making', Chatham House, 2022.

67 Interview with Chief Piripiri, Alto Gingone Neighbourhood, Pemba, 5 June 2025.

68 Ibid.

already lost their lives, they died still waiting to receive. And nothing!"<sup>69</sup>

This is not merely economic displacement; it is a process of social and cultural destruction, severing people from their land, their history, and their means of subsistence, leaving them in a state of profound precarity. This process of displacement and dispossession directly contravenes Mozambique's obligations under the Kampala Convention to protect citizens from arbitrary displacement. It violates the spirit of the African Charter, which guarantees people's rights to freely dispose of their wealth and natural resources under Article 21. The declaration of *force majeure* by TotalEnergies in 2021 only exacerbated this, as compensation payments were halted, leaving displaced families in a state of extreme uncertainty and poverty.<sup>70</sup>

This lived experience of exclusion cultivates a collective feeling of being outsiders in their own land among the youth of Cabo Delgado. A young person in Palma or Mocímboa da Praia is told they are a Mozambican citizen, a stakeholder in a future gas-rich nation. Yet, they see themselves through the eyes of the state in Maputo, which has historically neglected them, and through the eyes of the foreign corporation, for whom they are an obstacle to be resettled or a potential security threat to be managed if not destroyed. This creates an internal schism, a feeling of being both Mozambican and yet not truly belonging to the nation-state that claims them as its own.

The insurgent group, known locally as Al-Shabaab and formally as Ahlu Sunnah wa-l-Jama'ah (ASWJ), has masterfully exploited this psychological vulnerability. While its ideological underpinnings are linked to a global wave of Islamic revivalism, its recruitment strategy is deeply rooted in local grievances. The group's propaganda, though often rudimentary, consistently

frames the conflict as a struggle for social justice against a corrupt and illegitimate state that serves foreign interests. Recruiters have instrumentalised socio-economic hardship with remarkable success, offering tangible incentives that the state has failed to provide: steady wages, interest-free loans to start businesses or pay bride prices, and scholarships for education abroad. The mining and LNG corporations could have offered these incentives directly to the youth at a tiny fraction of what they spend on security.

More profoundly, the insurgency offers a powerful alternative identity. It taps into generational divides, portraying the established political and religious elites as inept and out of touch, and presenting itself as a radical, youthful movement capable of restoring dignity and justice. For a young man facing a future of perpetual unemployment and marginalisation, the choice to join the insurgency is not merely an economic calculation. It is a desperate attempt to resolve the painful dissonance of feeling like an outsider—and to embrace one that offers agency, purpose, and belonging, even through violence.

The "colour line" in Cabo Delgado is not solely an external imposition; it is also mediated and reproduced by internal political and ethnic dynamics. The FRELIMO party, which has dominated Mozambique since independence, has historically drawn its northern leadership from the Maconde ethnic group, who inhabit the Mueda plateau. The presidency of Filipe Nyusi, himself a Maconde, was seen by many not as a moment of northern empowerment but as the consolidation of the "Makondization" of power, particularly within the provincial security forces and political administration.

This has created an "internal colour line," exacerbating tensions between the politically

---

69 Ibid.

70 'Vidas Suspensas: O Custo Humano da Força Maior em Cabo Delgado', Centro Para Democracia e Desenvolvimento (CDD) & Observatório do Meio Rural (OMR), 2022; 'Gas-Laden Promises, A Vicious Cycle of Misery: The role of oil and gas companies and financiers in the conflict in Cabo Delgado', Justiça Ambiental & Friends of the Earth International, 2022.

connected Maconde elite and other local ethnic groups, particularly the coastal Mwani people, who feel doubly marginalised by the distant southern government and by their powerful neighbours. The insurgency is believed to have found its earliest and strongest support among disaffected Mwani youth. In this context, the elites of the Maconde clan function as gatekeepers and local partners

in the extractive enterprise, benefiting from the new resource economy while other groups are pushed further to the periphery. This dynamic of elite capture, where a specific local faction aligns with external capital to the detriment of the broader population, illustrates how the global colour line is refracted through local power structures, thereby deepening the fissures that drive the conflict.

## MANUFACTURED INSECURITIES AND ORGANISED IRRESPONSIBILITY

*The decision to pursue the LNG projects in Cabo Delgado, was a gamble that has had devastating consequences. The subsequent security collapse is a clear example of “organised irresponsibility,” a system in which both corporate and state actors have evaded accountability for the risks they have created.<sup>71</sup>*

The risks associated with the LNG projects were well-known from the outset. Environmental impact assessments warned of potential social disruption, but these warnings were systematically downplayed or ignored. The decision to proceed with the projects despite these known risks represents a classic case of “manufactured risk”— dangers that are created by human choices and actions rather than natural disasters.

The Rural Environment Observatory noted the complex dynamics at play: “the Rwandan offensive in the Macomia forests allowed for political campaigning and the 2024 national elections in the district capitals of Cabo Delgado. However, following the post-election conflicts, the province experienced an escalation of conflict. From October 2024 onwards, there were popular protest in the extractive industry zones and in the main urban centres of Southern Cabo Delgado, but also a recovery of the jihadist initiative, which

regained military initiative. North of Nampula, naparamas movements also emerged that directly confronted the State.”<sup>72</sup> Natural disasters further complicated the situation. The destructive effects of Cyclone Chido “further increased pressure on humanitarian organisations, aggravating existing structural fragilities in the province, at the level of health services, education, humanitarian support and economic activities.”<sup>73</sup> This has created a cascading crises that is overwhelming the capacity of both state and humanitarian actors to respond effectively.

As a result, a “boomerang effect” (that describes how risks, once externalised, do not disappear but often return to impact their creators in unforeseen ways) has emerged. The March 2021 attack on Palma, which halted the LNG project, was a stark reminder of this phenomenon. The insecurities that had been festering in the periphery finally struck at the heart of the project, with devastating

<sup>71</sup> The concepts of “risk society”, “organized irresponsibility” and “boomerang effect” are borrowed from Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, Sage Publications, 1992.

<sup>72</sup> Interview with João Feijó, Rural Environment Observatory, January 2024.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

consequences for both the local population and the international investors. The attack on Palma was not an isolated incident but the culmination of years of mounting tensions and grievances. The failure to address the root causes of the conflict—poverty, marginalisation, and exclusion—created a powder keg that eventually exploded. The boomerang effect was complete: the risks that had been externalised onto the local population had rebounded to strike at the very heart of the global energy interests that had created them.

This system where institutions produced risks is simultaneously unable or unwilling to be held accountable for them. Both the Mozambican government and the multinational corporations involved in the LNG projects have systematically evaded accountability for the devastating consequences of their decisions. The government's response to the growing crisis has been to downplay the risks and to focus on the potential economic benefits of the LNG projects. However, the reality on the ground is that the projects have created

more problems than they have solved. The state has failed to provide basic services to the population, has been unable to maintain security, and has allowed corruption to flourish within its own ranks.

Multinational corporations, for their part, have often hidden behind corporate social responsibility programs and environmental impact assessments that have proven to be inadequate. They have failed to engage meaningfully with local communities, have provided insufficient compensation for displacement, and have paid no heed to the human rights abuses committed by the security forces they have supported. This system of organised irresponsibility has created a situation where no one is held accountable for the devastating consequences of the LNG projects. The local population bears the costs—displacement, violence, environmental degradation—while the benefits flow to distant shareholders and political elites. This is a classic example of how the logic of the risk society operates: risks are socialised while profits are privatised.

## FRELIMO'S REGIME: PERSONALISED RULE AND THE OUTSOURCING OF SOVEREIGNTY

*The conflict in Cabo Delgado is taking place within a broader context of political decay.*

The FRELIMO regime, which has governed Mozambique since independence, is facing a legitimacy crisis. This internal fragmentation has been exacerbated by the leadership of former President Filipe Nyusi (2014-2024), who has been accused of personalised rule and corruption. But before that, stemming from a political process during the former term of President Armando

Emílio Guebuza, in which divisions within the party were already visible, under Nyusi, this fragmentation reached alarming proportions in December 2022. His decision to align with Rwanda and to rely on foreign forces for security has been particularly controversial. Military sources close to Nyusi have even suggested that there were “opposing factions even planning a coup against him.”<sup>74</sup> Nyusi

---

<sup>74</sup> Military sources close to Nyusi, Moz24h, <https://moz24h.co.mz/recordar-e-viver-2>, accessed September 2025.

himself has been defiant, reportedly saying, “I will govern my way.”<sup>75</sup>

Protests against Nyusi’s dictatorial and gangsterized rule, which were representative of the chaotic state in which Mozambique finds itself, became particularly visible from early 2023 as was the case during the farewell funeral march for musician AZAGAIA in March 2023.<sup>76</sup> The Mozambican state reacted disproportionately with rubber bullets, live bullets, tear gas, arrests, torture, and other forms of violence and human rights violations. Information reached us from generals and members of the presidency that, beyond the visible of the assault vehicles, there were Rwandan troops parading and flexing their muscles in Cabo Delgado, especially in the district of Mocímboa da Praia and Palma, but also in Maputo on Julius Nyerere Avenue, in the presidency. This has created a climate of fear and paranoia, with one source claiming that “Nyusi had military personnel inside and outside his house. He feared the people taking over the presidency.”<sup>77</sup>

The corruption allegations against Nyusi are widespread. According to one source, it is alleged that President Nyusi has acquired

properties in every province of Mozambique, which is in stark contrast to previous presidents whose land holdings were far more limited. Businesspeople have reportedly been forced into partnerships, and there are claims that the president and his son, Florindo Nyusi, have been involved in the expropriation of mines and land. Years prior, the president’s son, Florindo, was allegedly connected to an arms deal in which a shipment of weapons was discovered in the port of Nacala. The Nysui family empire also included property in South Africa valued at over R17 million. Investigations by the NGOs Open Secrets and the Centro para Integridade Publica (CIP) revealed that a second house was purchased in 2022 using money acquired from the Hidden Debts bribes, in particular Privinvest.<sup>78</sup> The president’s brother Cosme Jacinto Nyusi has reportedly been the beneficiary of numerous mining concessions in the province of Nampula that is rich in gold, precious and semi-precious stones, and tantalum.<sup>79</sup> These allegations have raised further questions about potential links between international and domestic entities. Specifically, what is the connection between the Mexican drug cartels, an entity known as “Jacarandá,” and ADPP (Aid for the Development of People for People)?<sup>80</sup>

---

75 STV, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1173385637029328>, accessed August 2025.

76 <https://www.dw.com/pt-002/moçambique-a-geração-18-de-março-vai-protestar-sem-aviso/a-65364440>

77 Military (Anonymous interview, Pemba, 2024)

78 <https://mznews.co.mz/en/dividas-ocultas-filho-de-nyusi-comprou-casa-de-luxo-por-175-milhoes-de-rands-na-sa/>

79 <https://www.africaintelligence.com/southern-africa-and-islands/2022/04/08/president-nyusi-s-brother-expands-mining-interests-in-nampula-province,109766571-art>

80 ‘A mando de Florindo Nyusi, director da ordem da PRM ignora providência cautelar e expulsa de uma mina chineses com quem este tem contrato’, Evidências, 5 November 2024, <https://evidencias.co.mz/2024/11/05/a-mando-de-florindo-nyusi-director-da-ordem-da-prm-ignora-providencia-cautelar-e-expulsa-chineses-com-quem-este-tinha-contrato>, accessed September 20205; ‘Ouro de Manica: Família de Nyusi e Guebuza Chocam-se’, <https://www.zumbofm.com/index.php/noticias/item/115-ouro-de-manica-familia-de-nyusi-e-guebuza-chocam-se>, Zumbo FM, 20 November 2020, accessed September 2025; ‘Número de empresas da família presidencial duplicou no último mandato de Nyusi’, Centro de Integridade Publica (CIP), 14 November 2024, <https://www.cipmoz.org/2024/11/14/numero-de-empresas-da-familia-presidencial-duplicou-no-ultimo-mandato-de-nyusi>, accessed 2025.

## THE RWANDA CONNECTION

The turn to Rwanda represents a fundamental shift in Mozambique's security strategy. The agreements signed between Nyusi, Kagame, and TOTAL have raised concerns about the country's sovereignty. One agreement states that,

"Through this forum, we hope to establish secure entry points to reach the challenging market of Central Africa. Mozambique has enormous potential in minerals, tourism, agriculture, wildlife, and fishing, as well as a young and active population. We are aware of existing agreements whose trade exchanges are based on the export of sugar, corn and mineral coal."<sup>81</sup>

Another agreement notes that "Mozambique's adherence to the Kimberley process opens doors for the transaction of minerals such as diamonds, graphite, rubies, and heavy sands, which constitute a potential to be shared with Rwanda."<sup>82</sup> These agreements suggest a level of economic integration that goes far beyond simple security cooperation.

Broader geopolitical considerations have also influenced the relationship with Rwanda. Rwanda's murky history (e.g., the 2014 assassination of Rwandan defector Patrick Karegeya, and the Kagame regime's use of extraterritorial political assassinations) challenge the Western narrative of Rwanda as a model state.<sup>83</sup> This context raises questions about the wisdom of Mozambique's close alignment with Rwanda. The choice betrays a slippage in Mozambique's capacity to monopolise legitimate violence: the state has ceded, de facto, domains of coercion to Kigali. Rather than a hierarchical monopoly of

violence consolidating state sovereignty, we witness a state where Rwandan troops now act as principal security providers in Cabo Delgado, an imbalance that dilutes Maputo's exclusive claim to force. Mozambique is sovereign in name and semi-subordinate in action. The optics of statehood are fractured by the visibility of foreign boots and contractors steering security strategies.

From a regional security perspective, Mozambique's dependency on Rwanda is not a safe hedge but a source of systemic risk. The very remedy of outsourcing military power carries the hazard that Rwanda will project its own authoritarian logic regionally. Its interventions in the DRC (via its support to M23) illustrate how security operations may morph into geopolitical tools. The erosion of regional frameworks also plays a central role: Maputo's reliance on Kigali bypasses SADC's mission (SAMIM), weakening multilateral institutional legitimacy and normalising bilateral security pacts. The opacity of agreements, signed without parliamentary debate and shrouded in secrecy, recalls Mozambique's hidden-debt scandal and raises fears that Kigali may exact far more than security: access to resources, favourable contracts, e.g. in gas projects, and a stake in Mozambican governance.

Despite all these potential risks and hazards, the Mozambican government has resumed partial payments to Rwanda for its military presence in Cabo Delgado, a symbolic gesture meant to thaw strained relations but one that leaves deeper uncertainties unresolved. Having suspended its monthly US\$2 million contribution in 2024, Maputo has since mid-June begun settling its arrears. Yet, the payments, dwarfed by the mission's actual cost of over US\$10 million per month highlight Mozambique's financial fragility and

<sup>81</sup> Agreements signed between Nyusi, Kagame, TOTAL, <https://aimnews.org/2022/05/24/mocambique-e-ruanda-definem-estrategias-de-cooperacao/>

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Michela Wrong, *Do Not Disturb: The Story of a Political Murder and an African Regime Gone Wrong*, 2021.

the asymmetry of its dependence on foreign security provision.<sup>84</sup> While Kigali welcomes the gesture, the reality is that Mozambique cannot sustain the economic burden nor the political ambiguity of an open-ended foreign deployment on its soil.<sup>85</sup>

## INSTITUTIONAL DECAY

Mozambique's struggle against the insurgency in Cabo Delgado is not merely a matter of guns and terrain; it is a battle within the state itself, and a rupture in its security organs. The appointment of Bernardino Rafael, Commander General of Police, to lead counter-terror operations, bypassing the Ministry of Defence, has created a fault line in institutional authority. As one source noted,

"Bernardino was placed in charge of combating terrorism in Cabo Delgado, leading the FADM instead of the Ministry of Defence. The ministers of defence and generals decided little; Bernardino Rafael had Nyusi's full support. Frictions between the two ministries, the Interior and Defence, over who should actually lead the fight against terrorism in the TON became constant."<sup>86</sup>

While public record confirms Rafael's long tenure as police chief (appointed in 2017, reappointed in 2021) and his dismissal in early 2025 by President Daniel Chopo, internal frictions between the Ministries of Defence and Interior over who "leads" in Cabo Delgado are frequently cited in journalistic and civil society accounts.<sup>87</sup> This fissure matters. It means overlapping chains of command, blurred accountability, duplicated operations, and frequent paralysis at moments when decisiveness is indispensable. It makes

strategy uncertain, even as civilian suffering mounts. The disjunction between police forces led by Rafael and the military or defence structures undermines a coherent response, where a coordinated front is essential; there is overlap, miscommunication, and a risk of internal competition. Though public apologies (such as Rafael's for civilian harm in Macomia) suggest recognition of failure, they are symptomatic, not solutions.<sup>88</sup>

Beyond mismanagement, there is a more profound moral crisis: the fracture reflects a state that both claims monopoly of violence and yet cannot organise it around a common purpose. When institutions are split, people die in the interstices. When authority is divided, legitimacy erodes. For Cabo Delgado, where millions live with displacement, fear, and the façade of protection underwritten by contracts and extractive promises, this institutional breakdown is not a technical glitch—it is part of the architecture of betrayal. Until the sinews connecting defence, interior, justice, and political oversight are mended, Mozambique will wage war not only against insurgents, but against itself.

## ELECTORAL FRAUD AND REPRESSION

The 2024 general election in Mozambique was not merely contested; it was characterised by fraud, repression, and the abrogation of democratic expectations, a breach in the social contract that deepens mistrust and sows political alienation. Credible observer missions, including the European Union and opposition monitors, found irregularities: inflated voter rolls, ballot-box stuffing, manipulation of results,

<sup>84</sup> 'Maputo resumes funding Rwandan forces tasked with securing Mozambique LNG', *Africa Intelligence*, 8 July 2025, <https://www.africaintelligence.com/southern-africa-and-islands/2025/07/08/maputo-resumes-funding-rwandan-forces-tasked-with-securing-mozambique-lng>,110474820-art, accessed September 2025.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with FADM senior official, Maputo, April 2025.

<sup>87</sup> Mozambique: President dismisses PRM police chief, appoints replacement, *Club of Mozambique*, 24 January 2025, <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/mozambique-president-dismisses-prm-police-chief-appoints-replacement-274685>, accessed September 2025.

<sup>88</sup> 'Police commander apologizes to public', Agência de Informação de Moçambique (AIM), 01 August 2024, <https://aimnews.org/2024/08/01/police-commander-apologizes-to-public>, accessed September 2025.

and killings of opposition figures.<sup>89</sup> The police declared “enough of demonstrations and urban terrorism,”<sup>90</sup> signalling a hardline approach to dissent. In the streets, when people attempted to protest, the state mobilised the full weight of repression. Police fired live ammunition and tear gas; courts of law and political rhetoric labelled dissent “urban terrorism,” “coup attempts,” or threats to order.<sup>91</sup>

The declaration by security forces that they had had “enough of demonstrations and urban terrorism” is not a neutral statement of law and order; it is a performative mark of power: the regime announcing its refusal

to tolerate dissent. This phrase effectively undermines the legitimacy of protest, equating demands for accountability with criminality. As protests multiplied—hundreds of demonstrations, thousands arrested, dozens dead, some children among them—the violent suppression did not restore legitimacy, but ensured its corrosion.<sup>92</sup>

As a result, the fraud, the crackdown, and the language of “terrorism” form a constellation revealing a political order that no longer seeks to govern with consent, but with fear and violence. Legitimacy is less a prize than a spectacle; protest is less a right than a disruption; truth is always provisional.

## CHARTING A PATH BEYOND THE PARADOX OF PLENTY

*In Cabo Delgado, the theatre of this war is not only external; It is a collaboration between global predators and local traitors. It began in the corridors of power in Maputo long before the first gunshot in 2017, when gas, rubies, and graphite became curses disguised as blessings.*

Entire communities were uprooted to make way for extraction zones protected more heavily than hospitals. This violence is in a way an engineering of misery. The conditions that gave rise to it are familiar: weakened states decaying from corruption; ethnic and regional fractures deepened by politics; and unemployed youth stripped of their future. The insurgency fed on silence,

on communities divided — Makonde power entrenched with the ruling party, Mwani traders and Muslims marginalised and criminalised, Macua masses abandoned on the periphery.

To ask who the terrorists are in Mozambique is to step into forbidden territory. For many, the true terror does not wear rags but uniforms; it

89 ‘Mozambique ruling party declared winner of election marred by killings’, *The Guardian*, 24 October 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/oct/24/mozambique-ruling-party-daniel-chapo-winner-presidential-election>, accessed September 2025.

90 ‘Polícia moçambicana diz que “basta” de manifestações e “terrorismo urbano”’, *Observador*, 12 November 2024, <https://observador.pt/2024/11/12/policia-mocambicana-diz-que-basta-de-manifestacoes-e-terrorismo-urbano>, accessed September 2025.

91 ‘What is Driving Mozambique’s Post-electoral Protests?’, Crisis Group, 14 November 2024, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/mozambique/what-driving-mozambiques-post-electoral-protests>, accessed, September 2025.

92 ‘Mozambique: Escalating civil unrest leads to increased protection risks and poverty’, ACAPS, 20 December 2024, [https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data\\_Product/Main\\_media/20241220\\_ACAPS\\_Risk\\_report\\_Mozambique\\_Escalating\\_civil\\_unrest.pdf?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20241220_ACAPS_Risk_report_Mozambique_Escalating_civil_unrest.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com), accessed September 2025.

signs contracts, and hires private security. The beneficiaries are well known: corrupt elites who siphon funds under the pretext of war; multinationals who operate gas fields under the cover of “military zones”; and politicians who exploit fear to silence opposition and govern indefinitely. In this marketplace of violence, war is the most profitable business. The displaced, the mutilated, the dead are the collateral of this investment. Terrorism here is not a cause but a symptom, a mirror held up to a political order that manufactures violence to secure extraction. Mozambique’s tragedy is not terrorism; it is the state itself, dead and resurrected only as a machinery of plunder and pillage.

The multifaceted crisis in Cabo Delgado is more than a provincial conflict; it is a stark and cautionary portrait of the pathologies of the 21st-century post-colonial state, caught in the vortex of global resource competition, internal political decay, and localised rebellion. An analysis confined to the language of counter-terrorism and jihadism fails to capture the systemic nature of the collapse. By weaving together insights from the study of state formation, global economic hierarchies, and risk management, a more profound and unsettling picture emerges: that of a process of social breakdown, a violent regression fueled by the convergence of a state that never achieved a legitimate monopoly on violence, an extractive economy that replicates colonial patterns of exclusion, and a model of development that manufactures unmanageable risks.

The security landscape is the most apparent manifestation of this regressive spiral. The Mozambican state has not simply lost its monopoly on violence; it has actively participated in its commodification and fragmentation. Its own armed forces are hollowed out by corruption and delegitimised by abuse. It has outsourced its sovereign duty to a bewildering array of actors—foreign mercenaries, corporate security outfits, local militias, and, most significantly, a more effective foreign army—each operating with different loyalties and rules of engagement. This has not produced security, but a chaotic, multi-polar war where violence is the primary

medium of exchange and civilians are trapped between predatory forces.

This failure of state formation is built upon a foundation of profound socio-economic alienation. The LNG projects, far from being a vehicle for national development, have functioned as instruments of dispossession. They have created fortified enclaves of global wealth, physically and economically walled off from a local population that has been displaced from its land and severed from its traditional livelihoods. This has engendered a collective feeling of being outsiders in their own land among the youth of Cabo Delgado. It is this psychological wound of exclusion, more than any abstract ideology, that the insurgency has so effectively exploited, offering a violent path to agency and identity.

Finally, the entire tragedy has been propelled by the logic of a “risk society.” The decision to proceed with mega-projects in such a fragile context was an act of “organised irresponsibility,” where the predictable risks of social collapse and violent conflict were systematically underestimated and externalised onto the local population. The subsequent security and humanitarian disaster was not an accident, but an inevitable consequence of a development model that prioritises profit over people. The boomerang effect of the 2021 Palma attack, which halted the multi-billion-dollar project and drew global powers directly into the conflict, was a brutal lesson in the interconnectedness of risk: the manufactured insecurities of the periphery will, eventually, rebound to strike the core.

From this diagnosis, it becomes clear that the current international strategy—a securitised approach focused on protecting gas infrastructure through foreign intervention—is fundamentally flawed. It is not a solution but a mechanism for managing the symptoms of state failure while allowing the underlying disease to fester. It contains the violence within certain geographic limits but does nothing to address the root causes of alienation, injustice, and state decay. This approach ensures that the conflict will remain a chronic condition, ready to flare up as soon as the external

security cordon is relaxed. It perpetuates the regressive process by making the hard work of building a legitimate, accountable, and sovereign state seem unnecessary for the core business of resource extraction.

To reverse this regressive process and chart a path toward sustainable peace, a radical paradigm shift is required. The following actionable recommendations, grounded in the analysis presented, are proposed for the Government of Mozambique, its regional and international partners, and corporate actors:

### **A. Re-establish National Sovereignty and a Legitimate Monopoly on Violence**

**Action 1:** Initiate a profound and sustained Security Sector Reform (SSR), owned and led by Mozambicans, to build a professional, accountable, and rights-respecting military and police force that serves and protects its citizens rather than preying on them.

**Action 2:** Develop a clear, time-bound strategy to phase out the over-reliance on foreign military and private security contractors for core state security functions, treating such measures as temporary supports that must not replace the fundamental task of national state-building.

**Action 3:** Mandate that all international security support is structured to build the long-term capacity of Mozambican institutions, ensuring that external partners' support complements, rather than supplants, Mozambican-led efforts to restore a legitimate state monopoly on violence.

### **B. Dismantle the Extractive Enclave Model and Ensure Economic Inclusion**

**Action 4:** Fundamentally renegotiate resource extraction contracts to establish transparent, legally binding, and enforceable benefit-sharing mechanisms that go beyond corporate social responsibility projects.

**Action 5:** Legislate and rigorously monitor local content development, mandating that tangible benefits—including direct employment, skills training, infrastructure development, and direct revenue sharing—flow to the communities of Cabo Delgado.

**Action 6:** Establish formal platforms for community participation that transform local populations from passive recipients of development into active stakeholders with decision-making power over projects that impact their lands and livelihoods, thereby breaking the “resource curse” dynamic.

### **C. Institute a Framework of Accountable Governance and Risk Management**

**Action 7:** Replace the current model of “organised irresponsibility” with a national development framework grounded in principles of human security, environmental sustainability, and both corporate and state accountability.

**Action 8:** Empower local communities with a meaningful and decisive voice in the planning and implementation of mega-projects through robust, transparent, and culturally appropriate consultation processes that are independently monitored.

**Action 9:** Invest in building the state’s institutional capacity to conduct credible, independent social and environmental impact assessments and to manage manufactured risks before they escalate into violent conflict proactively.

Without a fundamental commitment to addressing these interconnected failures, Cabo Delgado will remain a potent symbol of a tragic, global phenomenon: how the pursuit of modernity’s riches, when divorced from the principles of social justice and legitimate statehood, can lead not to progress, but to a brutal regression into a more violent and fragmented state of human existence.