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# Coordinating Peacebuilding and Counterinsurgency for Sustaining Peace: Responding to Armed Conflict and Violent Extremism in Mozambique

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## **Coordinating Peacebuilding and Counterinsurgency for Sustaining Peace: Responding to Armed Conflict and Violent Extremism in Mozambique**

Rui Saraiva\* and César Rodrigues†

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### **Abstract**

As peace and security actors face increasing challenges to respond effectively to crises in complex and fragile settings, this study examines how the coordination between peacebuilding and counterinsurgency (COIN) may enhance prevention, stabilization, and sustaining peace in complex systems. The study reviews emerging peacebuilding approaches and modern COIN strategies, arguing that further coordination between both methods reveals additional pathways for sustaining peace in the face of multiple challenges. It examines Mozambique's case, where an Islamic insurgency coexisted with a small-scale recurrence of civil war and concludes that pragmatic and adaptive peacebuilding approaches – when combined with effective COIN principles that recognize the importance of non-military methods – will enhance the coordination between peace and security actors in contexts affected by both traditional armed conflicts and the rise of violent extremism.

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**Keywords:** armed non-state actors, complexity, counterinsurgency, Mozambique, peacebuilding

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## **Introduction**

The complexity of contemporary crises related to armed violence increasingly demands highly contextualized responses and the re-examination of peacebuilding as both a concept and a policy tool. This complexity derives from many factors including the constant fragmentation and mutation among involved parties and human security threats, such as natural disasters, environmental degradation, climate change, and the spread of infectious diseases, as demonstrated by the recent SARS-CoV-2 crisis. Complex armed conflicts now occur in low-income and middle-income countries, and they often become internationalized, suffering from external military interventions (Dupuy and Rustad 2018, 5). This element of complexity increases the likelihood that the original drivers of conflict will change more often over time, requiring pragmatic, adaptive, and multi-layered responses. Complexity also means that conflict-affected societies can cope with the challenges posed by these changes through resilience and self-organization, characteristics that are often unrecognized by both peacebuilders and security actors (de Coning 2020).

Armed non-state actors (ANSAs) have become one of the most complex threats to sustaining peace in fragile situations and have grown in influence and impact over the last decade. They often claim economic and political resources and are frequently moved by issues related to identity and ideology. ANSAs are also transnational, forming coalitions across states and aiming to control regions with unrecognized borders, leading to an increase of cross-border conflicts (DCAF 2011). As 95% of deaths from terrorism in 2018 occurred in conflict-affected situations, armed conflicts are also considered the primary driver of terrorist activity today (IEP 2020, 52). This demonstrates that once a country or society is on a violent path, changing its trajectory towards peace becomes more difficult with time. Consequently, peacebuilding interventions in complex settings where traditional intra-state conflicts coexist with violent extremism require coordinated actions by multiple actors with peace, development, and security objectives and with various types of technical expertise (United Nations and World Bank Group 2018, 283–89).

This working paper explores the relationship between peacebuilding and counterinsurgency (COIN) in complex conflict-affected societies focusing on the impact of armed non-state actors (ANSAs) – armed groups that are not directly linked to states (violent extremist groups, armed trafficking groups, and militias) – and the need for coordination between both interventions. It draws upon the policy trends introduced by the sustaining peace agenda, which present a new opportunity to rethink the sustainability and effectiveness of interventions in conflict-affected situations. In this context, an enhanced coordination between peacebuilding and COIN remains to be further explored, both in theory and practice. The perspectives presented by this paper are both historical and based on peace and conflict analysis, relying on fieldwork

conducted by one of the authors in Maputo, Mozambique, between January and February 2020, and employing methods such as semi-structured interviews<sup>1</sup> and participant observation.

This study argues that the coordination between pragmatic and adaptive peacebuilding approaches with more effective counterinsurgency practices can significantly enhance policy responses in complex systems. It begins by summing up the theoretical debates that have characterized the evolution of peacebuilding over time while underlining the importance of the adaptive approach amidst increasing complexity and uncertainty in conflict-affected regions. It then revisits twenty years of peacebuilding initiatives in Mozambique and the remaining challenges related to the RENAMO (Mozambican National Resistance) insurgency. The next section explores effective and ineffective principles of modern COIN, highlighting their relevance to the coordination and collaboration between peace and security actors, particularly when tackling the rise of violent extremism in complex conflict-affected societies. In the final section, this paper explores the link between peacebuilding and COIN in the context of the Islamic insurgency in the northern Mozambican province of Cabo Delgado. Mozambique's complex threats to peace and security present a case study where the rise of violent extremism coexists with a small-scale conflict recurrence, calling for further coordination between peace and security actors.

### **The Pragmatic Turn in Peacebuilding: Bridging Theory and Practice Amidst Complexity**

Johan Galtung (1975) established the term “peacebuilding” in the academic literature as a conflict resolution method that targets the core causes of violence and supports local peacekeeping interventions. Galtung's concept of peacebuilding emphasized the need for social justice in relationship with the absence of direct violence as a fundamental condition for achieving peace, and highlighted peacebuilding's function as a depolarization process that moves people into new actions and narratives, specifically regarding perceptions of the *enemy* (Galtung 2007). Since Galtung's early definition of the concept, various peacebuilding approaches and understandings have followed.

With the rise of a liberal international order during the post-Cold War era, liberal peacebuilding became the dominant approach among Western scholars and practitioners, which was reflected in the actual implementation of peacebuilding programs on the ground by Western countries. In line with these values, liberal peacebuilding identified its fundamental goal to be building a democratic and liberal political system after a conflict has ceased, and became an

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<sup>1</sup> Qualitative research data was anonymized when requested by the interviewees, due to the high sensitivity of the topics and the local context.

experiment that involved transplanting Western political and socio-economic models to achieve peace in non-Western regions (Paris 1997, 56). The assumption was that liberalism is universally attractive and offers a linear path to peace and development in countries affected by conflict. The claim was that a conflict between or within states would cease with the promotion or imposition of liberalism. However, the rising ineffectiveness of liberal peacebuilding, e.g., in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Somalia, evoked the need to consider alternative, context-specific approaches, such as bottom-up peacebuilding, hybrid peacebuilding, and adaptive peacebuilding.

The liberal peacebuilding critique focused on questioning top-down approaches and emphasized the importance of context, pragmatism, and local agency. As liberal peacebuilding often disregarded local priorities and perspectives, it was also less inclusive of local actors in the peacebuilding process (Roberts 2016). Conversely, the logic behind bottom-up peacebuilding is that peace should reflect the interests, identities, and needs of all actors affected by conflict, particularly those who were not at the top of the pyramid (political elites), namely middle and grassroots actors (Lederach 2002; Paffenholz 2014). This bottom-up peacebuilding approach sees local, cultural, and societal factors as the main vectors of sustainable peace, rather than liberalism (Lederach 2002).

The next debate highlighted a hybrid approach that attempts to find a middle ground in peacebuilding. It underlined the need for coexistence between bottom-up and top-down methods and posited that the interactions between local, regional, and international actors form a social process that results in a so-called hybrid peace (Mac Ginty 2016). The hybridization of peace also unveiled the importance of *mid-space* actors in facilitating dialogue among competing stakeholders and their function as intermediaries in the peacebuilding process (Uesugi and Kagawa 2019).

More recently, the pragmatic turn in peacebuilding considered the ongoing structural changes in international politics, such as the rise and influence of new emerging powers and the ineffectiveness of determined-designed peacebuilding interventions (Moe and Stepputat 2018). Within the peacebuilding pragmatic-turn debate, de Coning's (2018a) adaptive peacebuilding emerged as an approach in which peacebuilders and local communities affected by conflict actively engage in a structured and iterative process to sustain peace through experimentation, learning, and adaptation, offering new insights to respond to challenges raised by complex conflict-affected systems (de Coning 2020, 2018a; Brusset, de Coning, and Bryn 2016). The adaptive approach emphasizes the value of pragmatism, self-organization, and resilience and recognizes that the peacebuilding actors' organizational culture needs further reform, as suggested by the sustaining peace agenda and its whole-of-system method (de Coning 2018a). The insight provided by the adaptive approach underscores that for peacebuilding to be sustainable, agency

must be shifted from international to local actors and the proper balance must be struck between external support and the self-organization and resilience of local systems affected by conflict (Brusset, de Coning, and Bryn 2016).

Recent policy trends align with the evolution of the theoretical peacebuilding debates, emphasizing the need for a paradigm shift in peace-related interventions. The 2016 twin resolutions on *sustaining peace*, adopted by the UN Security Council and the General Assembly, moved away from linear and fragmented responses, and promoted prevention. The UN defines sustaining peace as “both a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account” (UNSC 2016). Thus, sustaining peace emerged as an umbrella concept and policy framework based on pragmatism and adaptiveness, encompassing all actions aimed at “preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict.” (UNSC 2016, 2) It incorporates various actors and responses in a whole-of-system approach, from humanitarian actions to peacebuilding and development assistance. It also provides a roadmap for the UN and its member-states to synergize their efforts towards a culture of coordination and prevention (UNESCO 2018, 141–51).

The pragmatic turn in the peacebuilding debates provide the opportunity for revisiting some of the fundamental tenets of counterinsurgency and for exploring its potential connections to contemporary peacebuilding formulations. A significant reason can be found in the rise of unconventional and complex threats across the globe and the renewed interest in equipping security and governance structures with the tools for best dealing with them. Driven by paradigmatic transformations in the post-9/11 security landscape, today’s so-called “new era of counterinsurgency” appears to be returning to international security agendas (Kilcullen 2006; Moe and Müller 2017; Ucko 2009), with a direct impact on peacebuilding interventions and the role of UN efforts in sustaining peace around the globe (Friis 2010; Rich and Duyvesteyn 2012, 1–2).

Current peacebuilding programs, often implemented in civil unrest scenarios with unconventional armed threats and fragile statehood, face challenges in many ways similar to the ones found in modern counterinsurgencies (Mockaitis 1999; Brocades Zaalberg 2012). These include the need to address the actions of guerrilla movements, armed non-state actors, and terrorist networks. They also involve implementing substantial social-economic measures that promote governance, stability, and human security, keeping populations safe from violence and dissent. Lastly, and perhaps more critically, both peacebuilding and COIN warrant an organizational arrangement that not only understands the political, social, and security dimensions of irregular conflicts but is also capable of addressing them holistically (Gelot, Doyle, and Jang 2016). As peace and security actors face increasing challenges on the ground, looking at the

coordination between peacebuilding and COIN may yield relevant contributions to informing sustaining peace actions in complex systems.

### **Twenty Years of Peacebuilding in Mozambique: From Liberal to Adaptive Approaches amidst Increasing Uncertainty**

Mozambique's case had been regarded as a successful liberal peacebuilding model until recent events called into question more than twenty years of peace-related achievements. In 2012, the country saw the emergence of a small-scale conflict between the FRELIMO-led (Mozambican Liberation Front) Government and RENAMO (Mozambican National Resistance), after the latter began demanding further reintegration of its former combatants, effective decentralization, provincial autonomy, equality in resources allocation, and more opportunities to hold significant political power (Regalia 2017, 13–15; Vines 2019, 7–8). In addition, an Islamic insurgency in Northern Mozambique surfaced in 2017, intending to establish an Islamic state in Cabo Delgado province, which added another layer of complexity to the country's peace prospects (Casola 2019; Faleg 2019, 4–5).

When asked about the current peace prospects in Mozambique, more than thirty interviewees living on the ground demonstrated that there is a societal recognition that the country is facing challenges resulting “not only from one but two conflicts.” There is also a common perception among Mozambicans that the coexistence between the recurrence of armed conflict and violent extremism demonstrates that previous peacebuilding approaches, programs, and methods were not entirely effective. In its recent history, Mozambique has faced three main armed conflict cycles: 1) the independence war (1964-1974) against Portuguese rule; 2) a long civil war (1977-1992) between FRELIMO and RENAMO, and 3) the recent recurrence of the civil war (2012-2019) (Pereira 2017). Decades of related peace negotiations resulted in three main peace agreements: the 1992 General Peace Agreement (GPA), the 2014 Cessation of Military Hostilities Agreement (CMHA), and the 2019 Peace and National Reconciliation Agreement (PNRA). Since then, numerous peacebuilding programs have been implemented by various actors, ranging from traditional international donors such as the G19 group to donors emerging in the last decade such as China, Brazil, India, Vietnam, and the Gulf Countries (Reppell, Rozen, and Carvallo 2016, 11).<sup>2</sup>

The peacebuilding literature on Mozambique first highlighted the role of UN missions and bilateral donors with country experience in explaining the outcomes of peace processes

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<sup>2</sup> Traditional peace and development donors in Mozambique: the UN, the African Development Bank, the World Bank, the EU, Portugal, Japan, Germany, Austria, Denmark, Portugal, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Norway, UK, Sweden, Switzerland, Belgium, Spain, US, and the Netherlands.



(Manning and Malbrough 2010). Development assistance was focused on building a democracy in Mozambique and attempted to support the transition from single-party rule to multiparty politics in the early 1990s. Since the 2000s, the emphasis shifted to bolstering local governance and good governance (Manning and Malbrough 2012).

The promotion of democracy and economic liberalization, as central elements of peacebuilding practices in Mozambique, has positively changed people's perception of their power and ability to influence political spaces. Democratization may even have contributed to people's empowerment by creating formal spaces for participation. However, economic liberalization has failed to alleviate poverty, and it has negatively affected spaces for empowerment (Maschietto 2015; Hanlon 2010).

Another essential reform after the 1992 GPA focused on decentralization and local governance. The limited effectiveness of such reforms revealed the inherent contradiction between top-down dynamics that shaped the reform process and the nature of the decentralization agenda. The fact is that the emphasis on deconcentration instead of devolution did not result in effective peace outputs in the long term (Maschietto 2016). The growth and decline of RENAMO's role were also evident during the various stages of the peacebuilding process since 1992. Afonso Dhlakama, RENAMO's historical leader, could not accommodate all socio-political changes occurring in Mozambique, particularly FRELIMO's consolidated of power within the various state structures (Vines 2013). In late 2012, amidst growing discontentment, Dhlakama reactivated military bases in the mountainous region of Gorongosa and attacked a police station in Muxungue, Manica Province. The FRELIMO-led government retaliated with a police raid on RENAMO's local headquarters (Faleg 2019, 3). Consequently, in 2013, RENAMO abandoned the 1992 General Peace Agreement and resorted to armed violence.

The characteristics of the recurring conflict consisted of an accumulation of small-scale attacks in Mozambique's central and northern regions. Although limited, the attacks' logistics and the number of victims were still comparable to other intrastate conflicts, significantly impacting the peace settlement while reopening the chances of a civil conflict (Reppell, Rozen, and Carvalho 2016). At the center of RENAMO's grievances was also the failure of the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process. Many of RENAMO's ex-combatants were not eligible for pensions, which would allow them to sustain dignity and basic livelihood. Young RENAMO recruits, often family members of ex-combatants, thought that resorting to arms was the only solution for achieving a more effective peace agreement (Wiegink 2015). At this stage, peacebuilding in Mozambique was dependent on initial domestic mediation attempts by faith-based and civil society actors, which resulted in the signing of the 2014 CMHA.

Domestic mediation without external support and facilitation was not sufficient to ensure

RENAMO's demands of further decentralization, power-sharing, and the equal distribution of resources. In 2016, Nyusi and Dhlakama reinforced the idea that the way forward would be to seek high-level international mediation. The Mozambican Government selected the following mediators: Ketumile Masire, former President of Botswana, linked to the Global Leadership Foundation (GLF), along with Robin Christopher; Jakaya Kikwete, former President of Tanzania, represented by Ibrahim Msambaho; and the African Governance Initiative (AGI), linked to former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, represented by Jonathan Powell of InterMediate (UK). RENAMO appointed three mediators, namely the EU, which was represented by Mário Raffaelli (former mediator in the 1992 peace process) and Monsignor Ângelo Romano (Community of Sant'Egidio); the Vatican, represented by the Apostolic Nuncio in Maputo, Monsignor Edgar Pena and the Secretary of the Episcopal Conference of Mozambique, Auxiliary Bishop of Maputo, Dom João Carlos Hatoa Nunes; and the South African President Jacob Zuma, represented by Mandlenkosi Memelo and George Johannes of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Forty-seven sessions of negotiations were held by the Joint Commission and the international mediators in Maputo (Saraiva 2022).

After more than 200 rounds of negotiation, both Mozambican leaders surprisingly decided to engage in direct dialogue, abandoning the high-level international mediation structure, and permanently dissolving the joint commission. In this context, from December 2016, a small mediation team of four members was led by the Swiss Ambassador to Mozambique, Mirko Manzoni. They would facilitate direct dialogue between the Mozambican government and RENAMO while promoting both parties' self-organization and resilience and focusing on pragmatic and adaptive responses to the challenges that arose during the negotiations. An adaptive mediation structure, style, and methods allowed first for a permanent ceasefire in 2017, which led to the signing of the 2018 MoU on military affairs – paving the way for new DDR programs – and, finally, the 2019 PNRA (Saraiva 2022).

Although the sudden death of Dhlakama in May 2018 represented a severe setback to the mediation process, the direct dialogue between the new RENAMO leader, Ossufo Momade, and President Nyusi, supplemented by Manzoni's pragmatic and adaptive mediation, led to the signing of a new peace agreement signed in August 2019 and laid the groundwork for the October 2019 national elections. Amidst the uncertainty generated by its historical leader's sudden death, RENAMO remained firmly committed to achieving peace rather than resorting to violence. During this period (2013-2019), adaptive mediation became an essential tool to address the recurrence of conflict and plan the reformulation of peacebuilding programs in Mozambique.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For a detailed account on adaptive mediation in Mozambique, see: Saraiva, Rui. 2022. "Peace-making from Within: Adaptive Mediation of Direct Dialogue in Mozambique's New Peace Process (2013-2019)."

In retrospect, since the 1990s, peacebuilding interventions in Mozambique have been devised under the liberal approach in five main areas: security, economic foundations, inclusive politics, justice, and revenues and services (Reppell, Rozen, and Carvallo 2016). However, numerous factors contributed to peacebuilding ineffectiveness in preventing the relapse of violence in the country. More recently, as highlighted in this section, an adaptive mediation approach led to the signing of a new peace agreement and the implementation of the 2019 PNRA. Related peacebuilding actions addressing the RENAMO insurgency should remain nationally-owned, pragmatic, and adaptive in nature while adequately supported by international cooperation partners. In this case, maintaining an adaptive implementation of peacebuilding programs and keeping mediation channels open seems to be the key for preventing the relapse of violence with RENAMO.

The historical record of post-independence insurgencies in Africa suggests that about 40% of such conflicts have ended in ceasefires or peace agreements, with or without international involvement, instead of decisive military victories (Day and Reno 2014, 106). However, considering the characteristics and behavior of contemporary ANSAs – more decentralized and horizontal in their organizational structures when compared with the centralized Marxist insurgencies of the late twentieth century (Mcquinn and Courchesne 2020) – addressing the Islamic insurgency in Cabo Delgado will require more coordination between different types of interventions beyond mediation.

The increased level of complexity posed by the rise of an Islamic insurgency in Cabo Delgado intertwines peacebuilding and counterinsurgency actions in a country with two different peace threats. While formal or informal mediation initiatives may still achieve an agreement with RENAMO's Military Junta – a small splinter group that has broken away from RENAMO's political branch and remains a threat even after the signing of the 2019 PNRA – the decentralized characteristics and the nature of the Islamic insurgency will limit any possibility of mediation. Thus, seeking a sustaining peace pathway in Mozambique constitutes an example of how further coordination between pragmatic and adaptive peacebuilding approaches and effective counterinsurgency methods can provide an additional framework for addressing today's complex threats to peace.

### **Contemporary COIN Strategies: Insights on Effective and Ineffective Principles**

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In: De Coning et al. *Adaptive Mediation and Conflict Resolution. Peace-making in Colombia, Mozambique, the Philippines, and Syria*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. The findings presented in this section result from the author's research carried out for this book project.

Complex and protracted threats to peace include many of the challenges and characteristics of modern insurgencies. This is particularly true for the case of ANSAs, violent extremist groups, guerrilla movements, and transnational crime networks, among other threats. To explore the coordination between COIN-related principles and pragmatic peacebuilding approaches, some fundamental aspects of modern counterinsurgency must be considered. Modern counterinsurgency emerged through different insurgency waves – from Maoist national liberations in colonial contexts to today’s transnational jihadist patterns – and includes various practices and schools of thought. While the conceptual definitions of insurgency and counterinsurgency are still not entirely agreed upon, there are some essential notions that have arguably remained valid until today.

An insurgency can be defined as a struggle conducted inside a territory by a part of a population against existing authorities. It can take place with or without external support and seeks to depose, paralyze, or at least undermine the sovereignty of ruling authorities (Couto 1998, II:158). It is born out of discontent and exploits “seeds of conflict by highlighting the flaws in the present system, be they political or economic inequities or religious anathemas” (Nagl and Burton 2010, 126). By mobilizing people’s adherence, insurgencies move along the social fabric, garnering logistical, political, and organizational support for their cause. They tend to have an incipient start and usually lack the strength and means to confront governmental authorities directly. Because of that, insurgencies use indirect and asymmetric methods to pursue their objectives, growing through a crescent of subversion, agitation, and violence. This denotes some essential corollaries. First, insurgencies have a strong focus on population and involve social and political aspects in addition to the security component. Second, they are also complex, protracted, and use a variety of violent and non-violent means. Lastly, insurgencies tend to grow in size and intensity, becoming more challenging to respond as time passes (Couto 1998, II:226–27).

Counterinsurgency, on the other hand, consists of the efforts taken to defeat an insurgency. It is defined in terms analogous to the insurgency, dealing with social and political dimensions in addition to traditional military responses. In order to be successful, counterinsurgencies need to adequately meet the subversive, complex, and protracted aspects of insurgencies, employing methods aimed at containing and neutralizing its activities, keeping the population from the influence of the insurgency while addressing the root causes of dissent (Nagl and Burton 2010, 125–27). Consequently, counterinsurgency must be timely, have a clear political goal, and understand the causes of the unrest. The approach must remain flexible, adaptable, and able to articulate a stable, long-term social-economic response in addition to addressing security.

In a COIN strategy, legitimacy in local people’s eyes is a crucial objective for which opposing parties compete (Lynn 2005, 22–23). This has been reflected in the dichotomy between

enemy-centric and population-centric approaches, highlighting the need for integrating military and non-military methods into a single approach, if not with a stronger emphasis on the latter (Paul et al. 2016). Indeed, modern COIN strategies have been conducted differently across several historical cases, such as the Algerian War, the Malayan emergency, or in Iraq and Afghanistan. Even though these experiences reflect a diversity of counterinsurgency schools (Heuser and Shamir 2017), their baseline commonalities point towards a set of common principles. These generally consist of social-economic development, civil-military cooperation, minimum violence, and an effective intelligence structure. When these principles were present in the past, counterinsurgency tended to succeed, and when they were absent, insurgency seemed to intensify (Paul, Clarke, and Grill 2010; Warner et al. 2007). A brief review of four modern counterinsurgency schools can provide some insights into this argument.

The first case is the British counterinsurgency experience, admittedly one of the most influential references for this type of warfare (Mackinlay and Al-Baddawy 2008, 9–13). Favoring an approach based on minimum use of force, civil-military cooperation, and the decentralization of command and control, the British counterinsurgency model introduced the concept of *hearts and minds* alongside the use of intelligence and psychological operations. This classic formulation, advocated by Robert Thompson (1966) and Frank Kitson (1971), denoted the political nature of counterinsurgency and heralded prevention and proactivity in addition to purely securitized responses. The effectiveness of this approach is usually associated with the Malayan campaign (1948–60), but also Borneo (1963–66), Oman (1970–75), and Northern Ireland (1969-98). Less successful cases like Kenya (1952-1960) or Aden (1963-1967) are sometimes equated with failure to follow through with those principles (Chin 2008, 119–21). Even though implementation was historically strained with difficulties, long learning curves, variance in the outcome, and some debate about doctrinal superiority and the use of violence (Mockaitis 2012; Reis 2011), Britain's classic counterinsurgency principles remained relevant after the decolonization years and throughout the post-Cold War period. Not only were they used successfully in peacekeeping missions in the Balkans, but when a failure in Iraq and Afghanistan intensified, they were also recalled to inform a new *stabilization* oriented doctrine (Griffin 2011; Mumford 2010).

Contemporary American counterinsurgency experiences also provide valuable insights. While the U.S. military has “historically paid little attention to the nature and requirements of counterinsurgency and stability operations” (Ucko 2009, 1), the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan after 9/11 revamped interest in the topic to the degree that was not seen since the Vietnam war. The “American way of war,” based on firepower, technology, and conventional military might, was ill-equipped to deal with irregular armed struggles (Russell 2014; Rosenau 2009, 52). The U.S. Army Field Manual FM 3-24 issued in December 2006 brought about a paradigm shift by

highlighting the political, social, and cultural dimensions of the conflict, placing the local population at the center of priorities (Heuser 2007). In casting a significant realignment with the fundamental dimensions of insurgency, U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq achieved improvements in terms of population security, governance, and capacity-building, even though these conflicts have to date remained largely unresolved. Lack of long-term strategic and political focal points ultimately undermined the success of these operations (Clemis 2010; Ucko 2019).

Another essential reference is the French counterinsurgency school. Enshrined in the writings of David Galula (1964) and Roger Trinquier (1964), French COIN was the result of intense learning in a colonial setting. After the failure of firepower and conventional military methods in Indochina, the later stages of counterinsurgency in Algeria internalized the political aspects of insurgent movements. The need to reciprocate their activity pushed the French military towards a broader understanding of insurgency war, where “pacification” efforts, social and political action as well as psychological campaigns were introduced in addition to the security component. This approach used resettlement to separate insurgents from the general population and deployed a grid force arrangement (*quadrillage*) bolstered by local troops and special coordination offices (de Durand 2010, 19–20; Tachikawa 2017). However, ineffective civilian oversight, regular use of brutal methods, the late arrival of a specialized doctrine, and the lack of a viable political goal undermined the tactical gains achieved by the end of the conflict (Chalk 2007, 24–25). Although associated with the memory of colonialism, this experience holds valuable lessons that are still relevant to some of today’s irregular conflict scenarios (Taillat 2010; Francois 2008).

One last example of contemporary COIN guidelines can be found in the Portuguese doctrine. Drawing from the colonial experiences in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau (1961-1974), the Portuguese case is one of the least known and yet possibly most complete examples of its kind (Cann 1998; Fernandes 2017). Portuguese COIN drew upon French and British experiences to “emulate” and “combine” their most successful practices (Reis 2018, 141). It departed from a conceptual understanding of insurgent phenomena that prescribed a *total*, holistic strategy that used the entire spectrum of state resources (Pineiro 1968). The key features included the use of small-unit operations, intelligence gathering, local recruitment, and the minimum use of force. Additionally, vast social-economic development, resettlements, and psychological campaigning were deployed to insulate the insurgents from the population (Cann 1998, 32–33). Portuguese COIN thus combined military, social, and political-administrative components into a unified effort, and was guided by the notion that counterinsurgency was essentially a struggle for winning the support of the population (Portuguese Army Staff 1966). While not achieving complete victory, this strategy allowed the Portuguese dictatorship to sustain

a thirteen-year-long campaign in three geographically distinct theatres when the country was poor and internationally isolated.

These examples provide some ground for considering the coordination between COIN and peacebuilding according to their shared principles and characteristics. As with counterinsurgency operations, many of today's peacebuilding interventions occur in complex settings. And just as with successful forms of counterinsurgency, peacebuilding in armed conflict scenarios needs to look at both security and non-security dimensions and consider the specific dynamics of irregular, insurgent-like phenomena. While the last two decades have shown fragility in high-profile counterinsurgency and peacebuilding campaigns, the framework of coordination between COIN and peacebuilding does not have to be considered in liberal, interventionist, or even colonial terms (Mockaitis 2012; Ucko 2014). Instead, by reflecting the shared characteristics of the two fields along a value-neutral evaluation, the coordination between COIN and peacebuilding can be seen as an opportunity for discerning tools and approaches that further the local and pragmatic turns in peacebuilding.

Translated to the logic of pragmatism and adaptiveness, enhanced coordination resides in bridging COIN and peacebuilding into a realistic and effective form of structuring peace efforts. Current peacebuilding trends increasingly underline the value of a whole-of-system approach that uses all available means in a convergent and coordinated manner – a central characteristic of modern COIN – breaking the silos of traditional interventions to form an organic and holistic framework directed at local needs and contexts. Also, like in modern counterinsurgency, adaptive peacebuilding approaches warrant context-specific political commitment and the long-term mobilization of resources along an adaptive process. Thus, a coordination framework between COIN and peacebuilding helps to identify the root causes of violent threats to peace and sheds light on how those threats spread, supplying security and peace actors with directions on assessing local dynamics, conducting the iterative learning process, and building resilience in local structures.

### **The Peacebuilding and Counterinsurgency Nexus in Mozambique: Addressing the Cabo Delgado Conundrum**

Current threats to peace and security in Mozambique call for the coordination between mediation initiatives, humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding, development assistance, and counterinsurgency. The first dimension of this complexity is the remaining number of armed RENAMO fighters, some of whom – despite the progress of new DDR programs – are now affiliated with the Military Junta. The second is the ongoing Islamic insurgency in Cabo Delgado,

a Muslim-majority province located on the northeastern border with Tanzania, rich in natural resources and agricultural potential.

Violent extremism erupted in Cabo Delgado for the first time in October 2017 in Mocímboa da Praia when militants attacked a police station and state facilities in Cabo Delgado in an apparent attack against the Mozambican government. The attacks came after tensions between the extremist sect and other sectors of the local population, who had been clashing over social-economic grievances, religious extremism beliefs, and discontentment against local Frelimo-led authorities. The affiliation of the insurgents remained somewhat unclear. Some thought it was called Al-Shabaab and others referred to it as *Al-Sunnah Wal-Jamâa* (followers of the prophetic tradition). After an attack in June 2019, the question of the insurgents' connection with ISIS emerged, with the Islamic State claiming that "the soldiers of the Caliphate were able to repel an attack by the Crusader Mozambican army" (Postings 2019). The extent of ISIS' direct involvement in the region is still debated among experts. However, the support provided by external insurgents from Tanzania, Uganda, Congo (DRC), and Kenya, providing organizational resources and armament, has been confirmed by various sources (Matsinhe and Valoi 2019, 8).

At first, the Mozambican government responded to this threat by arresting suspected terrorists, closing extremist mosques, and passing new anti-terrorism laws. It also increased its military presence in the region, called for increased civilian cooperation, and signed security protocols with neighboring countries (Faleg 2019, 4; Siteo 2019, 15–16). However, the insurgency grew stronger through 2018 and 2019. At the same time, the government continued dispatching troops to the region. This response proved insufficient, and by early 2020 the security situation in Cabo Delgado began to deteriorate rapidly. What started as isolated attacks on small villages turned into larger sweeps on major provincial towns, resulting in numerous victims and effectively expelling the government presence in some places. During these attacks, the group raised ISIS flags in captured towns and declared its intention of establishing an Islamic state in the region. The tactics, weaponry, and geographical reach of the armed groups also evolved considerably, prompting Maputo to mobilize increasing numbers of troops and resources.

The confrontation henceforth developed into a pattern of violent attacks and government counter-offensives. Several towns, including district capitals, were taken by the insurgents, and then retaken by government forces amidst fierce battles. The Mozambican government also hired private military companies – the Wagner Group from Russia, the Dyck Advisory Group from South Africa, and since February 2021, the Paramount & Burnham Global consortium from South Africa and Dubai – to quell the insurgency, but they also failed to win over the guerrilla (Venter 2020; Nhamirre 2021). The lack of a strategy that tackles the security threat while addressing the driving causes of the conflict, combined with ill-prepared troops, unfavorable terrain, and the



growing demoralization of security forces, has complicated the government's goals. The situation in Cabo Delgado has, in the meantime, raised increasing international concern. In May 2020, *Voice of America* (VOA Português 2020) stated that U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Tibor Nagy, was hoping that Mozambique would give full attention to the conflict, comparing its rapid evolution to that of Boko Haram in Nigeria due to insufficient government response. Similarly, in April, the European External Action Service issued a note calling for comprehensive responses to the multiple dimensions affecting the conflict (EEAS 2020). On the regional level, contacts between Maputo and the South African Development Community (SADC) in mid-May were conducted to articulate responses and aid to fight the insurgency (Baptista 2020). After almost one year, the SADC Troika Summit was held in Maputo on April 8, 2021, with the top six leaders calling for "an immediate technical deployment" to Mozambique (SADC 2021).

Following the SADC Troika Summit and a technical assessment mission conducted in Cabo Delgado in April 2021, The SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) was deployed on July 15, 2021, to support the Mozambican Defence Forces (FADM) in the region. In parallel with the SADC process, on April 28, 2021, Nyusi initiated consultations with Rwandan President Paul Kagame, which would later result in the deployment of Rwandan troops in Cabo Delgado beginning on July 9, 2021. Despite the quick gains achieved by the foreign military forces on the ground, security arrangements with foreign security partners have not been without controversy. The agreement enabling the deployment of Rwandan forces to Cabo Delgado is unknown – as it was with the Wagner Group and DAG deployments – raising successive public questions about the legal framework that allowed for these foreign military interventions in Mozambique (Nhamirre 2021).

In addition to agreements with regional security partners, in June 2020, the Portuguese government offered diplomatic and military support should the Mozambican government request such assistance (Lusa 2020). More recently, Portugal sent 60 military personnel to provide training to the Mozambican Armed Forces in a bilateral cooperation plan to help combat ANSAs in the province (Gomes and Gonçalves 2021). Further support from European security partners was confirmed in October 2021, after the European Council launched the European Union Military Training Mission in Mozambique (EUTM-MOZ). The EUTM-MOZ will become operational as soon as the transfer from the Portuguese Armed Forces Training Project is completed. The mission is planned to become fully active by mid-December 2021, with around 140 military troops divided between two training centers, one for commandos and the other for marines.

Despite the security-focused initiatives, Cabo Delgado remains a fertile ground for

subversion and dissent. This appears to have been worsened by the escalating fighting and increased presence of various military forces in the region. President Nyusi admitted that the situation in Cabo Delgado could potentially jeopardize peace prospects in the country, including the ongoing DDR process with RENAMO (Rodrigues 2020). Indeed, as of April 2021, insurgent attacks in Northern Mozambique have thus far caused nearly 4,000 deaths and forced over 700,000 people to flee their homes (ACLED 2021; UNHCR 2021). Natural disasters and food insecurity have aggravated the resulting humanitarian crisis. Also, the ongoing Covid-19 outbreak is straining the responses from government and non-governmental organizations.

Taking a closer look at the debate on the origins and nature of violent extremism in the northern province, some see religious extremism or even ethnic issues as the root causes of the conflict. Others see poverty, inequality, marginalization, and youth unemployment as some of the most relevant factors (Morier-Genoud 2020). A local expert underlined that Islamism is being used as a tool to take advantage of local people disenfranchised from the Mozambican state and society. He also underlined that this is not an ethnic conflict, as people from all ethnic backgrounds have been victims of the Islamic insurgency. In his opinion, addressing inequality, food security, and capacity-building to generate jobs is equally important as security operations to defeat the insurgents.<sup>4</sup>

The country's fragile, centralized governance structure is also a crucial vulnerability factor, as it fails to provide adequate education, health, infrastructure, and other forms of social support in Northern Mozambique. Furthermore, the rise of this movement occurred while powerful economic interests are settling in the region, specifically natural gas extraction and ruby mining, two natural resources in which Mozambique is among the wealthiest countries in the world. It is believed that the economic *gravitas* of these investments, especially liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects by foreign corporations such as Anadarko, Exxon, Eni, BP, Total, and Shell, contributed to attracting transnational terrorist movements into the region. In addition, mining companies operating under lucrative concessions by the government have dislodged local communities and informal miners, aggravating the negative perceptions that these businesses bring no benefit to the population (Alberdi and Barroso 2020). A local expert reinforced this perspective. In his opinion, ISIS or Al-Shabab are just opportunistic groups "that take advantage of its system of franchising of terrorism."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, violent extremism in the region has a clear connection to the issue of natural resources and the redistribution of related revenues to local stakeholders and the general population in Cabo Delgado. Transnational crime and

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<sup>4</sup> Interview by Rui Saraiva with an investigative journalist in Cabo Delgado, Maputo, Mozambique, 6 February 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Interview by Rui Saraiva with a local expert working with both academic and government institutions, Maputo, Mozambique, 30 January 2020.

narcotrafficking also took hold in the region, fueled by weakened governance and the lack of viable economic activities and employment options.<sup>6</sup>

According to Alberdi and Barroso (2020), despite the high expectations by the local population resulting from the exploration of natural resources, there were no significant gains in the areas of education or health in Cabo Delgado. The economic and social gains linked to related megaprojects are unlikely to be adequately transferred to the local community, and in this new economic context, Mozambican elites at local and national levels may even embrace new embezzlement practices. The fact is that, at the time of writing, the discovery of natural resources in the region is one of the elements contributing to the escalation of violence in Cabo Delgado, rather than bringing development to the northern province.

Concerning the *modus operandi*, the activities of this movement also have an unequivocal insurgent pattern. The armed groups use indirect, asymmetric violence to attack government structures, undermining state authority while furthering a radical Islamic political and social agenda. Faleg (2019, 4) pointed to “between 350 and 1,000 militants, organized in cell-based structures with each cell comprising 10-20 individuals using basic weaponry and tactics.” The size and sophistication of the guerrilla have since evolved considerably. The movement also appears to be led and financed through local and transnational networks of supporters, with ties to international Islamic extremism. Recruitment occurs locally through a combination of indoctrination, intimidation, and propaganda in areas of strong social discontent and weak government presence (Habibe and Pereira 2019). The insurgents also operate through porous regional and international borders, establishing *de facto* liberated areas that the government has difficulties controlling.

Overall, the Islamic insurgency in Cabo Delgado calls for holistic responses that combine both effective COIN principles and adaptive peacebuilding actions addressing the economic, social, and political root causes of violent extremism in the region. As this section points out, the Mozambican government’s response has been focused primarily on hard-security perspectives that lack the non-military dimensions commonly associated with peacebuilding. Admittedly, the lack of coordination between pragmatic and adaptive peacebuilding approaches and effective COIN strategies have been at the center of Maputo’s difficulties in dealing with the Islamic insurgency and may have inclusively aggravated the conflict by fueling the motivations of the insurgents rather than solving them. This also stands in contrast with the peace process leading to the 2019 PNRA, in which institutional and economic dimensions were combined with international cooperation to achieve peace and security.

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<sup>6</sup> Interview by Rui Saraiva with a local expert working with both academic and government institutions, Maputo, Mozambique, 30 January 2020.

Long-term responses in Cabo Delgado should include peacebuilding initiatives such as supporting civil society organizations (CSOs) and religious groups that may help prevent and respond to peace threats by functioning as essential nodes for information sharing, the implementation of humanitarian assistance, and other peace and development activities. In addition, additional support to local government institutions and local emergency services will enhance preparedness at the provincial level. Finally, the security responses by the national government and regional and international security partners will benefit from new coordination mechanisms and institutions that can develop expertise and help to coordinate the implementation of future responses. Moreover, if the Peacebuilding-COIN nexus in Mozambique is developed under pragmatic, adaptive, and holistic approaches focused on resilience, it will have more chances to effectively address the interplay between violent extremism and traditional armed conflict threats, and even other human security threats, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, environmental degradation, and climate change.

## **Conclusion**

This paper analyzed the need for the coordination between peacebuilding and counterinsurgency in the context of today's complex threats to peace, arguing that combining pragmatic and adaptive peacebuilding approaches with successful practices of modern counterinsurgency can significantly enhance policy responses in complex scenarios. The peacebuilding-COIN nexus has rarely been explored either in the academic literature or in policy practices and is often presented as an opposing or competing approach to conflict resolution. By examining the case of Mozambique, this paper argues that traditional peacebuilding and conflict resolution approaches are being challenged by the character and behavior of contemporary ANSAs who seek to transform the state rather than govern it. Furthermore, we emphasize that classic COIN strategies are being challenged because long-term solutions require more than just defeating an insurgency. They need to also address the genuine political and socio-economic grievances of the affected communities using a peacebuilding perspective, in particular the pragmatic and adaptive peacebuilding approaches. As a result of these challenges, the coordination or complementarity between peacebuilding and COIN is presented here as a more effective nexus to respond to peace threats in contexts affected by both traditional armed conflicts and the rise of violent extremism.

The Mozambican case also demonstrates that a comprehensive approach to the coordination between peacebuilding and COIN – *breaking the silos* and enabling multi-sector coordination – will be enhanced by a timely coordination strategy with a political goal aligned to the context of the conflict-affected situation and an understanding of the causes of unrest, and that

articulates a stable and long-term social-economic response in addition to the security component. The Peacebuilding-COIN nexus should increase the effectiveness of peace and security initiatives when compared to responses based solely on hard-security measures. Such an approach would not only improve peace and security in Cabo Delgado, but would also consolidate the DDR process with RENAMO and its militants. The case of Mozambique also represents a number of other contemporary conflicts where the legitimacy of not only the government, but the state itself, is questioned and attacked by an Islamic extremist alternative vision of statehood, values, and society. The victory of the Taliban in Afghanistan is likely to further boost this form of conflict across the world and the Peacebuilding-COIN nexus may represent a more effective way for the peace and security communities to think about both short-term and long-term responses.

COIN principles are often associated solely with hard-security approaches. However, the same holistic logic can be extracted from the concrete modern COIN concepts of minimum violence, social-economic development, civil-military cooperation, and good intelligence. The concept of minimum violence will help preventing the government and other peace and security actors from negatively impacting local populations in Cabo Delgado, or in RENAMO provinces with active combatants. The focus is assuring the rule of law and proportionate security responses. Social-economic development can directly tackle sources of discontent, bringing basic government structures such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, and employment. By satisfying many of their most essential needs and attending to local political and social claims, Maputo can help defuse the dissent behind the Islamic insurgency and RENAMO. Civil-military cooperation may contribute to peace efforts by providing much-needed cooperation between strategies, resources, and expertise deployed on the two fronts. Lastly, an effective intelligence structure can inform both peacebuilding agents and security actors about the essential elements for situational awareness, adequate decision-making, and crisis prevention, enabling better policies and achievable peace goals.

In coordination with peacebuilding, COIN highlights the prominence of political and social dimensions in counterinsurgency, in addition to its typical security component. It also points towards the importance of addressing irregular conflicts through flexible and adaptive interventions, taking the root causes and the specific context of each case as guidance for deciding the best measures. Both insurgencies in Mozambique configure, on different levels and with different backgrounds, a gradient of insurrection that is moved by social, political, and economic grievances, taking the shape of an armed guerrilla in the conflict with RENAMO and a violent extremist group in the case of Cabo Delgado's Islamic insurgency. Both situations involve security, political, and social-economic dimensions to which it is not possible to respond only through humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding and prevention of violent extremism programs,

or security interventions in isolated silos. This is particularly true with Islamic extremism and its insurgent activity, whose typology follows the logic of religious extremism rationales that must be carefully understood and addressed.

The coordination between peacebuilding and COIN interventions should be acknowledged as part of a sustaining peace process that is nationally owned. International cooperation partners, such as multilateral and bilateral agencies, may provide essential support to facilitate security, humanitarian, development, and peace actions, and promote the self-organization of all stakeholders involved in sustaining peace. A wider recognition of the need for enhanced coordination between peacebuilding and counterinsurgency within an increasing demand for pragmatic and adaptive interventions will enable peacebuilders and security actors to respond more effectively to the challenges presented by contemporary complex and fragile situations.

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Abstract (in Japanese)

要 約

本研究は、平和と安全保障の担い手が、複雑で脆弱な状況下における危機に効果的に対応するための課題に直面する中、平和構築と反乱対策(COIN)の連携が、複雑な状況における予防、安定化、持続的な平和の効果をいかに高めることができるかを検討する。本稿は、新たな平和構築のアプローチと最新のCOIN戦略を検証し、両者のより一層の連携が、多角的な課題に直面する中で平和を維持するための、さらなる道筋を明らかにすることを主張する。イスラムの反乱と小規模な内戦の再発が併存するモザンビークの事例を検証し、実用的かつ適応性の高い平和構築アプローチと、非軍事的手法の重要性を認識した効果的なCOIN原則を組み合わせることで、従来の武力紛争と暴力的過激主義の台頭の両方に影響を受ける状況下で、平和と安全保障を担う主体間の調整を強化できると結論付けている。

**キーワード：**非国家武装主体、複雑性、反乱対策、モザンビーク、平和構築