The Escalation of Extremist Violence in Southern Africa and the Need for More Collaborative Security Responses

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Introduction

The year 2021 marks 20 years since the 11 September attacks on the United States (US) by Al-Qaeda, in the wake of which the country launched an international war on terrorism defined by military intervention, nation building, and efforts to reshape the politics of the Middle East and elsewhere.[1] Legislation and military initiatives under the umbrella of the Global War on Terror have proliferated in the intervening years, creating a web of conventions, laws and institutions that define the ways in which states react to terrorism in the 21st century.

Nonetheless, over the past two decades, extremism and associated acts of terrorism, whether perpetrated by fundamentalist Islamist, white-supremist or far-right nationalist organisations, have continued to spread globally. Military operations at massive financial and human cost have provided territorial victories over groups such as Islamic State (IS) and Boko Haram, consecutively lowering the annual number of terrorist deaths from a high point in 2014. However, extremist movements continue to spread internationally, and 2019 saw the highest number of countries (103) since 2000 record at least one terrorist incident.[2]

Southern Africa, in particular, has seen an escalation of extremist activity in recent years. The price of inaction on the part of the region's governments and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has been a deepening insurgency in northern Mozambique with potentially profound consequences for the region. In part, this failure is the result of political leadership and policy-makers not learning from both the successes and the many mistakes made in

efforts to address extremism internationally over the past two decades.

The objectives of this chapter are to (1) report on recent developments in extremist activity in South Africa and the wider southern African region, including responses by governments and regional bodies; (2) discuss some of the regional dynamics of security challenges in southern Africa; and (3) synthesise lessons learned throughout the *Extremisms in Africa* series to provide recommendations on how extremisms can be better addressed in both South Africa and the wider region.[3]

As outlined below, South Africa has a particular responsibility in the region to take a leading role in efforts to fight extremism in southern Africa, both because of its relative wealth and resources, and due to its function as a node for illicit transnational networks, which support extremist movements. Moreover, the country currently sits as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, and in February 2020 South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa took over chairmanship of the African Union (AU). South Africa has stated that the primary focus of its chairmanship will be on the AU Silencing the Guns by 2020 initiative.[4] However, this can only be achieved by addressing the continued spread of extremist movements on the continent, many of which are at the core of Africa's most intractable conflicts.

Extremism and Terrorism in South Africa

Currently, in terms of legislation and law enforcement, South Africa's law enforcement and judicial response to terrorist activity occurs through the Protection of Constitutional Democracy Against Terrorist and Related Activities Act (POCDATARA), which criminalises acts of terrorism, as well as the financing of terrorism, and sets out specific obligations for international cooperation.[5] The Crimes Against the State unit within the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation (Hawks) in the South African Police Service (SAPS), the SAPS Crime Intelligence Division, as well as the State Security Agency, are tasked with detecting, deterring and preventing acts of terrorism within South Africa, while the SAPS Special Task Force is specifically trained and proficient in counterterrorism, counterinsurgency and hostage rescue.[6]

South Africa is a major international transit hub on the continent, and as such

is an important node for both transnational extremist and criminal networks. However, in recent years, the country has also seen an increase in the threat of direct terrorist attacks on its soil from both Islamist and far-right, white extremist movements. This is not uncommon, and countries across the world have similarly seen a local rise in movements emboldened by a range of extremist ideologies.

Over the past decade, for example, populism has become a defining political movement across the globe. The decade has seen the election of American President Donald Trump on a populist agenda, the Brexit vote in Britain, and ascendant far-right parties in Austria, Germany, Brazil, Italy, India and Indonesia, to name a few. There is scarcely a region in the world that has not seen a rise in populist movements and associated political parties, which build their platforms on the basis of national identity, immigration and race.

In South Africa, identity and race still play a central role in politics. Centuries of racial segregation have not been undone in the 25 years since the end of apartheid. While the Democratic Alliance and African National Congress have largely attempted to promote non-racialist party rhetoric, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), Black First Land First, Freedom Front Plus, and social movements such as AfriForum, Rhodes Must Fall and Fees Must Fall place race and identity front and centre in their rhetoric.

One illustrative example from the 2019 election is the largely unexpected success of the Freedom Front Plus, whose party platform rallied against perceived victimisation of white South Africans by affirmative action and land expropriation policies. The party was formed in 1994 as a break-away group from the Afrikaner Volksfront (a separatist umbrella organisation of right-wing nationalist parties) under the leadership of former South African Defence Force military commander Constand Laubscher Viljoen. In 1994, its main policy objective was to establish a volkstaat or independent state, and that year it received 2,2% of the popular vote. In 1999, this declined to 0,8%, where it remained in all subsequent elections until 2014. In 2019, however, the party returned to its 1994 support level, capturing 2,5% of the popular vote and six more parliamentary seats, making it the fifth-largest political party in the country.[7]

From a national security perspective, questions remain around the degree to which an increasingly charged political atmosphere and toxic rhetoric on race and identity will fuel extremist narratives and translate into militancy. Posts

about 'reverse apartheid', white genocide and land grabs are fairly common on social media platforms in South Africa, fuelling feelings of white victimhood.[8] This is given further oxygen by divisive political figures such as EFF leader Julius Malema and others who have used explicitly racial rhetoric for political gain and public appeal, and by farm murders, which remain ongoing.

Historically, the most significant terrorist incidents and biggest threats to peace in South Africa have come from the far right. During the 1994 multi-party negotiations process to end the apartheid system, members of the Afrikaner Volksfront, Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging and other far-right paramilitary groups, led by Eugène Terre'Blanche, in armed vehicles stormed the Kempton Park World Trade Centre where negotiations were taking place. In 1996, members of the Boere Aanvalstroepe, an offshoot of the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging, detonated two bombs, killing a woman and three children, while injuring another 67 people, in an attempt to start a 'race war'. Similarly, in 2002, members of the Boeremag detonated eight bombs in Soweto and had formed a plot to assassinate President Nelson Mandela in an attempt to start a race war, during which they would seize power and reinstate 'white rule'.

There are several far-right extremist groups currently active in South Africa. While some exist largely online, there are others such as the Suidlanders[9] and Kommandokorps[10] which have a greater organisational structure and pose a threat large enough to be actively monitored by security services.[11]

There have been no coordinated attacks by a far-right organisation in South Africa over the past decade. However, in November 2019, the Hawks' Crimes Against the State unit and National Crime Intelligence arrested the professed leader of the National Christian Resistance Movement (NCRM, also known as the Crusaders), Harry Johannes Knoesen, in Mpumalanga, South Africa, for alleged terrorist activities. In the weeks following, three more alleged Knoesen accomplices were arrested in Johannesburg, and a fourth in Cape Town. The arrests followed an extensive two-year, intelligence-led investigation into an alleged terrorist plot coordinated by the group to bomb national key points, shopping malls and informal settlements. During raids on the homes of two members of the group, police uncovered firearms, ammunition and bomb-making equipment. Knoesen and his accomplices have been charged with terrorism-related activities in contravention of the POCDATARA.[12]

Knoesen is a retired pastor and former member of the South African National Defence Force. He was elected leader of the NCRM in 2012 and has been known to law enforcement for some time, having publicly released a series of controversial videos in which he calls for white South Africans to take up arms and declare war on the black majority. As discussed in Volume 1 of *Extremisms in Africa*, in a chapter on identity politics and the re-emergence of South Africa's far right, social media platforms have helped disparate far-right movements to connect and rally around common narratives containing themes of white supremacy, white victimhood, isolationism, 'reverse apartheid' and divine calling. Some of these themes can be seen in Knoesen's social media posts:

> "[South African Defence Force] and [South African Police]…Brave veterans. Precious pensioners. Young people and not so young…Business persons and farmers….If you are experiencing the Oppression and Hate of Reversed Apartheid [Black Economic Empowerment], [Affirmative Action], and the ill treatment because you are White…Stand by me and do as I say…work with me. I have Godly instruction to take back what Satan has stolen from us through clever, sly Money Powers and Politics and given to the North African settlers and Land Invaders…our God Given Country. In return I PROMISE YOU a Safe, Secure country where criminals fear to walk our streets. Your colour will count in your favour for jobs. I will reinstate the Death Penalty and punish those already judged and sentenced. Prison will be a feared place. I PROMISE to secure the Future of our Race. Permanently…our neighbours will fear to illegally cross our borders. We will again be proud of our Race."[13]

To date, the absence of a unified organisational structure, strong leadership and, from a cost-benefit analysis, the outcomes of engaging in acts of terrorism, have likely prevented far-right organisations from escalating their cause through violence. Knoesen, however, broke from this trend, explaining his reasoning in a video posted to social media:

> "It's important for us to stay together as a white nation. I know there are many movements. I met with some of the leaders around the table and we sat and we spoke, and halfway into speaking I told them we're not on the same page.

The reason being they want to defend and see what happens…Reality is, you cannot wait to see what the enemy does to you. You cannot wait for the enemy to wake up. It's too late already. The Crusaders haven't got a waiting plan, we've got an attack plan. The only way to win the situation and turn the tables is by attacking. Yes, I'm talking war."[14]

In the week following the arrests in November 2019, Harry Knoesen, brothers Eric and Errol Abrams, and Riana Heymans made a brief appearance together in a Middelburg court, where the magistrate was told that they would not be applying for bail. Randall Esau, who was apprehended in Cape Town, was released on R1,000 bail.[15] In November 2019, police publicly released a picture of a woman who is being sought for questioning in relation to the case, asking for public support in establishing her whereabouts.[16] Hawks spokesperson Hangwani Mulaudzi stated: "We know they are in their hundreds if not their thousands. It is a matter that is of very serious concern in the country, hence it has taken some time for us to be able to come to this stage. We will continue to monitor others."[17] The investigation is ongoing and based on the extensive evidence gathered on the organisation over the past two years, implicating up to 100 members in terrorist activity, the Hawks expect to make more arrests in 2020.[18]

In addition to far-right extremist movements, the threat of IS and associated Islamist extremist networks in South Africa remains. In July 2016, brothers Brandon-Lee and Tony-Lee Thulsie were arrested during raids in Newclare and Azaadville, west of Johannesburg, on evidence that they were linked to IS and planned to bomb the US embassy, Jewish institutions and several other targets in South Africa. This was allegedly after Tony-Lee had discussed plans for the attacks online with an undercover agent from the US Federal Bureau of Investigation. Being a Schedule 6 offence, their defence was unable to provide evidence of exceptional circumstances for them to be granted bail, and the twins have remained in prison for more than four years. The case has had several false starts as the state and the Thulsies' defence argue over what evidence can be heard in court. In January 2020, the case was again postponed, to April, after it emerged that some of the state's evidence had accidentally been wiped from a laptop by the information department at the National Prosecuting Authority.[19]

In early 2018, Sayfudeen Aslam Del Vecchio, his wife Fatima Patel, a Malawian

national living with them named Ahmad 'Bazooka' Mussa, and their teenage neighbour Temba Xulu, were caught by police in connection with the murder of two British citizens, botanists Rod and Rachel Saunders, in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. In addition to kidnapping and murder charges, the state has charged them with contravening the POCDATARA, alleging that the three were in communication with IS and planning terrorist attacks on South African targets when they stumbled across the couple (Xulu was released with a suspended sentence after being found in possession of the Saunders' cell phones and turning state witness). Again, due in part to challenges experienced by the state in collecting and storing evidence, the case remains at the pre-trial phase after several delays. The defence team has argued that should the state again request a delay in the trial, the co-accused should be granted a new bail application.[20]

In October 2019, the Hawks arrested 19 suspects during a raid on a residence outside Durban, South Africa. The state alleges that, led by businessman Farhad Hoomer, the residence was being used as an IS training facility. Eleven of those arrested have been charged with contravening the POCDATARA, among other crimes, in connection with an attack on a local Shia mosque in which one person died, the planting of a series of incendiary devices in shopping malls and other public locations across the province, extortion and kidnapping. Alleged ringleader Hoomer was released on $10,000 bail and, despite concerns over their potential flight risk, his co-accused on lesser amounts.[21] The case has also seen several delays, and Hoomer is expected back in court on 21 May 2020.

While the incidents outlined above are relatively isolated for the most part, South African law enforcement has successfully detected, monitored and apprehended individuals before they could launch attacks on local targets. Some of the cases have seen multiple delays, and the state is yet to successfully secure their prosecution under the POCDATARA. This could signal a need for improved coordination between prosecutors and law-enforcement agencies, as well as indicating the urgent need for special prosecutorial skills. Many of the country's law-enforcement units, such as the SAPS Special Task Force, are particularly well regarded and trained in counterterrorism, counterinsurgency and hostage rescue. Ultimately, however, to sustainably prevent local acts of terrorism in the long term requires inter-agency collaboration between prosecutors, law-enforcement agencies and the intelligence community, guided

by an integrated national strategy to address extremism and associated acts of terrorism.

Extremism and Terrorism in Southern Africa: A Multiform Security Challenge

In addition to the South African-based cases outlined above, southern Africa as a region has seen a recent rise in terrorist activity, and increased collaboration and coordination between extremist organisations. Empirical research shows that extremist organisations tend to take root in areas where the state is unable or unwilling to provide effective governance, or where socio-economic grievances and perceptions of political neglect and marginalisation are present. Furthermore, 95% of the world's annual terrorist attacks take place in countries with ongoing armed conflict.[22]

While southern Africa is more politically stable than some other regions on the continent, it has not been without incidents of armed conflict and political upheaval, and has recently seen a concerning regression in democratic gains and good governance practices. An improvement in both would help to insulate against the spread of extremism in the region.

For example, since the forced resignation of Robert Mugabe in 2017, President Emmerson Mnangagwa has failed to stabilise Zimbabwe's economy or control hyperinflation. The country has also seen widespread protests, many of which have turned violent, and generated tens of thousands of economic migrants. In 2014, Lesotho went through a *coup d'état* and has continued to be marred by political intrigue and instability. In 2009, Madagascar went through a political crisis that had severe economic consequences for the country – the impact of which is still felt. The Democratic Republic of Congo remains mired in political upheaval and widespread violence, and Tanzania, once perceived as one of the most stable democracies in Africa and a strategically vital part of the region, has seen increasingly authoritarian rule in recent years under President John Magufuli. South Africa has seen bouts of xenophobic violence, political killings and gender-based violence against a backdrop of economic stagnation and failing state-owned enterprises.

These political crises and governance challenges arise over and above the

ongoing socio-economic and environmental issues across the continent, such as a population youth bulge and youth unemployment, slow economic growth, climate variance and environmental degradation.

Mozambique has seen an alarming increase in extremist activity and associated acts of terrorism. The origins and extent of the insurgency[23] have been documented in detail in chapters by Linos Mapfumo as well as Blessed Mangena and Mokete Pherudi in this volume. However, the situation in the region is extremely fluid and changing daily. While writing this chapter, Alu Sunna Wa-Jama (ASWJ) insurgents surrounded the town of Mocímboa da Praia, ransacked government buildings, and overtook a barracks, where they raised the black flag of IS. The following day, IS released a statement claiming responsibility for the attack through its Amaq news agency. On 25 March, the group staged another attack on the town of Quissanga, seizing and looting significant caches of arms and ammunition from the Quissanga police station. The group released footage from the incident in which masked fighters can be seen waving IS flags and calling for the imposition of sharia rule across the country. The total number of civilian deaths from these attacks is still unknown, but early reports indicate that at least six members of the Mozambican security forces were killed during fighting in Quissanga alone.[24]

Reporting indicates that insurgents have recently changed tactics, moving away from the targeting of civilians to government and security forces. On 6 April 2020, ASWJ insurgents staged attacks in Miengueleua and Bilibiza, and on 7 April an attack took place in Ntchinga. During these incidents, the insurgents made public declarations calling for an Islamic state, urged citizens to build mosques, and promised to attack only the government and its representatives. There are also reports of more public support for the group, and a recently released video shows local townsfolk cheering for the group. These reports indicate a significant escalation in the insurgency and its potential intractability.

While the nature and extent of the relationship between ASWJ and IS has been debated over the past year, it now seems clear that the organisations are at the very least attempting to align and are almost certainly in communication. By raising the IS flag, ASWJ gains more global recognition (thereby strengthening its fundraising and recruitment prospects), while IS gets to boost its image as a global jihadist force, which is still powerful despite the loss of its primary

territory in Syria and Iraq.[25] The organisational structure and internal leadership dynamics of the group are still largely unknown. There could, for example, be multiple factions vying for power, in so doing attempting to leverage IS affiliation. Several of the organisation's leaders have been killed or captured in police and military operations over the past two years, which may have had an impact on its structure.

The insurgency in northern Mozambique is fuelled by a variety of regional factors that require understanding to build a holistic and collaborative response by governments. In an extensive study into the origins of the insurgency, Haysom[26] argues that the large and dynamic illicit economy in northern Mozambique, which has its markets in South Africa and other countries in the region, is not only how the group derives funds but has itself generated the conditions for the insurgency to emerge by fostering corruption, undermining state legitimacy, providing livelihoods and local investment, and keeping borders porous and the coastline unmonitored.

Migration Routes

Over the past decade, before the recent large-scale liquefied natural gas investments, Mocímboa da Praia had already emerged as a key node of criminal activity in the southern African region, particularly in heroin and human smuggling. Recent external investments into oil and gas exploration and the mining of rubies and other minerals have, however, created 'boom times' for the area and allowed for increased opportunity for both licit and illicit revenue streams.

Mocímboa da Praia lies on the 'southern migration route' that starts in Somalia and enters Mozambique across the Rovuma River, then exits to South Africa via the Ressano Garcia border.[27] While most irregular migrants from East Africa and the Horn are simply trying to escape political, economic and food crises in search of a better life, their movement is usually facilitated by criminal networks.[28] To enter a country without the requisite permission requires contravention of the law and usually involves an assortment of parties offering illegal services, from lorry drivers willing to smuggle migrants over an international border, to document forgers, logisticians and handlers – many of whom are likely involved in a range of criminal activities.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) identifies four

established migration routes in East Africa and the Horn of Africa. The Horn route consists of circular migration movements between countries in the region, particularly Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia. The eastern route consists of migration movements from East African and Horn countries towards the Arab peninsula, along which Saudi Arabia and Yemen are the most common destinations. The northern route comprises migration movements from Ethiopia and Somalia towards Sudan and Libya, and then on to Europe, while the southern route runs from Horn countries to South Africa (see Figure 1).
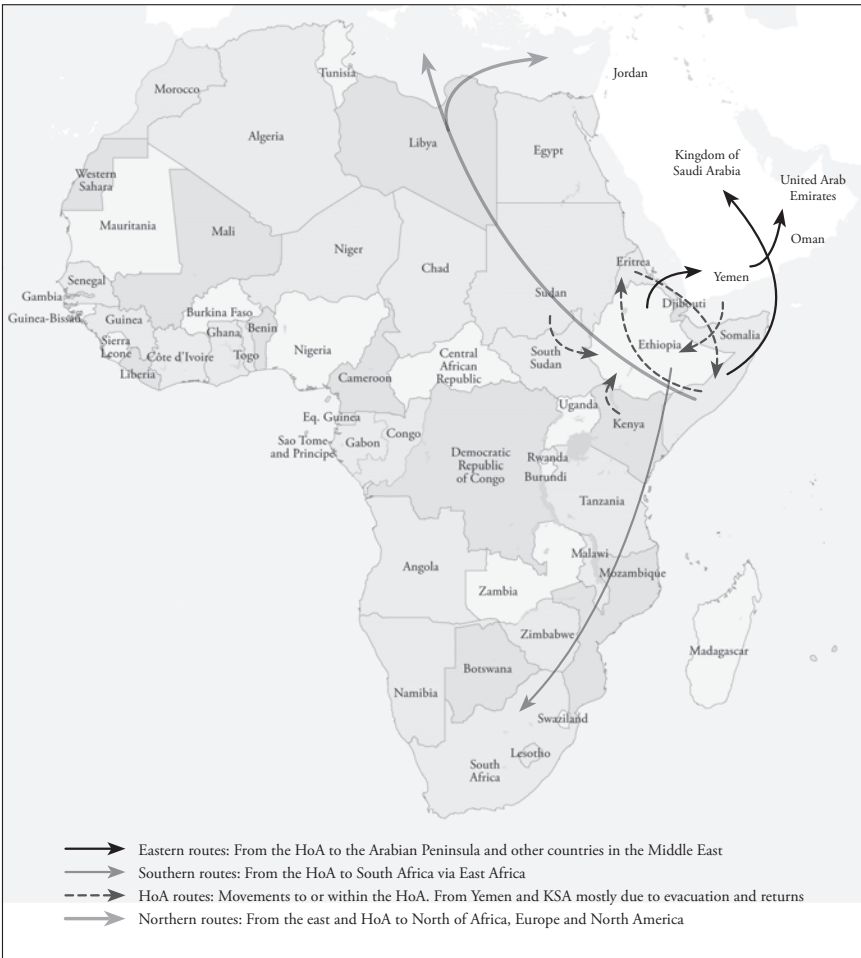

Figure 1: Main migration routes in East Africa and the Horn of Africa as of December 2018[29]

In a 2018 study, the IOM tracked 47,545 migrant movements along the southern route. The data showed that the majority of tracked movements along this route were mainly towards Kenya from Somalia (71%) but also included a substantial (8%) number of migrants heading to South Africa through Mozambique. Of those 8% tracked to South Africa, 85% were Ethiopian and 11% were Somali. The majority (94%) were young males, which was much higher than the average found on other routes. While the exact number of migrants who use this route is difficult to measure and will fluctuate depending on conditions of instability in the region, in 2017, the Mixed Migration Centre estimated that between 14,750 and 16,850 migrants travel this route annually.[30]

Human trafficking and smuggling networks along the southern route use a chain of *mukulas* (human smugglers) to get migrants through the region's many jurisdictions. In addition to being transported by minibus and on foot, smugglers also use dhows along the coastline. As documented by Gerety, who interviewed smugglers in northern Mozambique, Somali migrants travelled overland from Doble in southern Somalia to the Kenyan port of Mombasa, along the Tanzanian coastline, to the northern beaches of Mozambique and the port of Mocímboa da Praia.[31]

The unintended consequences of South Africa's efforts to curb illegal immigration southwards from Somalia at the height of the Al-Shabaab insurgency illustrates the interconnected nature of security challenges along the eastern seaboard. As Haysom writes:

> "Events in 2010 may have laid the basis for a substantial number of migrants from the Horn to establish themselves in northern Mozambique. The majority of these migrants were fleeing forced recruitment by Al-Shabaab (the Somali group), famine and poverty, but it is possible that these networks also laid the basis for ex-fighters to establish links with local communities – particularly in Mocímboa da Praia and Palma. The triggering factors for this was pressure from South Africa on its neighbours to disrupt the flow of migrants south, which led to hundreds, then thousands, of migrants from the Horn being bottled up in the north of Mozambique, including a period where they were effectively abandoned (by smugglers) along the Cabo Delgado coast where dhows dropped them off."[32]

A similar security crackdown by Tanzania on human smuggling routes during this period meant that the thousands of migrants in northern Mozambique were unable to return north or complete their journey south, and became a vulnerable population from which both criminal and extremist actors could recruit. Unsurprising, then, that by early 2015 radical imams from Somalia, Kenya and Tanzania had moved into Mocímboa da Praia and surrounding towns, took control of existing mosques or established their own, began to preach radical ideologies, which challenged both the state and the existing Muslim religious establishment, and started to establish military cells.[33] Following the initial attacks by ASWJ insurgents on police stations in Mocímboa da Praia in October 2017, the Mozambican government quickly closed two of these mosques, which were known to take in Kenyan, Tanzanian and Somali migrants and had become a hotbed of extremist activity.

The Heroin Trade

In recent years, the volume of heroin shipped from Afghanistan along a network of routes in east and southern Africa has increased considerably. In particular, northern Mozambique has served as a conduit for heroin coming from other countries in transit to South Africa before being transported to Europe and other international markets. The same criminal networks that engage in human smuggling have also been implicated in the heroin trade.

In a 2018 study based on 240 interviews across seven countries, Shaw et al[34] provide an outline of how heroin is shipped from Afghanistan to the east coast of Africa along a maritime route known as the 'southern route'. In reality, this is a network of routes stretching along the east and southern African seaboard, with drug consignments eventually making their way to countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and, to a limited extent, North America.

Similar to the mukulas who smuggle people along the eastern seaboard of Africa, heroin is shipped to Africa on motorised seagoing dhows built in the United Arab Emirates. The dhows are loaded with heroin shipments off the Makran coast of southern Pakistan. From there, the dhows cross the Indian Ocean and anchor off the coast of Africa in international waters, while flotillas of small boats collect the heroin and offload it at small harbours and various beaches along the coasts of Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and Mozambique.
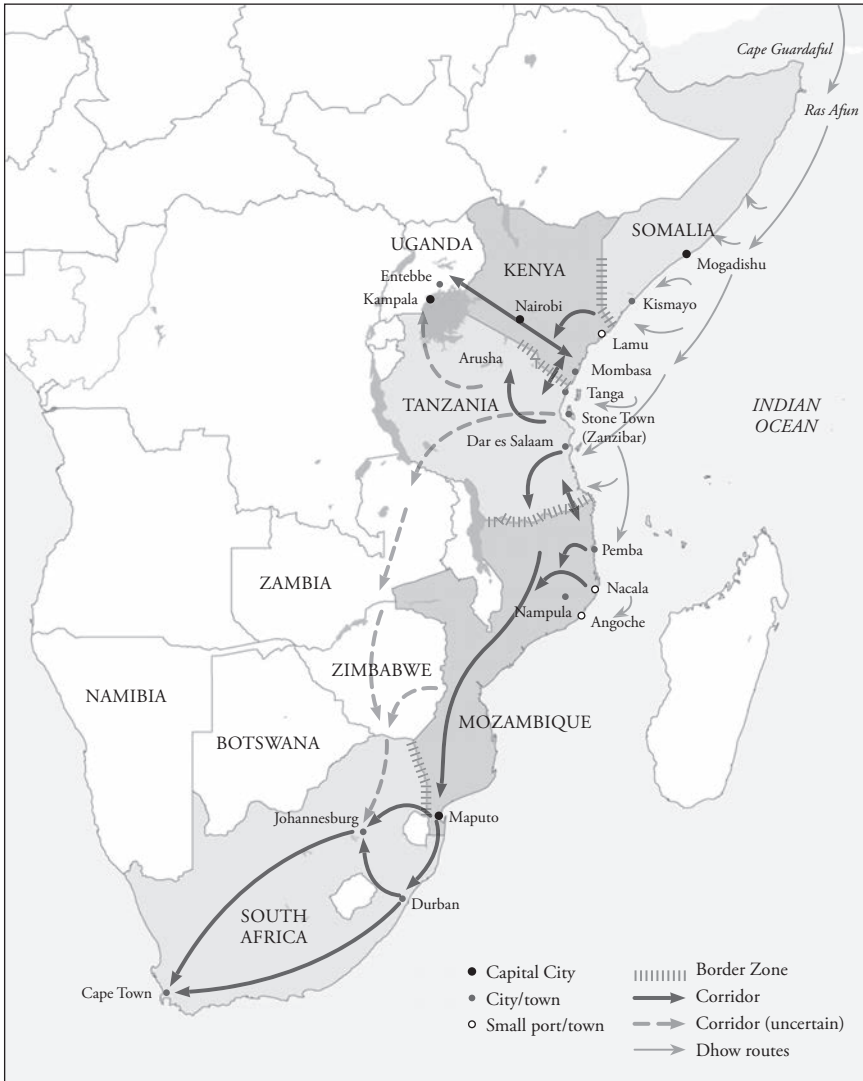
Figure 2: Sea- and land-based heroin routes across East African coastal states[35]

In the case of Mozambique, heroin is transferred from these dhows onto small fishing vessels off the port of Mocímboa da Praia and the coastal town of Pemba. Once on land, the heroin is taken by road to Nampula for processing and onward shipment to South Africa. There are no verified figures to estimate how much heroin arrives in northern Mozambique in this manner. However, dhows arrive

weekly, except during the three-month monsoon season, each carrying between 100 kg and 1,000 kg of heroin. This would suggest that between 10 tons and 40 tons of heroin move through Mozambique annually, a figure that has been corroborated by the Combined Maritime Force, which has made several large heroin seizures in recent years.[36]

South Africa is the primary destination for most of the heroin that enters the region, both as an end destination for local sale and consumption, and for onward shipping to Europe and other international markets. In addition to its developed aviation sector relative to other African countries, South Africa is considered to be at lower risk of containing contraband, and there is a large volume of licit trade between South Africa and Europe in which to hide illicit products.[37]

In Nampula, drugs are hidden in motor vehicles and shipped by road to South Africa, or are smuggled by sea. Several large heroin seizures hidden in motor vehicles coming from Mozambique have occurred in the past five years. However, likely due to poor resources and corruption, none have occurred on the Mozambican side of the border. As Shaw et al write: "In South Africa the number of ports of entry and long international borders mean that there are a range of entry options available to those involved in trafficking illicit goods, and these routes can be changed and shifted should the risks associated with a particular route become too high."[38] Once in South Africa, heroin is consolidated for smaller shipments and repackaged for onward transport by air or sea.

As the above examples illustrate, the insurgency in northern Mozambique cannot be successfully addressed only at the national level. Up until recently, however, this was the approach taken by the Mozambican government. It will require collaboration and a coordinated policy response from states in southern and eastern Africa. Failing to do so will ensure that the heroin trade can sustain itself indefinitely.

Mozambique's Response

The response to the insurgency in northern Mozambique by governments in southern Africa illustrates some of the political challenges that undermine collaborative security-policy coordination on the continent. As argued by Ewi and Louw-Vaudran,[39] the Mozambican government reacted to the insurgency by first denying its existence and attempting to downplay the extent of the problem.

This saw the barring of media access to the region, the intimidation of journalists, and a crackdown on civil society and human rights organisations. After the extent of the insurgency became clear, the government made strong public statements promising to deal harshly with anyone suspected of terrorist activity. This was bolstered by a strong military response by police and the military, which included mass arrests, the closure of mosques where radical elements were seen to be congregating, and the destruction of two ASWJ training facilities.[40] However, as detailed above, the insurgency in northern Mozambique has many transnational components. The military crackdown in Cabo Delgado on places of worship, and the mass arrests, has likely done little to stem the trafficking of people and drugs, and other illicit activities, which ensures ASWJ's funding and continued survival.

In August 2019, President Filipe Nyusi signed energy and security agreements with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, in the first visit by a leader from the country in two decades. A month later, on 13 September, 160 Wagner Group Russian military contractors arrived in Mozambique on a Russian Antonov An-124. Twelve days later, another Antonov An-124 touched down at Nacala airport carrying military equipment, including a Mi-17 attack helicopter. At least one of the Antonovs that flew into Mozambique belonged to the 224th Flight Unit of the Russian air force.[41]

In November 2019, several Wagner contractors were killed in fighting in Cabo Delgado province. Reports indicate that Wagner soldiers suffered a surprise attack when insurgents entered their camp dressed in Mozambican army uniforms. The total number of casualties suffered by the Wagner Group is disputed, and reports on the specific details of the operation are scant.[42] Despite close links between Wagner Group financier Yevgeny Prigozhin and the Kremlin, Russian presidential spokesperson Dmitry Peskov has stated that "as far as Mozambique is concerned, there are no Russian soldiers there".[43] The Mozambican government has also been reluctant to speak about the presence of foreign military contractors in the country. There are, therefore, still differing reports on whether the Wagner Group is still operating in Mozambique and, if so, to what extent.

It was only in late 2018 that President Nyusi began to publicly acknowledge the need for regional support to deal with the escalating insurgency. However, the messaging of the Mozambican government was mixed and at times contradictory.

Some statements indicated that the situation was under control, the instability was simply banditry, and Mozambique did not need or desire 'foreign intervention'. Other statements directly mentioned the extremist ideology espoused by ASWJ, its transnational links and the need for international support. In September 2018, at the 73rd Plenary Assembly of the United Nations, Nyusi stated: "We count on everybody's cooperation in measures against these evildoers, because this is a heinous crime of a global nature involving both nationals and non-nationals still unidentified and of who-knows-what motivation, which will tend to spread to neighbouring countries."[44]

More than two years into the insurgency and the Mozambican government's messaging remains no less confusing, alternating between referring to the insurgents as criminals and sometimes as extremists, and alluding to the potential for dialogue while emphasising a strong military and police crackdown on anybody seen as supporting the movement.[45] While the actions and public messaging by the Mozambican government taken since the start of the insurgency have been erratic and variable, it is clear that the government grossly underestimated the extent of the security challenge and failed to appreciate its transnational links. Similar heavy-handed militaristic responses by governments to emerging extremist threats in Nigeria, Kenya and north Africa have had disastrous long-term consequences. Either lessons from these contexts are not being learned, or governments are failing to consider, develop and implement alternative strategic responses.

SADC and the AU's Response

SADC has not made any public statements regarding the insurgency in northern Mozambique. The SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security, responsible for promoting peace and security in the SADC region, has neither tabled any meetings on the topic nor issued any communiques. In 2015, SADC heads of state drafted a sub-regional response to terrorism known as the SADC Regional Counterterrorism Strategy and Action Plan. On handing over the chairpersonship of the SADC Organ to Nyusi in 2015, former South African President Jacob Zuma stated that the counterterrorism strategy "ensured preparedness in confronting these threats facing our continent and the world".[46]

Furthermore, in addition to SADC protocols relevant to the insurgency in

northern Mozambique, such as regional responses to drug trafficking, small-arms trafficking and human trafficking, the SADC Organ's Regional Early Warning Centre is mandated to strengthen SADC mechanisms for conflict prevention, management and resolution through the compilation of strategic assessments and analysis of regional security threats, information sharing and policy recommendations.

Despite this, SADC faces a number of structural and capacity challenges that constrain the organisation from taking a more proactive role in efforts to address extremism in the region. In the case of its procedures, the Mozambican government needs to bring the issue to SADC before it is officially tabled for discussion. As outlined above, Mozambique chose first to deny the severity of the problem before seeking outside bilateral security arrangements.

Historically, during political crises in the region, SADC has been reluctant to intervene in matters of its member states unless explicitly called on to do so by a ruling party. Being comprised largely of member states governed by liberation parties that share a common history, SADC tends to support incumbents in power, and the presidents and states act in mutual support of one another.

Furthermore, at the core of relations between the AU and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) is the principle of subsidiarity, which encourages regional structures to take the lead on situations occurring in their region or under their political jurisdiction.[47] Therefore, SADC would likely first need to give approval before the topic could be tabled at the AU's Peace and Security Council.

It is only recently that Mozambique has solicited the support of SADC and the AU in addressing the insurgency.[48] This despite repeated calls by Africans to their leaders to avoid outsourcing national security responsibilities to foreign powers, and to build the capacity of African regional bodies to handle their own security challenges.

The insurgency in northern Mozambique began more than two years ago, while a strong early warning system and good analysis may have been able to identify early markers of instability even further back. The ongoing escalation highlights the changes required in the African Peace and Security Architecture to encourage less bureaucratic and more dynamic responses to peace and security challenges as a whole.

South Africa's Response

South Africa has not yet provided military or other forms of support to the Mozambican government to address the insurgency. Defence analyst Helmoed Heitman[49] outlines several military options available to South Africa should the insurgency continue to escalate, and containment and diplomatic efforts fail. These include, for example, support in logistics, training, communications intelligence, and interdiction patrols off the coast. If the South African military did choose to become engaged, support could include aerial reconnaissance, air transport, communications intelligence, the deployment of special-forces teams, and close air support. However, as Heitman notes, effective military interventions in Mozambique will require the participation of other countries in the region. Tanzania would have to close its borders to guard against resupply through its territories, and Malawi would need to deploy forces along its border with Mozambique to prevent spill-over.

However, foreign military interventions against extremist organisations across the continent should serve as a warning to South Africa, which to date has largely avoided engaging militarily in counterterrorism operations. Many troop-contributing countries to the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) have experienced blowback attacks on their own territories by Al-Shabaab, in Kenya and Uganda in particular.

There are a variety of ways in which South Africa could provide assistance to Mozambique short of military intervention. The government, however, has made no explicit public statements on the insurgency. During President Ramaphosa's AU chair acceptance speech on 9 February 2020, he stated:

> "South Africa will also host the Extraordinary Summit on Silencing of the Guns in May 2020 to look at the implementation of the AU Master Roadmap, and at the same time respond to emerging circumstances on the African peace and security landscape. The summit must come up with real actions we, as Africans, must take to end conflicts, and deal with acts of terrorism that are raging in many countries and regions such as the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and now spreading to other parts of southern Africa as well."[50]

However, at the African Heads of Mission Conference in January 2020, which is a closed meeting for ambassadors and regional representatives, South Africa's

Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Dr Naledi Pandor, seemingly made a point of mentioning both instability in northern Mozambique and the presence of IS in southern Africa. She stated:

> "Trends in conflict and violent events during 2019 have indicated an increase in the number of conflict actors and the transnational nature of threats and vulnerabilities. Datasets and analyses point to the proliferation of rebel and extremist groups, bolder linkages between transnational organised crime and violent extremists in Africa and the Middle East, and a rise in the frequency and scale of riots and protests. Attacks by militants affiliated with the Islamic State and Daesh in the northern Mozambique province of Cabo Delgado have raised concerns about an IS presence in new territories where it has drawn allegiance from local militant groups. We should be worried, given that the attacks on Mozambique point up the presence of IS in the SADC region. History has shown that poorer regions are most vulnerable to violent external incursions as material incentives are easily disbursed to attract young people to these negative activities."[51]

Hopefully, recognition by the South African Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) of both the threat that instability in northern Mozambique poses to the entire region, as well as of the operation of IS in southern Africa, indicates movement towards action.

Towards a More Collaborative Security Paradigm: Recommendations to Southern African States

Pan-African and regional solutions to peace and security challenges on the continent are especially important today, particularly in a global context of declining multilateralism where developing nations are increasingly seeking bilateral security arrangements. The past two decades have shown that foreign military interventions in conflicts involving extremist actors often serve to rally support behind these movements and elevate their standing among international jihadist networks. The potential for creative diplomatic solutions to resolving conflicts with extremist actors diminishes when foreign militaries become involved in African conflicts. The use of private military companies, especially the Wagner

Group, which is so closely tied to the Kremlin, oftentimes introduces opaque foreign-policy objectives into conflict situations, complicating peacebuilding efforts. It is also an outsourcing of national security responsibilities, which should be fulfilled through training and capacity development.

Today, more than ever, security cannot be seen as the internal affairs of a state, and where a government's handling of an extremist threat will impact a region it is up to regional organisations to intervene.[52] The spread of extremist organisations and transnational criminal networks does not fall neatly within the boundaries of RECs, and in many cases stretches across regions. Inter-REC cooperation should be encouraged as a matching response to this, particularly on topics of migration and trafficking. There is also potential for the sharing of important lessons learned from regions that may have more experience in dealing with extremist violence.

The capacity of states in southern Africa to deal with the unique challenges posed by transnational extremist groups differs, and it is therefore important that platforms be created to encourage capacity-building and the exchange of expertise across nations. States in the region must work to review and strengthen counterterrorism legislation in compliance with international legal frameworks against terrorism, and in compliance with human rights and the rule of law. The nature of extremisms, and associated acts of terrorism, has changed considerably over the past two decades in virtually all its aspects, from the way groups recruit and disseminate propaganda, to how they plan and stage attacks. States' counterterrorism legislation, such as South Africa's 2004 POCDATARA, must be reviewed and, where necessary, strengthened to reflect these changes.

In addition, where necessary, states must bolster mutual legal-assistance laws to enable regional and international cooperation in the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of terrorism and terrorism-financing cases. As demonstrated by ongoing delays in current terrorism cases in South Africa, in addition to strengthening mutual legal-assistance laws, states must develop standard operating procedures to ensure that cooperation takes place in a timely and coordinated manner.

Across southern Africa there is a need for increased awareness among parliamentarians, policymakers, legislative drafters and civil society organisations of strategies to help citizens, especially young people, identify divisive extremist narratives, propaganda and fake news online, as well as the establishment of

programmes to promote tolerance, civic education and social cohesion.

Efforts must be made to build and/or strengthen the capacity of special investigative units, financial investigative units, prosecutors and judges to better deal with terrorism cases. This would include training on the collection and preservation of physical and electronic data, and the use of the internet for terrorist purposes. This should be done through enhanced engagement between governments, both within the region and internationally, and through the development and use of regional networks and platforms where expertise in the field and best practices can be shared.

Southern African states must develop national strategies to address extremism based on the dynamics unique to their region, their national capacities, and their realistic ability to implement these. The all-too-common copy-and-paste approach to developing national counterterrorism and Preventing/Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) strategies has proven ineffective and a wasteful use of resources. In reality, most such strategies function simply as a set of goals rather than a clear set of choices that define what a government is going to do (and not do) based on the resources available. Where international nongovernmental organisations and the international donor community are involved, states must be given the room to develop unique approaches to addressing extremism based on local knowledge and expertise, augmented by international best practices.

In developing national strategies to address extremisms in southern Africa, it has become overwhelmingly clear that good governance must be prioritised, since perceptions of marginalisation, corruption, nepotism and a lack of service delivery are what extremist actors exploit to garner support. In the southern African context in particular, efforts must be made not to strengthen the core of government at the expense of the periphery. Local elites in these regions often play a significant role in initiating or preventing conflict, and they should be included in the state-building process rather than being alienated.

Furthermore, states must move from reactive to preventative measures to address the spread and emergence of extremisms and associated terrorism violence. As the case of northern Mozambique illustrates, an early warning system that identified the movement of known Islamist extremists into Mocímboa da Praia, coupled with the town's location as a node for regional illicit trafficking and an understanding of the widespread perceptions of marginalisation by the local population, may have helped to prevent the insurgency.

Consultations with local communities to understand their security needs are paramount. Ultimately, the state's relationship with these communities will help to determine whether an extremist threat will escalate into a full-blown insurgency. Local communities can be an important source of intelligence to the state, or can choose to provide material and other forms of support to insurgents.

In Mozambique, as is the case with almost every major Islamist extremist organisation operating in Africa today, the roots of the insurgency can be traced back to individuals who received scholarships and religious education in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations. In addition, Gulf funding towards mosques, madrassas, youth centres, humanitarian organisations and civil society organisations across the continent is often contingent on the receiver's compliance with a particular Islamist agenda. African nations should not tolerate the export of fundamentalist ideologies that are disrespectful of local norms and customs, and that are socially divisive. Extensive research should be carried out into Gulf funding patterns and appropriate measures taken to ensure that any funding received is not predicated on such ideological commitments.

Policy planning to address the threat of extremisms should be informed by evidence-based research. However, a vast amount of the most cited current research in the field of terrorism studies focuses on radicalisation and the individual's reason for joining an extremist organisation. While useful, this research often ends up producing policy options that are not scaleable, and can turn attention away from larger socio-economic challenges, the potentially negative role of the state, or negative externalities produced by government security policy. In this regard, more innovative research is required which examines the relationship between extremisms and wider social, political and economic trends. It is our hope that the *Extremisms in Africa* anthology series has contributed to these efforts.

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Endnotes

1 Between 2001 and 2019, the US government has appropriated and spent an estimated $5,9 trillion on the War on Terror – roughly $32 million per hour. See Crawford (2018).

2 Institute for Economics and Peace, 2019.

3 As lead researcher on the National Security Programme at Good Governance Africa, the author has been involved in the editing of all three volumes of *Extremisms in Africa*, in addition to contributing a chapter to each. The anthology includes 44 chapters on a variety of topics relating to understanding and addressing extremism and associated acts of terrorism on the continent. In total, more than 45 authors based across Africa, Europe and the US, and drawn from a variety of fields, have contributed to the anthology.

4 African Union, 2020.

5 South Africa also has acts relevant to counterterrorism, such as the Regulation of Foreign Military Assistance Act of 1998, which applies to nationals who may have left South Africa to join extremist movements abroad, such as IS. The country is a member of the Financial Action Task Force, the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group, and the Global Counterterrorism Forum. It is a signatory to a number of acts and protocols relating to terrorism and trafficking developed and promulgated by the AU, SADC and United Nations.

6 United States Department of State, 2017.

7 The party's platform found success in vocally challenging calls for land expropriation without compensation and affirmative action policies, with an aggressive *Slaan Terug* (Fight Back) slogan and media campaign (coloured blue, orange and white, to mimic the old South African flag). See *The Conversation* (2020) and Gottschalk (2019).

8 For a discussion of 'white victimhood' and the role it plays in white supremist propaganda, see Castle et al (2020).

9 The Suidlanders – roughly translated from Afrikaans as 'southerners' or 'south-landers' – are an all-white, Christian group who believe that a race war is imminent, and that white South Africans are in mortal peril. Founded in 2006, the group claims to have over 130,000 members, but these numbers are difficult to verify as the group does not keep a public membership list. Rather than looking to commit acts of terrorism, the group prepares itself with survival and weapons training, and is planning to withdraw to a sparsely populated area in the Kalahari Desert and establish a refugee settlement for white South Africans. See McKenzie & Swails (2018).

10 Van Gelder, 2015.

11 Powell, 2019.

12 South African Police Service, 2019.

13 *The Citizen*, 2019.

14 Ibid.

15 Lauren, 2019.

16 Dlulane, 2019.

17 Mokhoali, 2019.

18 Ibid.

19 Wicks, 2020.

20 Singh, 2020.

21 Somduth, 2018.

22 Institute for Economics and Peace, 2017.

23 In October 2017, 30 militants attacked three police stations in Mocímboa da Praia, a district in the Cabo Delgado region. Since then, the ASWJ, which alternatively goes by the moniker Ansar al-Sunnah or Ahlu Sunnah Wal-Jamâa, has launched increasingly violent attacks on villagers, security installations and liquefied-natural-gas companies, ostensibly with the goal of overthrowing the old order of the National Islamic Council, which it views as having been coopted by the government, and building an Islamic state. The number of those killed in the insurgency is difficult to determine, but estimates vary from anywhere between 300 and 900.

24 Reuters, 2020; Al Jazeera, 2020.

25 Fabricius, 2020.

26 Haysom, 2018.

27 See Habiba et al (2019).

28 Frouws & Horwood, 2017.

29 IOM, 2019.

30 Ibid.

31 As cited in Haysom (2018).

32 Ibid, 12.

33 See Bonate (2018) and Habiba et al (2019).

34 Shaw et al, 2018.

35   Shaw et al, 2018:9.
36   DefenseWeb, 2019.
37   Wright, 2013.
38   Shaw et al, 2018:14.
39   Ewi & Louw-Vaudran, 2020.
40   Pirio et al, 2018.
41   Lister & Shukla, 2019.
42   See Saur (2019) and Fabricius (2019).
43   Russian News Agency, 2019.
44   Club of Mozambique, 2018.
45   See All Africa (2020).
46   DefenseWeb, 2015.
47   In July 2004, the AU adopted the Protocol of the Algiers Convention, which recognised the "linkages between terrorism and mercenarism, weapons of mass destruction, drug trafficking, corruption, transnational organised crimes, money laundering, and the illicit proliferation of small arms" as increasingly prevalent risks associated with terrorism. The protocol mandated the AU's Peace and Security Council to monitor and facilitate implementation, and to encourage RECs to play a more active role.
48   Ewi & Louw-Vaudran, 2020.
49   Heitman, 2020.
50   Ramaphosa, 2020.
51   Pandor, 2020.
52   The African Peace and Security Architecture provided a strategic shift away from non-interference in the internal affairs of member states to include the responsibility to protect; conflict prevention, management and resolution; and post-conflict reconstruction.