Assimetrias no acesso ao estado: um terreno fértil de penetração do jihadismo Islâmico?

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ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Asymmetries in access to the state: a fertile ground for the penetration of Islamic jihadism?

SUMMARY

Since the beginning of the attacks in the north of Cabo Delgado, several hypotheses explaining the conflict have highlighted the existence of ethnolinguistic tensions, particularly between the people of the coast (mostly Islamic, belonging to the Muani and Macua groups, and tend to be sympathetic to Renamo) and the Maconde population, (mostly present on the plateau, but with a noticeable presence in various parts of the province and the country). However, a critical analysis of the concept of ethnicity implies an understanding of historical coexistence, recurrent migration and population resettlement, as well as mixed marriages between different groups, which make of belonging identities dynamic, hybrid and strategic processes. Sociological literature shows that ethnic identities are often produced and imagined by elites, particularly in contexts of greater competition for access to power resources or greater socio-economic asymmetries.

The last two centuries have seen recompositions of the power relations of different ethnic groups in Cabo Delgado. From peoples confined to the high plateau, often taking refuge in Tanzania, numerous members of the Maconde population have acquired important socio-political visibility in the post- independence period. As important protagonists in the national liberation struggle, many Maconde individuals held positions in the state apparatus (particularly in defence and in the interior), and had access to large houses in the main cities and military districts. Despite the persecution to which they were subjected by the colonial regime, after Mozambique's independence the Islamic population of the coast did not have access to the same economic, social and symbolic prominence. The anticlerical policy adopted by Frelimo in the early years of independence reinforced feelings of discrimination on the part of the Islamic populations, ably capitalised on by Renamo. With the introduction of multi-partyism, Frelimo faced enormous electoral difficulties in the coastal districts. Although in the new millennium Frelimo improved election results, it was precisely on the coast that armed insurgents built their social support base.

Using analysis of data from the 2017 Census (for welfare indicators), data provided by the Ministry of Former Combatants (on pensions) and 94 semi-structured interviews with citizens living in the districts of Palma, Mocímboa da Praia, Macomia, Muidumbe and Montepuez, with their mother tongue Macua, Maconde, Muani or Mácue, we find:
1. The coastal districts of the province, mostly Islamic, do not show very significant differences in terms of welfare compared to the Maconde plateau, mostly Christian. The literacy rate and access to zinc-roofed housing is slightly higher in the plateau area, but better sanitation conditions are found along the coast. In terms of access to mobile phones or bank accounts, there are no significant differences between the coastal and plateau districts.

2. Crossing welfare indicators with the ethnolinguistic origin of individuals, high poverty rates are found within all groups, concluding that poverty in Cabo Delgado is widespread and transversal to all ethnic groups.

3. The indicators that registered a higher socio-spatial inequality index were related to access to state resources, in particular the pension of a former combatant. In the latter case, a strong concentration of beneficiaries was identified in the districts of Mueda and Muidumbe, but also in Nangade, Mocímboa da Praia and Macomia, therefore in areas of strong Maconde presence. Interviewees were largely in agreement in the association of the former combatant's subsidy to this ethnolinguistic group, although the evaluation of the justice of this favouratism is not consensual.

4. On the part of the Muani and Macua populations, the State is represented as partisan and captured by specific ethnolinguistic groups (mostly Macondes and in alliance with elements from the South). The resulting feeling of social exclusion was aggravated by the election of a Maconde as President of Mozambique, which coincided with a greater assertion of state control of natural resources in the province, a process locally interpreted as serving powerful Maconde individuals. This takeover interrupted countless clandestine activities of exploitation of timber, ivory and precious stones, affecting thousands of young people's access to income. The situation was aggravated by population resettlement processes [for mining and gas] and the limitation of access to production sites, namely agricultural land and fishing areas, feeding tension and conflict.

5. Particularly in the districts of Mocímboa da Praia and Macomia, where inter-group competition is more heated, many interviewees explained the phenomena of economic inequality by political and religious differences. They saw a restricted group of Macondes (mostly Christians and members of Frelimo) contrasted to Muanis and Macuas populations (mostly Islamic and tending to support the opposition).

The efforts to build a Mozambican identity were based on the idea of non-secular and national resistance to colonial exploitation. But the post-independence reality is that the economic disintegration of the territory and the unequal access to ex-combatants pensions between ethnolinguistic groups contradict this discourse of anti-colonial national resistance. The introduction of the ex-combatant's pension has given rise to historical tensions. Inequalities in access to public resources are an obstacle to building national unity.

It was among the Muani population of the coast that armed insurgents found an important social base for recruitment and support, but a number of other factors must be taken into account and these lead us to reject simplistic ethnic explanations:

1. The young insurgents rebelled within Islamic groups, therefore in the context of divisions and internal power struggles within Islam and within Muani and Macua ethnolinguistic groups.

2. Even if it is true that thousands of Maconde families have privileged access to ex-combatants' pensions, the reality is that this group is a minority among the Maconde, with high rates of social differentiation within this group;

3. Reports on the ground reveal the existence of a growing number of young Macondes among the ranks of rebel groups.

The reality is that corruption and nepotism that develop around the state, and the consequent fragility of public services, the feeling of democratic fragility and absence of freedom of expression, and difficulties of access to justice, combine to increase the feeling of marginalisation of the poorest groups. This may make them vulnerable to joining movements with strong identity, and populist and messianic discourses.

8. CONCLUSION

Throughout the analysis, several discourses were identified that highlight inequalities in access to power. These inequalities were often interpreted by reference to ethnic assumptions, although assuming geographical variations.

In the far north of the province, in the areas of implementation of the gas industry, the tension focuses not only on access to jobs and income, but also on access to benefits and compensation resulting from major projects. In terms of access to power, there are feelings of discrimination and disadvantage compared to foreign citizens or those from the south of the country (known as Maputecos), considered to be privileged in the access to the best jobs to the detriment of locall people. In the gas exploration areas, the Macua population tends to be represented as the great beneficiary of the resettlement and compensation processes, particularly the Macua community leaders, who assert themselves as gatekeepers between the outside and the local population. In this particular case, the discourses of self-exclusion are mostly given by Macondes, compared to the Mácus group, understood as "originating" from the district, with access to the largest plots of land and the possibility of putting them on the market.

In the district of Mocímboa da Praia, and in some areas of Macomia and Palma, particularly in places where Macondis, Muanis and Macuas coexist, the speeches tend to emphasize the privilege of the former in access to state subsidies. The statements of Muanis, but also of Macuas, tend to emphasize the politicized character of the allocation of pensions of ex-combatants (as well as the notorious "seven million" rural loans), over-concentrated among Maconde elements, locally conflated with the Frelimo party.

Economic inequalities are not only conflated in interviews with political differences, but also with religious differences, opposing,a group of Macondis (Christians and members of Frelimo) to Muani and Macua populations of the coast, mostly Islamic and tending to support the opposition.

In addition to emphasizing the inequalities between the Macuas and Macondes (particularly in access to state subsidies), in Montepuez, a district strongly marked by the dynamics of artisanal mining, interviews tend to highlight the inequalities between Mozambicans and foreigners (African and from other continents) in the process of controlling ruby exploitation.

Data from the 2017 census do not show the existence of an ethnolinguistic group that stands out for its socio-economic conditions, at least in terms of access to education, housing, sanitation, energy or consumer goods. The exception is access to public resources, such as former combatant pensions, largely concentrated in areas of larger Maconde population, and access to natural resources. In fact, a relatively small group of Maconde families show a great capacity for political influence (both at central and provincial level) in various aspects of the reality of Cabo Delgado, holding a strong power of influence down to the locality level.

In this situation, discourses tend to emerge, according to which access to state resources (pensions, subsidies and jobs, but also natural resources), is ethnically and politically conditioned, favouring Macondi groups, mostly Christian and Frelimo Party sympathisers. This phenomenon tends to generate feelings of envy, repulsion and victimisation on the part of individuals from other language groups, mainly Muanis but also Macuas.

The arrival in power of President Filipe Nyusi coincided with a new government posture, more incisive in the supervision and control of natural resources, namely through the repression of illegal miners in Montepuez, as well as Operation Tronco, restrucing the timber trade, and the burning of ivory, to the detriment of extensive local networks, which operated outside the law. The brutal action of state forces in the protection of private economic interests participated by prominent Maconde individuals (notably Montepuez Ruby Mining) was locally understood, in various circles, as an opportunity for this

ethnolinguistic group to appropriate state resources for its own benefit, to the detriment of the other groups in the province.

The efforts to build a Mozambican identity were based on the idea of non-secular and national resistance to colonial exploitation. But the post-independence reality is that the economic disintegration of the territory (observable through greater socio-economic proximity to Tanzania) and the unequal access to state resources among ethnolinguistic groups contradict an inclusive discourse of anti-colonial national resistance. This aggravates social tensions. This situation resurrects historical tensions between coastal and inland populations, often confused as Muanis and Macondes, but also as Islamic and Christian, and sometimes as Frelimo and Renamo. Inequalities in access to public resources are an obstacle to the construction of national unity.

On the other hand, the corruption and nepotism that develop around the state, the consequent fragility of public services, the feeling of democratic fragility and absence of freedom of expression, or the difficulties of access to justice, increase the feeling of marginalization of groups on the coast. This makes them comparatively more vulnerable to joining movements with strong identity, populist and messianic discourses. The reality is that it was precisely among Islamic coastal populations, in areas of historical resentment, that radical Islamic movements found their bases of recruitment for violent and radical purposes.

It should be noted that the manipulation of these local contradictions for political purposes, according to the interests of conflicting groups, is not only a recent practice. The colonial state skilfully exploited the historical contradictions between the people of the coast and the plateau, and the religious question has fuelled contradictions within Frelimo itself. In the post-independence period, Renamo skillfully exploited the dissatisfaction of Muslims on the coast with Frelimo's deeply secular stance. However, even during the Samora Machel government, the Islamic Council of Mozambique achieved a strategic rapprochement with Frelimo. After the General Peace Agreement, the different political parties remained aware of the importance of an alliance with Islam, as indeed with other religious congregations. The attempts to co-opt these religious movements never assumed a unidirectional sense, the various congregations having invested in strategic alliances with the power.

Despite the presence of ethnic tensions and conflicts, any simplistic understanding of conflict in Cabo Delgado based on the existence of a pole of ethno-religious contradiction, between Muanis and Macondes or between Islamists and Christians should be avoided. Although it is true that it was among the Muani population of the coast that an important social basis for recruitment was found, it is important to attend to other aspects that make that situation particularly complex:

First, far from being a phenomenon of aggression against individuals from other ethno-religious groups, the young insurgents' revolt was within Islamic groups, therefore in the context of divisions and internal power disputes within Islam.

Second, reports on the ground reveal the existence of a growing number of young Macondes among the ranks of rebel groups.

Third, while it is true that thousands of Maconde families have privileged access to a number of state funds, existing data shows that this group constitutes a minority, with thousands of Maconde excluded from such access. In Muidumbe, during the election campaign for the 2019 legislative elections, there was a greater involvement of young people in caravans of opposition parties, a scenario that would have been unthinkable some 10 years ago. These elements illustrate the existence of a strong social hierarchy within this ethnolinguistic group.

SOME SUGGESTIONS:

In this scenario, it is important to continue a set of studies on the existing socio-economic tensions in the north of the country, not only in the north-east of Cabo Delgado, but also in similar socio-economic areas, marked by a long history of disintegration and feelings of socio-economic discrimination, namely in the northern coastal strip up to the north of Zambezia, as well as several areas of Niassa.

On the other hand, special attention should be paid to the social situation of a "waithood" youth [a group restricted by lack of opportunity that cannot establish economic independence and that remains waiting to pass on to formal adulthood.]. In places of great investment in natural resources and the creation of great social expectations, the existence of masses of more educated young people, but without socio-economic integration, moreover, in an emerging consumer society, makes them particularly vulnerable to illegal or violent activities, or captureable by radical populist discourses.

The development of more and better public services, particularly in health and education, will be key to promoting greater social inclusion. Investment should be made in infrastructure and the creation of services to support productive activities.

The narratives of anti-colonial resistance should be more inclusive, highlighting the different forms of resistance and involvement of different ethnolinguistic groups in order to strengthen the sense of belonging and political inclusion.

It is also important to promote strong investment in inclusive, employment-generating and socially inclusive economic activities, seeking, as far as possible, to diversify the benefited populations, not only in terms of gender, religious and ethnolinguistic.

Conducting mass communication campaigns promoting social cohesion issues, highlighting traditions of intercultural communication, involving religious leaders and opinion makers in disseminating these messages.