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SADC Strategies to Overcome Religion-inspired Conflicts in the Region: An Intellectual Peek from the SADC Mission in Mozambique

Vengai Tabinga[1] and Douglas Gwite[2]

Abstract

The study critically evaluates the strategies aimed at ameliorating or overcoming religious-inspired conflicts in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region using the Cabo Delgado conflict in Northern Mozambique as a case study. The study and thrust stems from the background that Africa has been struggling to bring about positive peace in religion-motivated conflicts. What is known is that the African Union Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and its regional subordinate organs, such as the SADC Organ on Politics Defence and Security. do have conflict prevention strategies. However, missing in critical analysis is the efficacy of these strategies, given the enduring nature of religious motivated conflicts. The main strand permeating this research is the inquiry contributing to the continued escalation of the Cabo Delgado conflict in the presence of SADC conflict management strategies. The study is informed by interpretivism theoretical and methodological paradigms. It adopts a qualitative approach and uses online interviews to collect data from the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) troops deployed in Pemba, Macomia, Muidumbe and Nagande. The major finding from the study is that the SADC does not have a doctrine that specifically responds to religion-inspired conflicts. There is poor response mechanisms when early warning about conflicts is given. The failure of SADC to prevent and resolve the conflict is also attributable to the Mozambican government's

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inability to respond to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) warning of the conflict. The article recommends that SADC come up with a Counter Religion-Inspired Insurgence Doctrine (CRIID).

Keywords: religious conflict, peace-building, peace-keeping, direct violence, structural violence, cultural violence.

INTRODUCTION

The conflict in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique, has continued unabated to the detriment of sustainable peace in that country and the region as a whole. The conflict has not affected Mozambique's Northen Province alone, but the whole of Mozambique and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In this context, what is generally known is that SADC has a conflict early warning and response mechanisms. Unknown in the discourse is the efficacy of these strategies in the context of religion-inspired conflicts. To support the assertion, Matsinhe (2021) asserts that the inefficacy of SADC in dealing with religiously motivated violence has been observed in Cabo Delgado.

Despite a solidarity stance with Mozambique and the deployment of a force, the ability of SADC to address the conflict in Cabo Delgado has been put under the spotlight by Mozambique, which has sought assistance beyond SADC from the European Union (EU) and private paramilitary organisations such as Wagner Group/Grupa Vagnera from Russia (Peter, 2021). Apart from logistical and training support and military contingents, the SADC's Organ on Politics, Defence and Security has not gone beyond and tapped into the need for conflict prevention through addressing cultural violence. This inability to address cultural and structural violence leading to continued direct violence has led to instability in Mozambique. From this perspective, it is imperative that effective strategies be found with a view to addressing religiously motivated violence in Mozambique and the region in general, which is the focus of this article. If a holistic model

of conflict prevention and resolution is not provided, the conflict has the potential to spread beyond the province only, but into neighbouring SADC countries.

This will entail a volatile region characterised by religious conflicts such as what is prevailing in West Africa with Boko Haram and in the Horn of Africa with al-Shabaab. To address the research gap, the study is premised on addressing three objectives: to evaluate the SADC conflict prevention model in Cabo Delgado; to identify militating factors towards the achievement of positive peace; and to provide strategies for the prevention of religion-inspired conflicts in the SADC.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This portion of the research output fleshes out the main theoretical strands on which this research is premised. The study is informed by the Theory of Peace. However, inherent theoretical gaps, leading to the development of a conceptual framework to address the gaps. Thus, the conceptual framework delineated the study to focus on the implemented strategies, the challenges and the recommended strategies.

Galtung (2005) propounded the Theory of Peace whose basic tenets relate to the concepts of positive peace and negative peace. For positive peace to thrive, he avers, there must be an absence of physical, cultural and structural violence. He argues that much of peace and conflict studies (PCS) have tended to focus on the 'end of war', which translates to eradication of physical violence paving way for the existence of negative peace. In this same vein, Ndeche and Iroye (2022) assert that the African Union (AU)'s conflict prevention and resolution have tended to focus on the eradication of physical violence at the expense of structural inhibitions to growth and performance and cultural violence. It can, therefore, be seen from

the foregoing that the concept of conflict management in Africa and SADC presents a conceptual and implementation lacuna as the focus is on the eradication of war, thus silencing the guns without silencing the factors behind the guns which, in the study reflects a poor conflict prevention model. By and large, the theory focuses on the achievement of three fundamentals: 'the end of war' (negative peace); 'harmonious relationship' (positive peace) and 'justice' (structural peace) (Leshem and Halperin, 2020).

The conflict in Mozambique has been and continues to be an ethnocentric conflict (cultural violence) which has generated structural inhibitions (structural violence) and this has led to an outbreak and resurgence of physical violence (direct violence). In this, Vumbunu (2021) critically argues that the implementation of conflict measures by SADC has been devoid of the fundamentals of eradicating structural and cultural violence, thus in the context of Theory of Peace, there exists an implementation or conceptual gap on the model that has been in use. Basing on this gap, the study inquires as to what exactly have been the measures or strategies used by SADC as preventative strategies to address religious differences before they degenerated into physical violence. It, therefore, indicates that whatever model to be used by SADC, its success hinges on the eradication of structural and cultural violence in Cabo Delgado. It is important to note that the theory was developed during an era when religious conflicts had not taken centre stage, thus no mention is given on the complexities of this phenomenon, hence presenting a theoretical gap that must be addressed by the study. The latter motivated the study to question if there is a holistic conflict prevention and resolution framework developed by the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security to address the peculiarity of religion-inspired conflicts.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework undergirding this research was designed to address theoretical gaps in the theoretical framework. To this end, the study examines the first independent variable (IV), the peace-building efforts by SADC in the conflict. To start with, the failure of a conflict prevention and resolution process in Africa has been argued to be dependent on eight factors as outlined by Abdi (2012) in Leshem and Halperin (2020). These are the number of warring parties involved; lack of a proactive peace agreement before peace enforcement; existence of spoilers; a collapsed state; number of soldiers involved; resource curse; demands for succession; and hostile neighbouring states. For the Cabo Delgado conflict, all the above apply. Most importantly, the major stumbling block to the conflict has been the lack of institutional capacity by the state and SADC to deal with the conflict which, in the context of Chigudu (2018) and Vumbunu (2021), led SADC to intervene under peace enforcement four years into the conflict. This resource gap motivated the study to interrogate if SADC had adequate resources to mount effective conflict prevention and resolution strategies in Cabo Delgado.
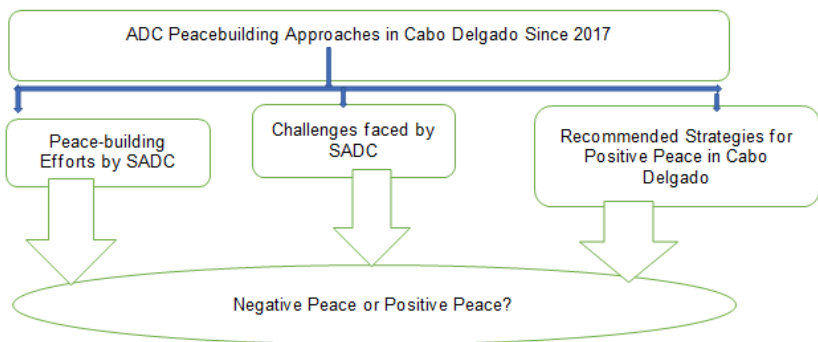
Figure 1: The Peace-building Mechanisms by SADC to the Gabo Delgado Conflict: A Conceptual Overview (Researchers, 2024).

The concept of conflict prevention, as propounded and enunciated by Boutros-Ghali is the art and science of preventing tomorrow's conflict today. Its development as a global norm and field of practice came in the Boutros-Ghali era as UN Secretary General, with the development of "preventative diplomacy" in the 1992 Agenda for Peace. It, therefore, requires the proactive identification of the drivers of conflict which, in the context of Galtung (2008), are situated in the cultural dynamics and structural setup of a state. If these are not noted and if noted and ignored, they definitely will degenerate into direct violence (Payne, 2020).

From the UN to the European Union (EU), the latter has adopted conflict prevention as an explicit objective through the Lisbon Treaty (Payne, 2020). The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) also developed a state-centric conflict prevention model that is meant to prevent conflict between member states and intra-state conflicts (Della-Giacoma 2011). In Africa, the African Union (AU) has also developed preventative strategies within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). While there are measures meant to prevent conflicts from the UN, down to individual member states in regional groupings, the practice of such strategies has been criticised as being weak. This, therefore, brings to the fore a practical gap where regional groupings do have conflict prevention strategies but are reluctant to implement them. This gap motivated the study to interrogate what could be the rationale behind poor implementation of preventive measures. Conspicuous from the debate is the lack of well specified strategies designed for religion-inspired conflicts.

The role of the UN in the prevention of religion-inspired conflicts is seen in Bosnia. The Bosnian War, one of the most conspicuous religion-inspired conflicts, started in 1992 and ended in 1995. To resolve the conflict, the first international response by the UN was the imposition of an arms embargo on the Yugoslav government.

Peace-keeping efforts and negotiations were also implemented but they failed to bring an end to the conflict. In his quantitative study, Akaras (2024) acknowledges that the end of the conflict through the Dayton Agreement of December 14, 1995, signified the end of direct violence, but the country still experiences deep-rooted cultural and structural violence. To this end, Shaukat (2020) asserts that religious conflicts have remained unresolved because the UN and all peace-building players focus on the direct violence without looking at the cultural and religious causes that then manifest in direct violence. She further argues that religiously motivated violence is best cured through promotion of religious tolerance that must be socialised from birth in a lifelong continuum and that the UN need to launch an international campaign of religious tolerance. Related to the Bosnia conflict, Buyukcanga (2011) conducted a study on conflict prevention strategies post the war and made the conclusion that peace education was being used as a preventative tool to foster coexistence. However, he acknowledges that the policy, though clear, not all communities had embraced it. Despite all these strategies, Bosnia remains highly polarised, indicative of an absence of a holistic model that responds to the management of religion-inspired conflicts. This lack of knowledge on what constitutes the best conflict prevention strategies drove the study to search for such knowledge from participants in the study.

Related to the preceding Bosnia discourse, Sudan has continued to suffer through ethnic cleansing, while the world's attention has been diverted to the conflicts in the Ukraine and Gaza. The current conflict pitting the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the Sudanese Army has been taken to be the power struggle between the incumbent transitional president, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy, General Mohamed Hamden "Hemedti" Dagalo. However, it is just an extension of the Darfur genocide that happened about two decades ago because the RSF have embarked on an ethnic cleansing of non-Arab speaking populations in the Darfur region. To

this end, a total of 1 500 non-Arab speaking civilians were killed and more than 20 000 displaced to Chad on 4 November 2023, in Ardamata, El Geneina, West Darfur, by the RSF and the allied Janjaweed militia (Curtin, 2024). It is important to note that a convergence is drawn between the conflict in Bosnia and West Darfur in that there have been intervention strategies by the UN, the AU and despite the increased presence of these intervention mechanisms on the ground, the RSF have continued on the rampage of ethnic cleansing. The other convergence relates to the peace-building measures where the focus in Sudan and Darfur has been on addressing the directive violence symptoms without addressing the underlying cultural and structural aspects which, is indicative of lack of conflict prevention. The overall summation of the strategic imperatives on the two conflicts is that the strategies by different players tended to focus on the eradication of direct violence at the expense of cultural and structural violence, thus aim at achieving negative rather than positive peace. To this end, the argument of Shaukat (2020) that the cure to religious conflicts does not rest in peace enforcement or addressing direct violence, but practising tolerance needs to be upheld.

The conflict in Cabo Delgado has reflected the need by SADC to assert its position not only on conflict resolution in the region, but also on conflict prevention. If SADC fails to address the conflict, chances are that it will spill over to neighbouring countries, thus perpetuating the spread of Islamic extremism within the region. In terms of strategies, the SADC deployed a SAMIM contingent in 2021. While the initiative is admirable, previous military interventions involving troops from African Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have not completely resolved conflicts. This is evidenced by Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda in Nigeria and Mali, respectively. Zimbabwe and Tanzania deployed troops during the RENAMO conflict and while they managed to destroy its bases, they failed to destroy its ideology (Matsinhe, 2021).

The operationalisation of the AU Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) in 2008 was meant to provide timely information on evolving violent conflicts based on specifically developed indicators to help anticipate and prevent conflicts on the continent. On April 16, 2024, the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) met to discuss the obstacles to the effectiveness of the CEWS. This followed the last session in which it received a briefing from the CEWS in August 2023. During the latter, the AU Commission was advised to urgently review and adapt its framework of response to insurgence and fundamentalism in line with contemporary global trends, an indication that the Commission had a non-responsive doctrine and practice to modern fundamentalism and insurgency. One of the problems that the April session of the PSC discussed was the lack of effective communication between the early warning mechanism and those responsible for initiating the early response, the AU Commission and PSC (PSC Report, 2024). The study was, therefore, motivated to interrogate the nature of the CEWS and why it has become characterised by delayed responses against its conceptualisation of early response mechanism.

It is most probable that what is obtaining at the CEWS could be the situation with Regional Early Warning Systems (REWS). The SADC Regional Early Warning Center (REWC) was launched on 12 July 2010 by the then Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation, HE President Armando Guebuza. Like the CEWS, it is mandated with the integration of information from National Early Warning Centers (NEWCs) and the REWC itself and is expected to link with the Continental Early Warning Centre at the African Union (Bosman and Gruzd, 2022). Given this mandate, a knowledge gap exists as to why the conflict degenerated into its current state, given that there was room to prevent it. In the context of Bosman and Gruzd (*ibid.*), the conflict was identified roughly 10 years ago through the African Peer Review Mechanism

(APRM). After noting the early warning signs, the review mission advised the government to take swift action to prevent the conflict from escalating. No documented efforts were done by the government until violent conflicts erupted in 2017 (*ibid.*). This lack of knowledge on the action which the government of Mozambique took since the APRM review, drove the study to look for the strategies that the government embarked on to avert escalation.

Positive peace, in the context of Galtung (2005), relates to a situation where there is no cultural, structural and direct violence. In the context of Abdi (2012), the concept of peace-building in Africa needs to be revisited because it is not adaptive to contemporary threats. The traditional peace-building approaches of disarming, monitoring elections, demobilisation, repatriation of refugees and promotion of human rights are steps towards positive peace but apply mostly to conflicts induced by the Cold War, and not the contemporary conflicts in Mozambique, Somalia, Burundi, Nigeria and others that are religiously motivated. In this context, Haye (2022) asserts that there is need to expand the process of peace-building to include proactive measures and not to be reactive.

Religious fundamentalism-linked conflicts are enduring as can be seen in Nigeria, Mozambique and Somalia. Nweke and Chukwugozie (2018) are of the view that one aspect of conflict which rendered the OAU irrelevant and is likely to render the AU ineffective in conflict management, is the failure to appreciate the obscurantism of religion. Government issues have also been highlighted by IIAG (2017) as negating positive peace and these include authoritarian rule, kleptocracy, electoral impasse and serious abuse of state power and lack of accountability. According to Gumede (2017), the prolonged crises in Southern Africa are attributable to the liberation movements' militaristic rule. The liberation movements in the context of Gumede (*ibid.*) have established some power entitlements

where differences in ideology and political contestations are interpreted as neo-colonialism, thus structural violence has continued unabated to the detriment of positive peace.

Erhiorin (2023) puts forward the argument that lack of political will, weak institutional framework and financial status of member states are some challenges that have negated conflict management. In the same vein, Leijenaar (2020) links the challenges of the AU to the weakness in the functioning of the strategic Headquartes in Addis Ababa which in the opinion of the of the study could be not forthcoming in giving doctrinal direction and adaptive response to the contemporary threats of insurgency bedevilling Africa such as those in Mozambique, Somalia and Nigeria. This knowledge gap meant that the study ought to delve into the AU doctrine that guides the SADC doctrine on dealing with religion-inspired conflicts and insurgence.

Unlike in the context of the R2P doctrine, under Pillar Number 2, where the international community can intervene to protect civilians, the AU lacks the institutional apparatus to intervene without state consent. Interventions in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1998 and Lesotho in 1998 and 2017, were based on the host government's consent, thus in as much as other SADC member states sensed the need to prevent escalation of the conflict in Cabo Delgado during its emergence, the government assured SADC, that the situation was still under control (Ntaka, 2023). SADC has never undertaken an intervention without a member state's consent and it would require the UN Security Council approval under Article 53 of the Charter to intervene without consent (Svicevic and Walker, 2021). This is the problem with African conflict prevention and resolution where states remain dominant even in regional groupings.

In the context of Svenson (2021), peace settlements are difficult to salvage in religion-inspired conflicts. He argues that generic strategies which have been put in place include and are not limited

to, constitutional secularism, religious freedom, religious power-sharing, religious autonomy, legalisation of religious political parties, inclusion of religious civil society actors and religious bonding. The aspect of ideological paradigm shift and adoption of proactive measures is lamented by Ani and Ojakorotu (2021). The formation of the OAU and later the AU, occurred during a religious fundamentalist free epoch. In as much as there were isolated cases of religious and ethnic conflicts as the Rwandan genocide of 1994, religious extremism had not reared an ugly head as currently is its state, even though Nweke and Chukwugozie (2018) are of the view that the AU should go back to the drawing board and reconstruct the conflict resolution mechanisms to conform and address contemporary religious fundamentalist conflicts. Kolapo (2022), augmenting the preceding argument, highlights that the most persistent and enduring conflicts in Africa are culture- and religion-based such as the Somali, the Nigerian, the Cabo Delgado, North and South Sudan conflicts. This, in itself, is a clear indication that the AU is using a defunct or obsolete mechanism to address the most enduring conflicts on the continent. It, therefore, subsists that there is need for change in the conflict management mechanism as argued by Nweke and Chukwugozie (2018) and Kolapo (2022) to address extremism. It, therefore, logically follows that the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security should also restructure its conflict response model as derived from APSA and also contextualise it to suit the SADC geopolitical landscape.

In Mozambique, Ntaka (2023) attributes the emergence and continued existence of the Cabo Delgado conflict to poor governance. It is important to note that many African countries reel under authoritarian rule and this level of poor governance, normalised by the AU, makes it difficult to deal with those member states (Ajayi, Gukurume and Bangura, 2022). The preceding argument is supported by Bellamy (2014), who asserts that one missing ingredient in conflict resolution is democracy of member states. There is need for urgent

reforms within national governments and a change in national security doctrine to make their highest priority the human security. This is because peace-building starts at state level before regional initiatives. There is need for public trust, responsive governance and local participation, cooperation of the local political elite and, above all, well-funded and well-trained standby forces and diplomats.

Shaukat (2020) argues that religiously motivated violence is best cured through promotion of religious tolerance which must be socialised from birth in a lifelong continuum and that the UN need to launch an international campaign of religious tolerance. Abbink (2020) argues that conflict resolution strategies in Mozambique should be centred on a Three Point Framework which seeks to address: the politics of marginalisation and exclusion; arms trafficking and religious violence; and inter-religious dialogue and peace education. Given the forgoing, the study uses these as a basis which informed the generation of more strategies from the participants. Matsinhe (2021) concludes that the conflict in Mozambique requires short-term and long-term strategies where military intervention should then be part of the short-term strategies. Military interventions should provide a springboard for long-term conflict prevention strategies. The strategies in this conflict entail consulting with a wide range of stakeholders, including citizens, media practitioners, researchers, civic and faith-based organisations, policy-makers and decision-makers. There is also need for proactive measures to conflict prevention which include peace education from kindergarten up to university level and beyond, covering conflict prevention, management and resolution.

STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY
The study was informed by interpretivism methodological paradigm due to the need to construct knowledge and meaning from the opinions, attitudes and beliefs of the SAMIM contingent in Cabo Delgado. As informed by the philosophical view, the study adopted an

inductive approach. The case study design was adopted with Pemba, Macomia, Muidumbe and Nagande being the selected cases. The rationale behind this purposive selection was that the Pemba headquarters would provide a general overview of strategies adopted by SADC and the government in preventing the conflict and subsequently to resolve it after prevention failure. The other three districts presented pioneer deployments of the SADC contingent, thus were chosen for the detailed records of the conflict since the beginning of SAMIM. Ten (**n=10**) participants drawn from SAMIM headquarters in Pemba and from the districts of Macomia, Muidumbe and Nagande were interviewed due to their appointments in SAMIM and their involvement in conflict management.

FINDINGS

Divergent views came from the participants on whether SADC and the Mozambican government employed conflict prevention strategies in Cabo Delgado. Generally, the sentiments pointed to lack of preventive strategies by both parties with Participant D asserting that the Mozambican government did not employ any conflict prevention strategies because it ignored early warning signs of the conflict and had this to say;

> … If the government had taken heed of the early warning signs of the conflict, the latter could have been prevented but the government downplayed such warning well before 2017. It is also common knowledge brother that when the first shots were fired by the Islamists and SADC felt that there was need to assist, the government downplayed the magnitude of the conflict up to a time when it had become overstretched.

This thesis is supported by Bosman and Gruzd (2022), who argue that the conflict was identified roughly 10 years ago through the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). After noting the early warning signs, the review mission advised the government to take swift action to prevent the conflict from escalating. No documented efforts were made by the government until violent conflicts erupted in 2017 (*ibid.*).

Moving away from the role of the government in preventing the conflict, the general understanding from the participants was that there were no efforts by SADC to address the structural and cultural violence prior to the outbreak of direct violence in October 2017. To this end, Participants F and G went on to describe SADC as a regional body whose approach to conflict prevention and resolution is controlled by the affected state. If the affected state decides to downplay the early warning signs of a conflict, the regional body does not intervene, something different when the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is implemented. The arguments by the participants are in sync with the arguments raised in the context of the AU in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sahel region in that Matsinhe (2021; 2024) argues that the role of the AU has been more of peace enforcement than conflict prevention. Drawing from the AU approach, Matsinhe further asserts that the conflict in Cabo Delgado could have been prevented, had member states encouraged diplomatic initiatives and encouraged the Mozambican government to address issues of democracy, governance and marginalisation which were being raised by RENAMO as an opposition party and the generality of those in Cabo Delgado (*ibid.*). The primary data dovetails with Chigudu (2019) who asserts that the conflict in Cabo Delgado degenerated into a violent one because of the comradeship of revolutionary governments who cannot criticise each other on governance and democratic issues.

One problem that was raised as negating the prevention and resolution of the conflict hinged on a poor Early Warning and Response Mechanism by SADC. Within the same argument, Participant E had to relate the Cabo Delgado situation to the Mali conflict in 2012 in that he took part as an observer. He argued that the response mechanism of the ECOWAS was just bad and could not mobilise the standby force to enforce peace. This led to the creation of the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC)…

> The situation that we find here in Cabo Delgado reflects the usual nature of African conflict prevention and resolution discourse because the response mechanism is just fragile. I witnessed this in Mali and as we speak, where is Mali now?

In the context of SADC, Moyo, Larue and Huits (2021) argue that one of the challenges to conflict prevention which led to the escalation of the Cabo Delgado conflict, also affecting the AU, is the early warning-response nexus with the latter coming late. There is lack of effective communication between the early warning mechanism and those responsible for initiating the early response, the AU Commission and PSC in the case of the AU conflict prevention architecture, while at SADC, there is poor communication between National Early Warning Centers (NEWCs) and the REWC. The problem is also experienced between the REWC and the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security.

On a divergent view, the failure to prevent and resolve religion-inspired conflicts in SADC and Africa as a whole has been blamed on lack of a clear doctrinal framework that is responsive to religious extremism by APSA. In line with the preceding argument, Participant C had this to say:

> ...The government was reluctant to take heed of the early warning signs of the conflict. Moreso, the SADC conflict management doctrine has not been perfected to respond to religion-inspired conflicts.

His submission is at convergence with Ndeche and Iroye (2022) who argue how the AU has a fragile and traditional approach to conflict management that prefers peace-keeping and ignore the conflict prevention measures. Acknowledging the doctrinal gap, in the last Peace and Security Council (PSC) meeting in April 2024, the AU Commission directed that the APSA was to refine its doctrine to come up with strategies that would respond to religious fundamentalism-inspired conflicts.

In relation to the same question on the challenges that have affected conflict prevention and resolution in Cabo Delgado, Participant G lamented the lack of political will and commitment to regionalism. He asserts that SADC, just like other regional groupings, lacked the required collaboration and collectiveness when it comes to conflict prevention. He cites the reluctance of the body to intervene when the conflict started in 2017 and, instead, held several meetings which produced solidarity messages other than intervention to prevent the conflict from escalating.

According to Gumede (2017), the prolonged crises in Southern Africa are attributable to the liberation movements' militaristic rule. The liberation movements in the context of Gumede (2017) have established some power entitlements where differences in ideology and political contestations are interpreted as neo-colonialism. Therefore, grievances that are raised and require to be addressed to avoid escalation into conflicts are taken to represent neo-colonialism. The argument is also supported by Aeby (2018) who asserts that while democracy cannot be the overarching guarantor of peace and stability, democratic deficit, lack of accountability and poor governance in the regional groupings have given rise to lack of cohesion and the ineffectiveness of the regional conflict management architecture. In line with the above arguments, Sebudubudu, (2010) and Jobbins (2017) argue how for SADC, the threat to ensuring effective collective security is in governance deficit where governments have run down economies, have developed into kleptocratic avarice governments characterised by corruption, undemocratic tendencies without the member states being critical of each other to solve these structural inhibitions.

Issues to do with poor financing of conflict prevention and resolution strategies came up. Generally, the participants felt that though some countries were more determined to actively manage the conflict in Cabo Delgado, the same problems of underfunding and

poor infrastructure affecting the AU were also affecting SADC. The submissions by the participants relating to underfunding were also raised by Erhiorin (2023), who argues how the AU had become an open system subject to manipulation by the funders such as the UN and the US, thus could not come up with homegrown solutions without being compromised by the exogenous funding.

During the interviews, the withdrawal of SAMIM from Cabo Delgado became very topical in all the discussions with the participants highlighting the intricacies of the mission as regards its failures rather than the successes. Participant B at the strategic HQ in Pemba had said:

> … SAMIM is leaving Mozambique, not because the business is finished, no. As you could have heard, there was an attack on 10 May at the district headquarters in Macomia and this in itself has given the Islamist a sense of victory over SADC and are now moving into the second phase of the terrorist attacks. The decision to withdraw when the insurgency is actually increasing raises much questions. Whatever the decision, it has more to do with lack of funding and logistical support and lack of cohesion in the SADC. Why are we leaving when there are renewed attacks in Macomia and Quissanga districts?

Participant C argued that the failure of SAMIM as it withdraws should be seen in the context of the role that the Mozambican government has played. The government has negatively affected the efficacy of SADC in this conflict. He argued that at a diplomatic level, Mozambique had resisted regional involvement by keeping SADC at bay since 2017 despite the rapidly deteriorating security situation. SADC was only roped in following the Palma attack. One other aspect that has led to the failure of this mission hinges on the government's lack of trust on the capabilities of SADC member states to deal with a religion-inspired insurgence because without consulting SADC, the government fast-tracked a bilateral deal for Rwanda to send troops.

In addition, Participant A also argued that the failure of SAMIM in both prevention and resolution emanated from the selective

preferences that was given to bilateral agreements between Rwanda and Tanzania, at the expense of SAMIM, thus bringing about a breakdown in trust between SAMIM, Rwanda and Mozambique's security forces. Challenges on the ground were also compounded by political and diplomatic rivalries that appear to have taken precedence over security objectives. In this regard the renewed attack at Macomia and the next phases of conflict resolution is mostly likely to be undertaken by Rwanda, given that about 2 000 Rwandan troops are to be deployed in the province. In a situation which undermines the SADC bloc, Mozambique has not shown interest in renewing the SAMIM mandate but has instead requested further assistance from Rwanda.

Generally, the participants thought that religious problems would definitely require religious solutions. They also raised the issues relating to democracy, freedoms and good governance, given that in most cases, the grievances may not only be religious but multifaced as has been seen in Cabo Delgado. Submitting his contribution to the need for strategies, Participant C had the following;

> … I think there is need for religious freedoms, laws that also regulate the theological space so that fundamentalism and hate are not propagated through religion. I also feel that the government has to do more in terms of enacting laws that govern religious political parties because these require special treatment and cannot be treated as ordinary political parties.

His sentiments are echoed by Svenson (2021) who argues that constitutional secularism, religious freedom, religious power-sharing, religious autonomy, legalisation of religious political parties, inclusion of religious civil society actors and religious bonding are some of the strategies that can be used to avert and resolve religious conflicts. Above all, there is need for member states to open up the democratic space to avoid structural violence.

Participant J argued that the reason conflict prevention and resolution have not been effective lies in the lack of a clear doctrine

that can respond effectively to religion-inspired conflicts. He is supported by the PSC Report (2023; 2024) in that the AU Commission directed APSA to review the current AU doctrine to respond to religion-inspired insurgence. In line with the argument by participant J, participant F, submitted the following;

> … The problem that we have here is about our preventive doctrine. It's purely responsive to the ordinary intra-state insurgence. What we need as AU and SADC is an endogenous doctrine that is purely responsive to religion-inspired conflicts. In addition to this there is need to provide the necessary infrastructure and training for it to be fully implemented. Have you ever thought why Mozambique is preferring Rwanda to end this conflict? It's because Rwanda at state level is equipped with a fighting doctrine that is responsive to religion-inspired insurgence, unlike SADC. So, there is need for the AU, the SADC and other regional groupings to come up with a Counter Religion-inspired Insurgence Doctrine (CRIID).

The preceding submission dovetails with the arguments in literature where Ojakorotu (2021) argues that the institutions within the AU need to be restructured to respond to contemporary conflicts.

In the context of some participants, strategies were not to be confined to the AU or to SADC but were to be championed by the UN, then customised to suit regional and state contexts. In this line of argument Participant I argued that;

> … We need to have preventive measures that include and not limited to, religious tolerance and this must be promoted from early childhood. There is also need for peace education that in all sundry and purpose must address fundamentalism.

The above submissions relate well with the argument of Shaukat (2020) who argues how religious motivated violence is best cured through promotion of religious tolerance which must be socialised from birth in a lifelong continuum and that the UN need to launch an international campaign of religious tolerance. In support, Abbink (2020) argues that conflict resolution strategies in Mozambique should be centred on a Three Point Framework that seeks to address:

the politics of marginalisation and exclusion; arms trafficking and religious violence; and interreligious dialogue and peace education.

DISCUSSION

The Mozambican government was warned of the conflict by African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) a decade before the conflict erupted in 2017 but was reluctant to address the cultural and structural inhibitions that were to manifest themselves through a violent conflict in 2023. It is important to note that these grievances; poor governance, economic mismanagement and marginalisation did not emerge during the current conflict but also during the RENAMO-FRELIMO conflict and because of the government's reluctance, they became the grievances in the current conflict in what could be described as a Greed and Grievance conflict (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004) entangled in fundamentalism. In as far as the SADC early warning system was monitoring the development of the conflict in Cabo Delgado, the early warning signals did not in any way assist because the government downplayed the magnitude of the conflict to the extent that SADC could not deploy. Even after the 2017 attacks, the government continued to downplay the security situation until it escalated. The response to this conflict by SADC, given the foregoing has been mainly peace enforcement through SAMIM than prevention.

The challenges negating the achievement of positive peace in Cabo Delgado include lack of effective communication between the early warning mechanism and those responsible for initiating the early response. There is poor communication between NEWCs and the REWC. The problem is also experienced between the REWC and the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security. The other problem has been the weak doctrinal framework of the SADC as derived from the AU. There is no clear strategy or doctrine that addresses religious motivated violence in SADC. This stems from the fact that the APSA is still in the process of refining the existing doctrine as directed by the AU Commission in April 2024. The other issue is that religion-inspired

conflicts, also linked to marginalisation, are difficult to prevent and resolve, especially if those that are supposed to implement the prevention and resolution are part to the grievances, one aspect that was noted in Nigeria, Somalia and Mozambique.

The SADC revolutionary governments have developed a comradeship and an esprit de corps that discourages them from being critical of each other and, in the process, allows structural and cultural violence to degenerate into direct conflicts. The poor governance, economic mismanagement, corruption and marginalisation of the Cabo Delgado province was there for the SADC to see and act upon it as advised by the NEWC and REWC, but it did nothing. One other aspect which is a challenge in SADC is the role of the state in conflict prevention and resolution. Unlike in the R2P doctrine where member states can just intervene without the consent of the affected member, SADC member states cannot intervene without the invitation and consent of the affected member state, one of the reasons the Cabo Delgado conflict degenerated into a violent conflict because the government downplayed the magnitude of the conflict. By the time, it realised that it needed SADC intervention, the slow response mechanism, as already highlighted, forced the country to look for help outside SADC. One issue that stalled conflict prevention was the cautious approach to extremism by member states, lest the countries imported terrorism onto their doorsteps.

On the intricacies of SAMIM withdrawal from Cabo Delgado in the face of renewed onslaught by the fundamentalists, the conclusion is that the mission has failed to resolve the conflict in the province as has been seen by the renewed attacks in Macomia and Quissanga districts. The reasons behind the withdrawal, despite these attacks, can be pinned to lack of funding for the SADC mission, given that South Africa, Tanzania, Botswana and Lesotho had been footing much of the costs and that SADC is also committed in eastern DRC. One of the failures of the mission could be attributed to the Mozambican

government's lack of confidence in SADC capabilities to resolve the conflict. This lack of trust is seen from the onset when SADC was kept at bay despite the conflict deteriorating, only to be called in at the peak of the conflict following the Palma attacks. The preference of bilateral agreements with Rwanda and Tanzania at the expense of the SADC SAMIM led to a breakdown of trust between the SADC contingent and forces from Rwanda and Tanzania. The fact that SAMIM mandate ended in July 2024 and that the Mozambican government has not indicated that it wants it extended, but instead is set to receive 2 000 troops from Rwanda, in itself shows a trust problem. Overall, the conflict in Cabo Delgado has exposed the diplomatic and political tiff amongst SADC states that have downplayed efforts to prevent and resolve the conflict. The overall conclusion is that SADC intervention and resolution strategies have failed in Cabo Delgado.

CONCLUSION

The conflict in Cabo Delgado became violent in 2017. Prior to this violent phase, cultural and structural violence existed due mainly to poor governance, marginalisation of some sections of the population and mismanagement of the economy. While preventive measures could have been implemented 10 years earlier after warning from the Regional Early Warning System, the government downplayed the warning and even after the eruption of violence in 2017, the government took time to invite SADC despite the latter noting that there was an escalation of hostilities in Cabo Delgado. Some of the challenges that have led to the failure of SAMIM in Cabo Delgado include and not limited to, poor early warning, lack of a doctrine that is responsive to religion-inspired conflicts, lack of political will and collaboration of member states and lack of funding. There is need to come up with a Counter Religion-inspired Insurgence Doctrine (CRIID) for the region while bad governance, marginalisation, religious intolerance and the indiscriminate movement of arms must be discouraged.

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