

SADC's extraordinary double troika on Mozambique: what's new?

Six Heads of State and Government [converged](#) in Maputo, the Capital City of Mozambique, on 8 April 2021, in response to the 24 March 2021 terrorist siege of Palma, a town in Mozambique's northernmost province of Cabo Delgado. SADC citizens and observers who have been following SADC's stance on the rise of terrorism in Mozambique will probably ask this question following the latest extraordinary double troika gathering: What's new?

This is not the first time SADC has convened such a summit. It held [one](#) on 19 May 2020. In November 2020, SADC [convened](#) The Extraordinary Organ Troika Summit (EO – OTS) plus Force Intervention Brigade-Troop Contributing Countries in Gaborone, Botswana, to discuss security concerns in Mozambique. Expectedly, SADC registered its concerns over acts of terrorism in Cabo Delgado and reassured Mozambique of SADC's solidarity. The November "troika directed the finalization of a comprehensive regional response and support to the Republic of Mozambique to be considered urgently by the Summit." Apart from the expected blandishments about the methods the Mozambican government has employed to deal with the situation, the material difference from the 2021 Troika to its 2020 predecessors was that the former's communique [undertook to direct an immediate SADC Organ technical deployment](#) to Mozambique.

Arguably, this development could be attributed to President Masisi of Botswana who, in his capacity as the incumbent Troika Chairperson, pushed for the deployment of the technical team. If this is indeed the case, then he has achieved quite a feat because, to date, the government of Mozambique has been

loath to enlist the help of SADC, whether in terms of troops or skills. The government seemed to opt for the services of private security firms. The latest development in this regard is that the Mozambican government has opted not to renew the contract it had with [Dyck Advisory Group \(DAG\)](#), a South African private security firm that has been “[providing aerial support](#) to Mozambican ground forces battling Islamic State-linked insurgents near a \$20bn natural gas project.”

In the short term, Mozambican troops will probably be exposed, if bereft of aerial cover. However, the withdrawal of DAG entails that Mozambique might be warming up to the idea of having an active SADC force on the ground. Thus, one would hope that the proposed technical team would lead to a more proactive SADC involvement in Mozambique, although some questions need clarity, like the configuration of the promised technical deployment. How will it operate alongside the [Joint Combined Exchange Training \(JCET\)](#) announced on 15 March 2021 between the United States and Mozambique, which will run for two months? In addition, and perhaps more importantly, how will all this address the fact that what is happening in Mozambique is so complex and requires much more than a military solution?

We hope that behind the glare of generous commendations, the members present at the Double Troika were candid with Mozambique's hitherto failure to stem the tide of the rising terror and to deal with its governance issues. During a July 2018 [rally](#) in Niassa, President Nyusi struck a prescient tone when he wondered why the numbers of terrorists were growing in Palma. His pertinent questions were: “Could it be that poverty is only found in Palma? And also why Palma, today? Just because gas was discovered?” [Resource-curse theory](#), also known as the paradox of plenty, is advanced in attempts to explain why countries such as Mozambique, poor and underdeveloped, though rich in resources, are often in more danger when more resources are discovered. In many instances, the paradox of

massive resources that do not benefit ordinary citizens breeds resentment towards governments and corporations that take control of resources.

Anadarko, an American company, was a principal player when massive quantities of natural gas were discovered in Mozambique in 2010. French oil giant Total [announced](#) in 2019 that it had acquired “Anadarko’s 26.5% operated interest in the Mozambique Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project for a purchase price of \$ 3.9 billion.” This led to a [\\$20 billion Final Investment Decision](#). At the time, Total undertook to implement the Mozambique LNG “project in the best interest of all those involved, including the government and the people of Mozambique.” Amid all these promises, the World Bank bemoans Mozambique’s “current focus on capital-intensive projects and low-productivity subsistence agriculture” and calls for more emphasis on “key drivers of inclusion, such as improved quality of education and health service delivery, which could in turn improve social indicators.” SADC should be promoting these issues in Mozambique, alongside the urgent need for a military solution to the spreading terror.

In sum, the Double Troika showed some movement from past expressions of outrage to the deployment of a technical team, notwithstanding the lack of detail regarding the team. However, for there to be anything substantially new to its meetings, the regional body should do more by way of direct involvement in the security situation and offer the government of Mozambique frank counsel on how it could deal with broader issues of political, economic and social challenges bedevilling the country.