

The Potential of Paradiplomacy as a Counter-terrorism Strategy in Cabo Delgado

Ndzalama Mathebula & Hope Moremi***

Abstract

This paper discusses and proposes paradiplomacy and community engagement as instruments of stabilising Cabo Delgado. The paper contributes to the literature on the integration of paradiplomacy and community engagement in Africa's counter-terrorism approaches. The study employed a qualitative explorative approach, which relied mainly on documentary sources of data in the form of existing literature, previous research outputs and media reports. The main argument is that counter-terrorism efforts in Africa have embodied a top-down approach that has achieved only little results and no sustainable peace. Thus, employing a paradiplomatic approach and engaging with the community holds significant prospects for addressing the factors that inflame terrorist-related conflict and promoting sustainable peace in the province of Cabo Delgado. In addition, the study reveals that, apart from corruption and low political participation, the key internal factors driving the Cabo Delgado conflict are the socio-economic injustices resulting from poor governance, neglect by the government, internal displacement and loss of livelihoods due to commercial mining activities. As a result, a people-centred approach is necessary to address these socio-economic challenges and thereby promote peace in the region.

Keywords: Cabo Delgado, counter-terrorism, paradiplomacy, SADC, SAMIM, terrorism

* Ndzalama Mathebula is an Assistant Lecturer in the Department of Politics, and International Relations, University of Johannesburg. ORCID: <<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4313-8555>>

** Hope Moremi is a Research Assistant in the Department of Politics, and International Relations, University of Johannesburg. ORCID: <<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3881-016X>>

1. Introduction

After a long, armed struggle between nationalists and colonial Portugal, Mozambique achieved independence in 1975. However, the country has been plagued by violent conflict ever since. The conflict between the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) and the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) began in 1977 and lasted until 1992 (Domson-Landsay, 2022). The latest conflict concentrated in northern Mozambique involves an armed, Islamic-extremist group, Ansar al-Sunna (Svicevic 2022). The conflict began on 5 October 2017 when armed individuals attacked three police stations in Mocímboa de Praia town. The impact of this conflict continues to escalate and has, thus far, claimed more than 4000 lives, affected 10 302 000 people, and displaced 946 000 people (ACAPS, 2020; Humphrey, 2024).

Prolonged terrorist-related violence has gripped Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province, presenting substantial threats to the region's peace and security. As the conflict escalates, it becomes vital to explore novel measures to address its root causes and build long-term peace. This paper describes the possible role of paradiplomacy and community participation as critical mechanisms for resolving the Cabo Delgado conflict. Furthermore, it attempted to add to the limited literature on the integration of paradiplomacy and community participation within Africa's counter-terrorism approaches. Counter-terrorism can be characterised as either a military or political mission curated to circumvent terrorism (Miller and Feltes, 2021). Terrorism can be generally defined as a form of coercion that uses or threatens to use violence to instil fear and achieve ideological or political objectives (Miller and Feltes, 2021).

Due to the Mozambican government's failure to resolve the conflict, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) was deployed in July 2021 after approval by the Extraordinary SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Maputo, Republic of Mozambique on 23 June 2021 (SADC, 2021). This was based on the recommendations made in a Report of the Chairperson of the Organ on Politics, Defense and Security Cooperation (SADC, 2021). Although SADC's participation improved the situation, their efforts did not lead to long-term peace and stability in the country's conflict-ridden areas (Neethling, 2021; SADC, 2020). As it stands, the mission was extended to end in July 2024 (SADC, 2024). Mandrup (2024) states that SAMIM had managed to neutralise the extremists and aided the Mozambican Defence

Armed Force in undertaking operations. However, the ongoing conflict in Cabo Delgado highlights the limitations of traditional counter-terrorism measures in dealing with the conflict's multidimensional character. Against this background, this paper describes the potential efficacy of paradiplomacy and community engagement in mitigating the Cabo Delgado conflict and promoting long-term stability. Paradiplomacy is defined as the foreign relations undertaken by subnational governments (cities, regions, provinces and local municipalities) to further their interests (Alvarez, 2020). The genesis and the dominance of the modern government system firmly established foreign policy and diplomacy as the sole responsibility of the central state for over four centuries. Cornago (2010) maintains that the era of globalisation has produced a wide range of actors and methods in the international realm. The rationale is that sub-national actors are considered to be 'closer to communities' and would therefore act in the interest of local communities. Subnational government initiatives therefore hold significant prospects for fostering a more localised approaches to conflict management. In essence, paradiplomacy offers an opportunity to engage in cross-border projects which promote economic development which address some of the socio-economic drivers of the conflict.

By shifting the focus from traditional top-down approaches to inclusive bottom-up strategies, this study seeks to address the root causes of the conflict and include local communities in the peacemaking and peacebuilding processes. The paper's findings are significant as they serve to bridge the existing gap in the literature by offering insights into the integration of paradiplomacy and community engagement within Africa's counter-terrorism responses. The analysis in this article is the outcome of data gathered from the review of documentary sources of data in the form of authoritative literature, previous research outputs and media reports. This desktop research adopts a qualitative approach with an explorative research design. Qualitative approaches find interest in exploring beliefs, opinions, experiences and events (Mohajan, 2018). The benefit of this approach is that it allows for an exploration of the Cabo Delgado terrorism in terms of experiences, facts, ideologies and conceptualisations through the rich interpretation of data (Mohajan, 2018). Furthermore, a qualitative approach is complementary to an explorative research design that explores a research question and angle that has not been explored in-depth in existing studies (Stebbins, 2001).

In terms of the paper's overall structure, the next sections focus on existing literature on the Cabo Delgado conflict, followed by discussions on the conceptual framework of paradiplomacy and its application in managing the conflict in Cabo Delgado. The final section offers a conclusion and recommendations.

2. A contextual overview of the conflict in Cabo Delgado: From half-master sovereignty to terrorist revolt

Cabo Delgado is situated in the northeastern province of Mozambique, which neighbours the Republic of Tanzania. The province has approximately 2.3 million people (Makonye, 2020). Despite its socio-economic transformation strides in the last decade, Mozambique remains with a poverty rate of 74.5% (World Bank, 2024). Conflict is rooted in the colonial history of Mozambique, and is attributed to the north and south divide of the country in which both sides are inherently different and unequal. A cash-crop farming economy characterises the north, primarily influenced by Swahili culture and home to a vast Muslim population (Neethling, 2021). Morier-Genoud (2020) maintains that Cabo Delgado has always been regarded as a politically and economically neglected province with fixed underdevelopment. As Neethling (2021) contends, Cabo Delgado is characterised by limited statehood – areas where central authority or the government lacks the autonomy and sovereignty to implement and promulgate policy. There is therefore a shortfall in exercising authority and legitimate monopoly over cases of violence (Börzel, Risse and Draude, 2018). Encoded in the country's pressing political challenges, Cabo Delgado province bears the brunt of numerous national, regional and transborder governance challenges (Sithole, 2022).

Mostly referred to as 'half-mast sovereignty', there is rampant corruption in Mozambique's most destitute province. This is further characterised by criminality that has an element of external support and state security that comes with accusations of human rights violations (Sany, 2021). The driving forces of the conflict therefore point to several internal enabling factors that have continued to maintain a conducive environment for the conflict– the social, economic and security challenges of the province, and, notably, unemployment surpassing 88%, weak security capacity and poverty (Makonye, 2020; Sany, 2021).

The escalation of violence committed by terrorist groups has been linked to the discovery of the Rovuma basin off the coast, in late 2017 when alleged Islamic-affiliated extremist groups, known as the Ansar al-Sunna, began staging attacks

(Louw-Vaudran, 2022; Makonye, 2020). Uprisings ensued against the socio-economic status quo in the province were also triggered by the discovery of liquified natural gas (LNG) (Cheatham, Long and Sheehy, 2022; Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, 2021). Makonye (2020) posits three causal explanations of the origin of Ansa al-Sunna, all of which qualify the leads above while giving the context of the rebellion. The first explanation pertains to the extremist group followers of Kenyan radical, Cleric Abound Rogo, who moved to the islands in 2013/2014 and began to preach 'revolutionary thoughts'. The second explanation is linked to the Islamic Council of Mozambique (ICM), dating back to the early 2000s. While the ICM was established as a social good, it later expressed interest in overthrowing a secular state and creating an Islamic state, with radicalisation dominating their moral code and fundamental principles (Makonye, 2020). The third explanation asserts that Ansar al-Sunna was born when street vendors unified over economic frustration and radical Islam in 2015. The uprising gained momentum because of the dismal prospects that the LNG boom would benefit the community.

During recruitment, militants have strategically used a discourse which focuses on decades of political marginalisation, poverty, and unemployment. The ages of combatants who are recruited range from 20 years to 35 years (Makonye, 2020). This was driven by the narrative that government policy was detrimental to Muslims, as many Sufi leaders perceived (Makonye, 2020). Since its establishment, the terrorist group has gained vast momentum, mainly due to its criminal networks and alleged linkages to other African countries, such as Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Sudan and Uganda (Makonye, 2020; Renon, 2021). This 'momentum' has led to the death of over 4000 people and 947 000 displaced people (Louw-Vaudran, 2021). Over 700 000 people need humanitarian assistance and one in five people experience acute food insecurity and 40% of the population remains without clean water (ACAPS, 2020).

Amid this humanitarian crisis, several experts have questioned counter-terrorism efforts from the regional and international arenas, mainly due to the slow and fragmented response. Louw-Vaudran (2021) maintains that SADC was largely silent in the midst and escalation of the conflict. This was attributed to the Mozambican government undermining the escalation of the violence. However, when SAMIM was eventually deployed, the Mozambican government perceived the assistance as undermining national sovereignty and indicated that the country

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needed no assistance (Louw-Vaudran, 2021). Cronje (2021) maintains that several experts and academics who have tailed the conflict since its inception believe that Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi's government is central to the escalation of terrorism—judging from the increased weaponisation and equipment accumulated by the combatants, which has strengthened their momentum and mission. It is alleged that Nyusi has the correct information for the SADC and Rwandan troops, which he is hiding from the public (Cronje, 2021). The Mozambique Armed Defence Force (FADM) specific deployment into Afungi, where there are LNG operations, raises the question of the state's counter-terrorism strategy, prioritising the resolution of the conflict and restoring peace and security (Cronje, 2021). Cheatham et al. (2022) reiterate that one Mozambican civil society representative considers the FADM and Mozambique government's counter-terrorism efforts as protecting only the interests of big companies.

Efforts from the AU, Rwanda and SADC have all been met with varying degrees of skepticism. With regards to the role of the AU, Louw-Vaudran (2021) has described that SADC had been reluctant to involve the AU due to the continental body's history of mistrust and subsidiarity. Louw-Vaudran (2021) posits that the sluggish or poor coordination from all stakeholders involved in stabilising the conflict has eroded all efforts to contain it. Turner (2021) submits several stumbling factors that have hindered the counter-terrorism efforts. These factors include the clumsy nature of the response from the Mozambican police and FASM some of which have led to attacks on civilians and discriminated arrests. Finally, the skewed security priorities, which saw the defence force deployed on the Mozambican coast, contributed to the conflict's escalation in Cabo Delgado (Turner, 2021).

According to Davis and Mthembu (2020), it was only when the UN warned of the escalating nature of this conflict that African states started to facilitate efforts to help curb the terrorist activity. As a result, SADC leaders at the extraordinary summit of the Troika on SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation in Harare in May 2020 reiterated that the Cabo Delgado rebellion was an attack on all member states. This did not, however, lead to any immediate troop commitments from member states. Instead, they agreed on monitoring the situation for better understanding (Makonye, 2020). Rwanda's efforts and commitments are also being probed regarding their interests, based on the location of troop deployment and cooperation with other initiatives. This deployment has

been framed as Rwanda's adherence to the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine and the 2015 Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians, as well as the positive bilateral relations that have developed between the two nations since the signing of multiple agreements in 2018 (Government of the Republic of Rwanda, 2021).

The SAMIM troops were deployed in residential parts of the Cabo Delgado province. In contrast, Rwandan troops were deployed to protect the coastal areas around the LNG projects. The community regarded Rwanda's mission in the province as questionable and their interests and position as commercial (Cronje, 2021). While it is alleged that France was financing the deployment, Rwanda claimed that its counter-terrorism commitments stemmed from the painful genocide past; thus, its military intervention was to be viewed as saving lives. The government's lack of transparency around financing the deployment further invites hesitation about their genuine interests in the resolution of the conflict.

The poor coordination also highlights the need to rethink aspects of the AU Convention on the Prevention and Combatting of Terrorism in terms of conceptualising the contemporary elements of counter-terrorism (Omenma, and Onyango, 2020). Considering the AU's commitment and massive rollout of resources to counter-terrorism, these resources, ironically, parallel the rise of terrorism (Nhamir, 2023). A positive development in improving the continental body's response was the 2022 AU Extraordinary Summit on Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Malabo, comprising of African head of states who devised strategies on curbing terrorism. Several summit decisions included incorporating and making fully functioning, the African Standby Force (ASF) within the counter-terrorism unit. Proper coordination between the AU and regional economic communities was also seen as essential. The summit further placed good governance at the centre of eroding the enabling factors that continue to nurture violent extremism, such as poverty and marginalisation (AU, 2022; ISS, 2023).

3. A brief overview of Africa's counter-terrorism efforts

National governments, regional/continental bodies and global institutions, have taken part in African counter-terrorism initiatives. Intelligence collection, military operations and law enforcement initiatives are some of the efforts taken by the continent to deal with the fundamental political, social and economic issues that

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might underpin terrorism. The 11 September 2001 (9/11) terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, DC is often portrayed as a historic turning point in global terrorism that prompted a broad military effort. While this might have been a turning point for the Global North, national and regional counter-terror initiatives have been undertaken across Africa since the early 1990s (Le Sage, 2007; Makinda, 2006; Piombo, 2007).

According to Ewi and Aning (2006), prior to 9/11, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) had a minimal role in preventing and countering terrorism. It was primarily used as a political forum to express collective aspirations. While the OAU was successful in developing a legislative framework to counter terrorism, under the auspice of the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism (1999), it was unable to effectively implement the provisions of the instrument. Following the OAU transfer to the AU in 2002, policy responses improved. The AU developed a plan of action for the prevention and combating of terrorism in 2002, which includes practical steps that significantly address this type of conflict (Ramdeen, 2017). However, Iroanya (2007) maintains that as much as the AU has taken necessary steps toward developing tools to respond to the challenge of terrorism, the organisation lacks the capacity and resources to independently confront terrorism on the continent. This is because the AU relies mainly on external sources of funding and support. While the fight against terrorism necessitates the participation and support of the global community, over-reliance on outside assistance will be harmful in the long term.

Moreover Makinda (2006) underscores that, as much as there are frameworks that give precise insights into dealing with terrorist and violent acts, the militarised response has raised doubts about its effectiveness. Military campaigns, while necessary in some circumstances, results in deaths, mass displacements, destruction of infrastructure and human rights violations. Similarly, Solomon (2013) makes a compelling argument that counter-terrorism strategies on the continent are performing poorly because these strategies are state-centric and military-focused. This paper argues that, in cases where military support has been given to African governments by non-African states, this exacerbates overly militarised approaches which can contribute to the insecurity of its citizenry. Solomon (2013) and Emerson (2014) concur that the US' counter-terrorism policies in Africa have been poorly implemented and have endangered people's security. These experts advocate a holistic counter-terrorism approach that

emphasises enhancing democratic governance, taking into account the possibility that a responsive government would also contribute to discrediting the extremist ideology that drives terrorist activities.

Kimunguyi (2011) argues that counter-terrorism efforts in Eastern Africa have concentrated on short-term law enforcement and security initiatives that exclude, and often damage, longer-term attempts to address underlying circumstances that could increase or exacerbate terrorist acts.

The UN's Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy advocates for a holistic approach that offers “practical measures ranging from strengthening member states capacity to counter terrorist threats to better coordinating the United Nations System's counter-terrorism architecture and activities” (UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, 2006). This strategy presents a chance to rebalance counter-terrorism efforts in the sub-region. Scholars argue that successful and sustainable implementation of this strategy necessitates involvement from diverse stakeholders, including regional and subregional entities (Rosand, Millar, Ipe, and Healey, 2022). However, considering the region's problems and realities, implementing this approach will be challenging. For this reason, Dzinesa (2023) argues that Mozambique's Military Affairs Commission and faith-based organisations such as the Christian Council of Mozambique and the Islamic Council of Mozambique can be engaged as critical players in building a National Peace Architecture which promotes a multistakeholder approach to managing conflict.

4. The paradiplomacy approach

Diplomatic engagement of sub-national structures of governments includes actions of provinces, cities, regions and municipalities, all of which have been subject to different interpretations and definitions in the literature. The lack of consensus among scholars on the suitable coinage that should be used to represent this phenomenon is seen in widely used terms such as paradiplomacy, multi-layered or local diplomacy, constituent, sub-state or global affairs of subnational governments, and so on (Schiavon, 2019).

This section unpacks the significance of paradiplomacy as part of a counter-terrorism strategy. This paper defines paradiplomacy as the foreign contacts, relations and activities of non-central governments (provinces, municipalities, regions) with other global actors, for example, central governments, international

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organisations, other local governments and transnational enterprises, to enhance socio-economic cooperation (Cornago, 1999; Duchacek, 1990). Furthermore, this section will attempt to show the value of the two dimensions of paradiplomacy as an instrument for countering terrorism, namely the border and international security dimensions. It is important to note that these dimensions are limited but worthy of consideration for the broadening of counter-terrorism strategies.

According to Kuznetsov (2015), the influence of subnational government involvement in international relations on geopolitics and international security is best captured by Noe Cornago, who contends that paradiplomacy has contributed to the field of international security studies. The conflict between the Italian Bolzano and the Austrian Tyrol over the rights of the German-speaking minority in the latter region is an example. According to Cornago (1999), the conflict was controlled by encouraging cross-border cooperation between the two areas, since the ethnopolitical challenge severely threatened the security environment and bilateral ties between the two regions. Moreover, Spalek (2012) argues that insights into international security studies have relied on macro-level approaches that ignore local circumstances. Thus, paradiplomacy and its dimensions play a crucial role in redefining international security studies, considering the needs and dynamics of local communities and lowering the transnational components of ethnic conflict.

The academic discourse on borders is a multidimensional research field that often focuses on the management of borders, on the one hand, and the analysis and representation of borders, on the other (Iwashita and Chi, 2015). Border researchers interested in paradiplomacy often focus on the second aspect and seek to evaluate the different types of activities between border regions, the boundary lines and related political and institutional practices. However, current discussions seek to describe borders as a phenomenon shaped by social, political, cultural and economic practices. To support this, Brunet-Jailly (2010) maintains that borders should not only represent geographical lines that separate people and regions but should also be seen as providing social, economic, environmental, cultural and political opportunities for all who can cooperate across borderland lines. Border studies are one of the dimensions of paradiplomacy and are reflected in discussions on governments' transborder cooperation also known as cross-border paradiplomacy. Subnational entities that naturally share borders with other sovereign states means that, under geographical location, sub-states must develop

and maintain good relations with their neighbours. In this way, paradiplomacy presents opportunities for non-central states to use their border for social, economic and cultural advancement (Kuznetsov, 2015:76). Aldecoa and Keating (2013:9) suggests that cross-border relations between subnational actors and contiguous territories have a functional foundation focused on mutual challenges and opportunities in several areas, including economic and infrastructure development, traffic control and immigration regulation. The next section attempts to describe the relevance of paradiplomacy to the Cabo Delgado case study.

5. Paradiplomacy and the Cabe Delgado conflict

The earlier sections of this paper have established that a review of the continent's counter-terrorism approaches is necessary. This section describes the nature and development of the terrorist-related violence and the subsequent responses and seeks to argue for an approach which includes elements of paradiplomacy to foster cross-border approaches.

As described in earlier sections, the causes of the conflict in Northern Mozambique are linked to the socio-economic status quo in the country, political marginalisation of the region, a 'resource curse' and the proliferation of an illicit economy. The consequence of the violence is an undisputed humanitarian crisis. Thus, this paper proposes that the conflict be defined as a humanitarian crisis which requires a human-centric action plan and response. A coordinated effort with a focus on paradiplomacy can potentially engage citizens in conflict management at provincial and local levels. Furthermore, this paper also proposes that, due to poor coordination from the government on existing counter-terror responses that the province of Cabo Delgado take the lead in its supranational engagements. The benefits of these relations can promote grassroots-level engagements that can foster a better understanding of the crisis, in contrast to a purely militarised response which focuses on the deployment of resources and troops from a top-down approach. With a better understanding of the conflict, there is a greater likelihood of crafting context-specific solutions based on the lived realities of the affected communities. The assumption is also that paradiplomacy offers an opportunity to engage in cross-border projects which promote economic development which address some of the socio-economic drivers of the conflict.

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Specific examples of cross-border initiatives include:

- **Spatial Development Initiatives (SDIs):** Throughout Southern Africa, development corridors are being developed specifically to promote economic integration because they open markets and encourage more trade and investment (Priemus and Zonneveld, 2003). For example, in the region, there are 12 development corridors, one of which, the Beira Corridor which connects hinterland nations such as Zimbabwe and Malawi with the interior of Mozambique and the port at Beira in Mozambique. Beira, Nacala and Mtwara are just a few of Mozambique's current and future corridors that show how a nation's geostrategic location can benefit the area (De Beer, 2001). In addition to increasing these states' operational and economic efficiencies, connecting landlocked nations to their neighbours and the ocean opens many new business opportunities (Bowland and Otto, 2012). Since the primary cause of the violence in Cabo Delgado stems from internal causes perceived as socio-economic inequities, partnering and capitalising on the benefits of corridors such are essential.
- **Maputo Development Corridor (MDC):** The MDC is an example of a cross-border spatial development programme jointly initiated by the South African and Mozambican governments in 1995. It connects the port of Maputo in Mozambique to South Africa's economic heartland of Gauteng via the border province of Mpumalanga. Similar initiatives in the Northern part of Mozambique could potentially help to develop the Cabo Delgado province since the MDC aims to foster development through new investments, job creation and infrastructural development (Maputo Corridor Logistics Initiative 2012).
- **Regional concentration:** Borrowing from the European experience, according to Cornago (1999), one of the most critical aspects of the Council of Europe's activity is using subnational governments' international engagements to strengthen regional dialogue. Moreover, paradiplomacy in Europe has not only promoted collaboration projects but also has produced regional peacebuilding measures through open discussions and the exchange of information. In the case of Cabo Delgado, mobilising resources and exchanging knowledge from other

Southern African provinces and communities might help develop efficient counter-terrorism policies.

- **Community empowerment:** State strategies that prioritise national security over the needs and safety of communities have been at the heart of counter-terrorism strategies and procedures. Considering this, Spalek (2012) differentiates between two types of community dimensions: community-targeted methods (top-down counter-terrorism strategies) and community-focused methods (bottom-up strategies). Spalek (2012) maintains that promoting community-focused methods of preventing terrorism involves working with different state and non-state actors and, most importantly, the community itself, while acknowledging the diversity of communities in terms of their culture, politics, religion and other factors.
- Paradiplomacy can enable subnational governments, such as Cabo Delgado, to mobilise resources, expertise and collaboration through their foreign relations with other provinces, non-state actors and international bodies.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, this research has reflected on counter-terrorism efforts in Cabo Delgado and the potential value of paradiplomacy as a strategy to promote a more local approach to the management of the conflict. The key arguments of this paper point towards addressing the key socio-economic challenges of the province. The rationale lies in remedying the enabling factors that nurture an environment for terrorist-related activity. These suggestions include the use of spatial development initiatives which can be used to enhance economic integration, regional concentration and enable resource mobilisation and knowledge exchange amongst the SADC member states. The Cabo Delgado conflict is a humanitarian crisis that goes beyond peace and security and is violation of human rights and basic needs. In this context, the existing continental counter-terrorism instruments should focus on sustainable peace, human development and socio-economic development. Looking ahead, more practical examples of paradiplomacy initiatives which address the root causes of counter-terrorism are needed. 

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