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Conflict in the North of Mozambique

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Abstract

This article is a descriptive study that explores the multifaceted conflict in Cabo Delgado, northern Mozambique, focusing on the role of natural resource exploitation in fueling violence and social dissatisfaction. Since its outbreak in 2017, the conflict has escalated due to a complex interplay of historical marginalization, economic inequality, religious tensions, and poor governance. Rich in natural gas and rubies, Cabo Delgado paradoxically remains one of the country's poorest regions, where the benefits of resource extraction are concentrated in the hands of political elites and foreign investors, leaving local communities excluded. Utilizing the DFID analytical framework and root cause analysis, the study examines the structural and immediate drivers of the conflict, particularly the impact of unequal resource distribution and lack of inclusive public policies. The article argues that the "resource paradox" plays a central role in intensifying the insurgency led by Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama (ASWJ), which recruits disenfranchised youth by capitalizing on widespread dissatisfaction. Human rights abuses by state forces and the militarization of the region have further deepened distrust in government institutions. Through this case study, the article contributes to the broader understanding of how natural resource wealth, when poorly managed, can undermine peace and development. It concludes that resolving the conflict requires a comprehensive strategy centered on social inclusion, equitable resource governance, and long-term investment in local development.

Keywords:

Cabo Delgado conflict; Mozambique; Natural Resources; Insurgency;
Resource Curse; DFID Framework; Social Exclusion; Youth Radicalization.

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The conflict in Cabo Delgado, in northern Mozambique, is one of the most complex and prolonged episodes in Sub-Saharan Africa since its beginning in 2017. This conflict is a combination of historical, political, socioeconomic, and religious issues, culminating in a local insurgency fueled by social exclusion and the exploitation of natural resources, which is often associated with the worsening of conflicts, especially in contexts where the management of these resources is not transparent and where benefits are not distributed equitably ([Hanlon 2021](#), 12). In many cases, mineral and energy exploration can generate a “resource paradox”, in which local communities, instead of benefiting economically, find themselves further impoverished and excluded, while political elites and foreign investors are the main beneficiaries ([Bonate, Israel and Rosario 2024](#), 3-21). In the case of Cabo Delgado, the exploration of natural gas and rubies has been seen as a factor that exacerbates economic and social inequalities, as local communities feel marginalized and without access to employment or part of the benefits generated by these resources ([Louw-Vaudran 2022](#)).

This article seeks to understand the impact of natural resource exploitation on the conflict in Cabo Delgado and its influence on the underlying dynamics, causing an intensification of violence¹. The analysis will be conducted based on two methodologies: The Department for International Development (DFID) analytical framework and the analysis of the root causes of the conflict. The DFID methodology, widely adopted in the analysis of complex conflicts, allows a holistic view of the various dimensions that contribute to the continuity of the conflict, including historical, social, economic, and political factors ([Department for International Development 2002](#), 5-7). Root cause analysis, in turn, examines the structural factors that sustain conflict, such as inequality, marginalization, and unfair exploitation of resources.

It is a qualitative study that describes the structural factors of the problem, but with the limitation of not performing a quantitative analysis.

The choice of the research question is directly related to the context of Cabo Delgado: “To what extent does the exploitation of natural resources in Cabo Delgado contribute to the intensification of the conflict in the region?” This hypothesis considers that the exploitation of these resources amplifies social and economic inequalities, generating a feeling of injustice in local communities. This feeling is exploited by insurgents, who recruit marginalized young people, deepening the violence. The main objective is to understand how the exploitation of resources, instead of benefiting the population, has acted as a catalyst for divisions and worsening conflict.

The relevance of the topic transcends Mozambique, impacting regional and global stability, given the presence of large foreign investors, such as

¹ We can identify in this conflict mainly two of the types of violence defined by Galtung: direct violence, which kills quickly, and structural violence, which kills slowly ([Galtung and Høivik 1971](#)).

TotalEnergies and ExxonMobil, in natural gas exploration. The conflict also has profound implications for human rights, with more than 800,000 people displaced by 2022, and for economic development, as international investments have been severely affected by the instability. The analysis of the conflict in Cabo Delgado, therefore, offers important insights for understanding conflicts in regions rich in natural resources, but with high levels of inequality and exclusion.

The Cabo Delgado region, historically neglected by the central government, faces serious challenges related to infrastructure, public services, and economic development. Despite its mineral wealth, the province is one of the poorest in the country. The Mozambican state has been unable to ensure that the benefits of the exploitation of these resources are shared with the local population, which has generated an environment of dissatisfaction. This economic and social exclusion fuels discontent among young populations, creating fertile ground for the insurgency of groups such as Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama (ASWJ), also known as “Al-Shabaab”, who have exploited this dissatisfaction, recruiting young people and using local discontent as a justification for their violent actions ([Hanlon 2017](#), 756-769; [Louw-Vaudran 2022](#)).

Conflict theories offer an essential theoretical framework for understanding how the exploitation of natural resources can be a driver of violence. According to the “economic cause of conflict” model, conflicts often arise in contexts of economic inequality, where certain social groups are systematically excluded from development opportunities and access to the benefits of economic growth. This theory is crucial to understanding the case of Cabo Delgado, where a lack of investment in education, infrastructure, and employment has left local youth vulnerable to radicalization. Furthermore, the theory of social marginalization argues that the exclusion of certain social groups, especially those in peripheral regions, can create conditions conducive to insurgency and violence ([Anderson and Olson 2003](#), 23-86).

On the other hand, theories on the impact of natural resource exploitation on conflicts, also called the “resource paradox”, argue that in many regions of the world, natural resources do not generate development, but rather violence, corruption, and political instability. In Cabo Delgado, the presence of large reserves of gas and rubies has not resulted in a significant increase in the quality of life for the local population. On the contrary, these resources have been seen as a form of exploitation by foreign companies and local elites, which has intensified resentment and fueled recruitment by insurgent groups ([Institute for Security Studies 2022](#); [Bonate, Israel and Rosario 2024](#), 14-21).

Furthermore, analysis of the root causes of the conflict reveals that the worsening of violence is directly related to the absence of an inclusive development model that allows the local population to benefit from the resources exploited on their own land. The government’s failure to implement effective policies for wealth distribution

and social inclusion has been a determining factor in perpetuating the conflict. Indeed, the struggle for natural resources is not limited to an economic problem but is intertwined with issues of identity, religion, and power, making it a multifaceted issue that requires complex and integrated approaches to its resolution ([Department for International Development 2002, 7-13](#)).

Based on these theories and methodological approaches, this paper will seek to analyze how the exploitation of natural resources has influenced the course of the conflict in Cabo Delgado, examining both the immediate and structural causes that contribute to the escalation of violence. The DFID framework will be applied to understand the historical context and dynamics of the conflict, while root cause analysis will help identify the underlying factors that sustain the conflict and possible solutions for its resolution.

In short, this article seeks to understand how the exploitation of natural resources, often seen as an opportunity for development, can become one of the greatest obstacles to peace and stability in the conflict in Cabo Delgado, interfering with the dynamics of the related elements identified as root causes.

1. Conflict Analysis

The conflict in Cabo Delgado, which began in 2017, is one of the most complex episodes of armed violence in Mozambique and the sub-Saharan Africa region. Analyzing the conflict requires a comprehensive understanding of its causes, actors involved, social, political, and economic dynamics, and the consequences for the local population.

1.1. Analysis using the DFID Methodology

The DFID methodology, which provides a framework for conflict analysis, will be used to address the various dimensions of this conflict, including the historical context, underlying and immediate factors, actors involved, and social and economic impacts.

1.1.1. Economy

Cabo Delgado is one of the richest provinces in Mozambique in terms of natural resources, such as natural gas, coal, and rubies. However, it is also one of the poorest in the country. After the 1990 Constitution was passed, paving the way for democratization and economic liberalization, Cabo Delgado province continued to be neglected by the central government, which prioritized the development of the capital, Maputo, and other regions more connected to the global market ([Hanlon 2021](#)). The region's historical marginalization contributed to an environment of social inequality, which generated frustration and distrust in government institutions.

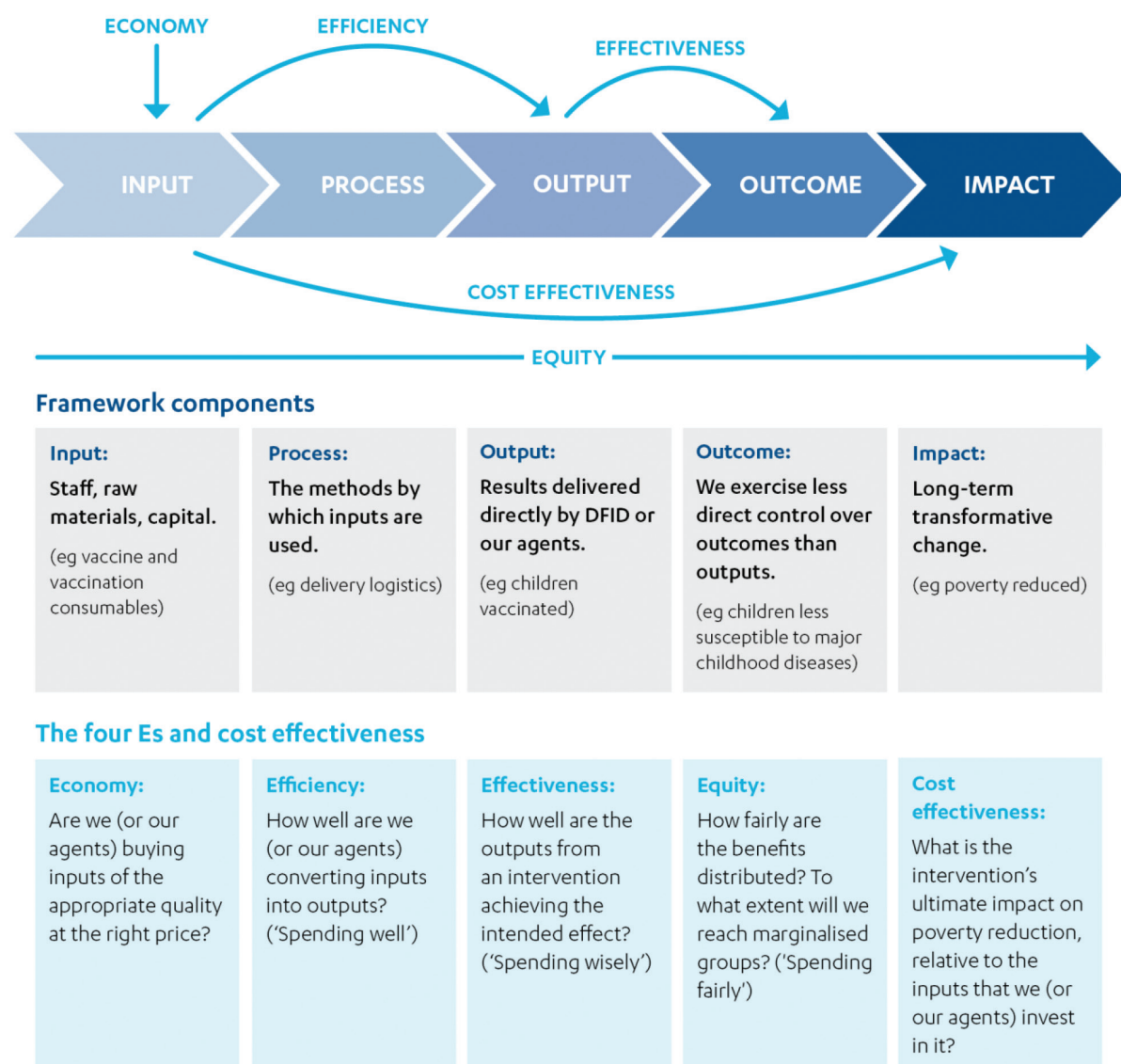


Figure 1 DFID's Value for Money Framework

Source: Adapted from DFID's Approach to Value for Money in Programme and Portfolio Management, published by the Independent Commission for Aid Impact, 20 February 2018 ((ICAI) 2018) (icai.independent.gov.uk, accessed 27 August 2025).

1.1.2. Government Efficiency and Effectiveness

Cabo Delgado's historical context is marked by the presence of a majority Muslim population, which creates a distinct religious and social configuration, especially when compared to other regions of Mozambique. In addition, the region is characterized by a lack of basic infrastructure and essential public services, such as education, health, and transportation. The absence of an effective governance system and the disconnect between political elites and local communities created a vacuum of authority, which was, in part, filled by insurgent groups that exploited the population's dissatisfaction (Anderson and Olson 2003, 24-86).

1.1.3. Equity and Cost Effectiveness

The marginalization of Cabo Delgado and the growth of inequality contributed to

the fragility of local institutions. This facilitated the radicalization of young people, especially between 2017 and 2018 when the insurgent movement began to take shape (Bonate, Israel and Rosario 2024, 2-21). One of the main factors that facilitated this process was the combination of the lack of effective inclusion policies and the increasing presence of international investors, such as gas and mineral companies, which brought with them large amounts of capital but also social tensions. According to (Hanlon 2017), while the wealth generated by the exploitation of natural resources was concentrated in small political and economic elites, local communities continued to live in poverty, which fueled frustration and a willingness to rebel.

1.2. Actors Involved, Outcome, and Impact

The conflict in Cabo Delgado cannot be understood without an analysis of the various actors involved. These include the central government of Mozambique, the Mozambican armed forces, local insurgent groups such as Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama (ASWJ), and external actors, including natural resource companies and international powers. Each of these actors has conflicting interests that fuel violence and prolong the conflict.

The Mozambican government has faced significant difficulties in dealing with the insurgency, largely due to the lack of infrastructure and underfunding of security forces, which are often accused of human rights abuses, contributing to the cycle of violence. In addition, governance in the region has been characterized by corruption and inefficiency.

The lack of a coordinated and effective government response and the absence of inclusive public policies have increased the isolation and alienation of local communities, facilitating the recruitment of young people by insurgent forces (Louw-Vaudran 2022).

Insurgent groups such as ASWJ, also known as “Al-Shabaab”, do not have a uniform religious or ideological agenda. Initially, the group was associated with radical Islamist movements, but over time, the insurgency has taken on a more hybrid nature, with local and regional motivations mixed with influences from international jihadist movements. This group preys on local frustration, offering financial support, protection, and a sense of identity to many young people who feel abandoned by the state and without prospects for a better future. The insurgency has also fed on ethnic and religious divisions in the region, with a discourse that appeals to radical Islam as a way to justify the fight against what it sees as corruption and exploitation of the population (Louw-Vaudran 2022; Institute for Security Studies 2022).

Natural resource companies, in turn, play a crucial role in the conflict, as they are directly involved in the exploration of gas and minerals in Cabo Delgado. These companies have often been accused of failing to contribute adequately to local development and of operating in environments with little transparency, which has contributed to popular distrust.

Natural gas exploration, which should benefit the local population, has been concentrated in the hands of multinationals, without there being a fair redistribution of the wealth generated (Hanlon 2017, 13-16). This has fueled feelings of injustice and exclusion, which in turn have been used by insurgent groups to recruit and radicalize local youth. The presence of large foreign investors in the region has also made Cabo Delgado a geopolitical area of international interest, with foreign powers (such as the US, China, and Russia) getting involved to secure access to the region's mineral and energy resources.

1.3. Root Causes

Although the exploitation of natural resources is the focus of this article, any analysis of the conflict in Cabo Delgado must consider both the underlying causes, which involve long-standing structural issues, and the immediate causes, which accelerated and sustained the escalation of the conflict. Among the underlying causes, economic and social marginalization stand out, which is one of the main reasons for the increase in local dissatisfaction. As mentioned above, Cabo Delgado is a region rich in natural resources, but these resources do not benefit the local population, who continue to live in conditions of extreme poverty. The inequality in the distribution of resources and the lack of investment in education and health have created an environment conducive to radicalization and recruitment by insurgent groups (Department for International Development 2002, 11-42).

In addition, the lack of effective governance is a central factor. The central government of Mozambique has failed to implement public policies that ensure the integration of Cabo Delgado into the national development process. The lack of infrastructure and essential public services contributes to the alienation of local communities and creates a vacuum of authority that is filled by insurgent groups. Political corruption and nepotism have also played an important role in perpetuating inequality and strengthening the insurgency (Bonate, Israel and Rosario 2024, 2-21).

On the other hand, the immediate causes of the conflict are related to violence by security forces and recruitment by insurgents. The government's military operations, often characterized by human rights abuses, have generated a wave of retaliation, further increasing polarization and violence. The recruitment of young people by insurgents, often with promises of a better life or financial compensation, has become an important strategy for armed groups. The exploitation of natural resources, which should bring prosperity to the region, has been seen by the population as a form of exploitation and perpetuation of inequalities, further fueling the increase in violence and discontent (Institute for Security Studies 2022).

The impact of the conflict in Cabo Delgado has been devastating for both the local population and the country's economy. More than 800,000 people had been displaced by 2022, with many living in refugee camps or in precarious conditions in other provinces of Mozambique. The social impact is immense, with thousands of lives

lost, communities destroyed, and essential economic activities such as agriculture and local trade disrupted. The conflict has also worsened the living conditions of the population, who, in addition to dealing with insecurity, face high rates of hunger and poverty ([Louw-Vaudran 2022](#)).

Economically, the conflict has negatively affected the development of Cabo Delgado. Insecurity has discouraged foreign investment, especially in the natural gas sector, one of Mozambique's largest economic drivers. Companies operating in the region have been forced to suspend their activities or postpone their projects, which has a direct impact on the local economy. The humanitarian crisis and the impact on infrastructure and public services have also led to a slowdown in economic development, further exacerbating inequalities and poverty in the province ([Bonate, Israel and Rosario 2024, 12-21](#)).

The analysis of the conflict in Cabo Delgado reveals that it is fueled by a combination of structural and immediate causes, with the exploitation of natural resources playing a central role in intensifying social and political tensions. The marginalization of the region, the absence of effective public policies, and the mismanagement of natural resources have contributed to the perpetuation of the conflict, creating a cycle of violence that is difficult to break. Resolving this conflict will require a multifaceted approach, including both improving governance and creating social inclusion policies that ensure that the benefits of resource exploitation are shared equitably with the local population.

2. Analysis of the Subtopic: The crucial role of the exploitation of natural resources in heightening tensions and violence

One of the key aspects of understanding the conflict in Cabo Delgado is the crucial role played by the exploitation of natural resources, particularly natural gas and rubies, in heightening tensions and perpetuating violence.

2.1. Natural Resource Paradox

The Cabo Delgado region, one of the richest in terms of mineral and energy resources, has paradoxically become one of the most impoverished and marginalized in the country. This phenomenon is exemplified by what is commonly referred to as the "natural resource paradox," in which the abundance of resources does not lead to local development but rather to the exacerbation of inequality, exploitation, and violence. The conflict in Cabo Delgado is closely linked to this dynamic, where the exploitation of natural resources not only generates economic and social divisions but also fuels the recruitment of insurgents and the radicalization of young people.

The wealth of natural gas, coal, and rubies in Cabo Delgado has been seen by many as a potential driver of development. However, the reality has been quite different. The

state of poverty and lack of basic infrastructure, such as roads, schools, and hospitals, in a resource-rich province has generated distrust between local communities and the central government. Natural gas exploration, which began with the arrival of large international investors such as the French company TotalEnergies and the American company ExxonMobil, is one of the factors that directly contributed to the intensification of the conflict ([Hanlon 2021](#); [Institute for Security Studies 2022](#)).

The impact of natural gas exploration has been negative for many communities in Cabo Delgado, as the benefits of exploration have not reached them. Instead, exploration has been associated with environmental destruction, forced displacement of local populations, and the creation of a highly unequal local economy. The lack of participation of local communities in decisions about how these resources would be explored and distributed has fueled a strong sense of social injustice. This is particularly evident when local communities do not benefit from direct and indirect employment in the gas industries and when foreign companies are perceived as the only ones to profit from this natural wealth, while the population's living conditions remain precarious ([Louw-Vaudran 2022](#)).

2.2. Insurgency

In addition, the presence of multinationals and the financing of large projects have generated great competition for resources, with Mozambique's political and economic elites, as well as external forces, having privileged access to these riches. Meanwhile, local youth, who do not have access to the same opportunities, feel increasingly excluded. This economic exclusion has been exploited by insurgents, who have promised an alternative sense of belonging, identity, and reward in exchange for the support of young people and entire families, often through forced recruitment ([Hanlon 2021](#)).

The impact of natural resource exploitation on radicalization and recruitment by insurgent groups is one of the most problematic dynamics in Cabo Delgado. The insurgent movement in Cabo Delgado, initially identified as "Al-Shabaab," has presented itself as a local movement that, unlike other jihadist groups, uses arguments of social justice to gain local support. The insurgents exploit the population's resentment towards the exploitation of natural resources, presenting themselves as defenders of the interests of local communities, who feel neglected by the central government and foreign companies operating in the region ([Anderson and Olson 2003](#), 24-86).

The insurgency in Cabo Delgado is not only religious but also sociopolitical in nature. ASWJ (Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama) is characterized by a rhetoric that aligns with a radical interpretation of Islam, but which largely has a component of resistance to what the insurgents perceive as an unjust political and economic system. The group's leaders use local frustration with poverty and exclusion to recruit young people and build a support base. The provision of financial resources, logistical support,

and a sense of community belonging has been the key to the success of this strategy ([Louw-Vaudran 2022](#)).

Furthermore, many young people in Cabo Delgado see themselves as victims of a system that does not provide opportunities. In a region with high unemployment rates and limited educational prospects, the insurgents offer an alternative, offering food, money, and even a promising future, in contrast to the promises of the government and multinationals, which fail to deliver substantial benefits to the local population. This sense of belonging and the promises of financial rewards have been a significant driver of recruitment, which intensifies violence in the region ([Institute for Security Studies 2022](#)).

2.3. Government Corruption and Inefficiency

Another key aspect related to the exploitation of natural resources in Cabo Delgado is the negative impact that this exploitation has on local governance and the strengthening of power structures in the province. The lack of central government control over the activities of large multinational corporations and transparency in the licensing and distribution process of resources are issues that directly contribute to the conflict.

Corruption within the central government of Mozambique has been a determining factor in the institutional fragility in the management of natural resources in Cabo Delgado. The licensing process for exploration projects, the allocation of land, and the distribution of benefits generated by the natural gas industry are opaque and are often linked to personal and corporate interests. This results in a system that excludes local communities from any power over their own resources and favors the creation of political and business elites with privileged access to these riches. For many Mozambicans, the government is seen as complicit in the exploitation of natural resources, and this view fuels support for the insurgency, which positions itself against what it considers to be a corrupt and unjust system of governance ([Institute for Security Studies 2022](#); [Hanlon 2021](#)).

In addition, the militarization of the region, which occurs as a response to the growing power of the insurgents, is also part of a dynamic of exploitation of natural resources, as local security forces are often more concerned with protecting the investments of foreign companies than with meeting the needs of the local population. In many cases, the military and police have been accused of engaging in human rights abuses, such as looting, killings, and extortion, which contribute to the government's loss of legitimacy and the intensification of conflict ([Department for International Development 2002](#), 12-39).

The exploitation of natural resources without the implementation of inclusive public policies is a critical factor that has fueled violence in Cabo Delgado. The growth of the gas and mining industries in the region has not translated into tangible

benefits for local populations. The central government of Mozambique has failed to implement effective policies to ensure that local communities receive a fair share of the benefits of mineral and energy exploration. The “gas leak”, where communities are unable to access the fruits of exploration, has fueled a growing sense of injustice and resistance to government authority. The absence of an inclusive development model, which takes into account the interests and needs of local communities, has been a major cause of instability and violence ([Hanlon 2021](#); [Department for International Development 2002](#), 7-41).

The inequality in the distribution of resources is also evident in the fact that foreign investments in Cabo Delgado have not been channeled towards improving basic infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, and transport systems. Instead, these investments have benefited only a small group of people, while the vast majority of the population continues to live in precarious conditions. Implementing policies that can redistribute resources equitably and promote social inclusion could be an effective measure to destabilize the insurgency, but a lack of political will and corruption in the central government have hindered such actions ([Institute for Security Studies 2022](#)).

The exploitation of natural resources in Cabo Delgado is a key factor that has intensified the conflict and exacerbated social and economic tensions in the region. The development model implemented in Mozambique, focused on gas and mineral exploration without a social inclusion strategy, has resulted in inequality, marginalization, and a continuous cycle of violence. The lack of effective public policies, corruption, the exclusion of local communities from the benefits of exploration, and the recruitment of insurgents exploiting this frustration have created an environment of radicalization. For the conflict to be resolved in a lasting way, the Mozambican government and international investors must adopt a more inclusive and transparent development approach, ensuring that the benefits of natural resource exploration reach local communities and promote social peace.

Conclusions

The conflict in Cabo Delgado is one of the most devastating episodes in Mozambique’s recent history, and the analysis of this conflict reveals a series of complex dynamics involving both deep and immediate causes, as well as the interaction between local, national, and global factors. The study of underlying causes, such as the historical marginalization of the region, the unequal exploitation of natural resources, and systemic corruption, provides a solid understanding of the reasons why the conflict has persisted and intensified. Throughout this analysis, it was possible to observe how the exploitation of natural resources, in particular natural gas and minerals, plays a central role in the aggravation of social and economic tensions, as well as in the radicalization and recruitment of local youth by insurgent groups.

The role of the exploitation of natural resources as a main cause of the conflict was examined in detail, with a focus on the social and economic impacts of this exploitation. The lack of inclusive public policies, the high degree of inequality, and the absence of a sustainable and equitable development model contributed to the feeling of social injustice in local communities. The exclusion of local populations from the economic benefits generated by resource exploitation, combined with the increasing militarization of the region and corruption within the central government, create a breeding ground for the emergence and perpetuation of the insurgency.

Furthermore, the analysis of the dynamics of recruitment and radicalization by insurgent groups shows how the Cabo Delgado insurgency is not only an ideological struggle but also a response to social, economic, and political issues. The resentment and lack of opportunities faced by local youth, combined with the promise of a better future and the sense of belonging offered by the insurgents, have been powerful drivers of recruitment. This aspect of the insurgency, strongly linked to social and economic issues, represents a major challenge to resolving the conflict, since, in addition to military repression, a real commitment to local development and the fair redistribution of resources is required.

The use of the DFID methodology and other conflict analysis approaches has provided a deeper understanding of the different factors that fuel the conflict and the possible strategies for its resolution. The analysis of the role of natural resources, local governance, the impact of corruption, and the lack of transparency in the exploitation process made it clear that the key to resolving the conflict lies in adopting inclusive public policies, promoting a development model that benefits local communities, and reducing structural inequalities.

In addition, the role of international actors and natural resource companies was also highlighted, showing how the presence of large multinationals can be seen both as an opportunity for development and as a factor in worsening the conflict when their activities are not accompanied by responsible management and a commitment to improving the living conditions of the local population. Transparency in negotiations, the creation of mechanisms to ensure community participation, and the implementation of projects that effectively meet the needs of the population are crucial steps in transforming the exploitation of natural resources into a driver of peace and development, rather than a focus of violence and exploitation.

Therefore, to answer the initial research question, which investigated the impact of natural resource exploitation on the worsening of the conflict in Cabo Delgado, the conclusion is clear: uncontrolled exploitation and the lack of an inclusive development strategy are, in fact, central factors that have fueled violence and insurgency in the region. For the conflict to be resolved effectively and sustainably, it is imperative that the government of Mozambique, in collaboration with investors and the international community, adopt a more just and equitable approach to the management of natural

resources. Only by substantially changing the way resources are managed and distributed will it be possible to reduce the social and economic tensions that fuel the conflict and allow peace and development to come to Cabo Delgado.

Finally, an effective resolution of the conflict requires a sustained commitment to rebuilding Cabo Delgado, including rehabilitating the destroyed infrastructure, implementing social inclusion policies that promote education, health, and employment for local communities, and creating a political and economic environment in which corruption is eradicated and transparency is the norm. This transformation process will require not only strong government action but also the active participation of local communities and the private sector to ensure that Cabo Delgado can overcome its current difficulties and harness its resource potential to promote lasting peace and inclusive development for all its citizens.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data supporting this study are derived from publicly available sources and referenced within the article. No additional datasets were generated or analysed specifically for this research.

DECLARATION on AI use

The author confirms that AI tools, including language models such as ChatGPT, were used solely to enhance the writing process, improve readability, and assist with grammar and formatting. All intellectual content, analysis, and critical arguments are the result of the author's original work. The AI tools were not used to generate research findings or substitute independent scholarly work.