

Boris Johnson has reshuffled more than just his cabinet

The UK prime minister's latest ministerial changes mark a new attitude towards dissent and control at Downing Street

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A reshuffle, in UK government cabinets, is the process by which new ministers are brought in and existing ones either dismissed or moved to different portfolios. London experienced one such event late last week.

Reshuffles have a well-established choreography. I have personally taken part in them over 35 years, as Member of Parliament, a ministerial aide, a promoted minister, a recipient of the phone call dispensing with my services and as a returning minister. The days before are filled with speculation – mostly unfounded, but often pitilessly directed at likely victims – as to who is going to be in or out.

A chart is drawn up in Downing Street with the moves set out, early phone calls are made to get the sackings done quickly and then the winners are called to walk up Downing Street in glory to receive their confirmed roles in front of the political media machine, which in turn goes into overdrive to spell out a narrative behind the prime minister's decision-making.

And there is always someone who says “no”.

Last week's reshuffle stuck faithfully to this pattern. Following a remarkable election victory in December, Prime Minister Boris Johnson was always going to take an early opportunity to



Johnson speaks during his first Cabinet meeting following a reshuffle the day before, at Downing Street in London.

shape the government he wanted. This is a key moment, especially for an administration likely to be conservative – and perhaps under Johnson's leadership – for the next decade. The UK is piloting a course outside the EU and answering questions about its place in the wider world – on trade, defence and security, alliances and the common global

challenges of climate, population and migration.

The clues to the future are in the names appointed to be his close team. Keeping Priti Patel as Home Secretary and Dominic Raab as Foreign Secretary was sound. Both shared the PM's euro-scepticism during his campaign to leave the EU, and keeping an existing Foreign Secretary in

place to build the relationships needed in a difficult world is essential, especially after he has spent only a few months in the role.

But the loss of Sajid Javid as Chancellor of the Exchequer – head of the treasury – was the big and unexpected shock. It was the “no” moment. As a Thatcherite with a smart financial back-

What Mozambique's insurgency woes can

STEPHEN RAKOWSKI

Mozambique is losing its battle against Islamist insurgents. Last week, the United Nations declared that armed militants have carried out no less than 28 attacks since the beginning of 2020. It is a notable uptick in violent activity since attacks first began in the country's northern Cabo Delgado province in late 2017.

Sadistic raids on villages are now commonplace, driving more than 100,000 people from their homes. As Andrej Mahecic, spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights noted on February 7, “They speak of men in particular being targeted and beheaded, and many, many reports of women and children ... being kidnapped or simply disappearing.”

For Maputo, Mozambique's capital, the timing could not be worse. In recent years, the country has successfully courted oil majors like Total and ExxonMobil to pump billions of dollars into its promising offshore energy sector. Indeed, ExxonMobil's joint \$30 billion liquefied natural gas project with Italian giant Eni in Mozambique's Rovuma Basin is set to be by far the largest investment by an American company in Africa for many years to come. The burgeoning energy sector could be a massive boon for Mozambique's impoverished economy, which was devastated

by a decades-long brutal civil war following independence from Portugal in 1975.

Yet the offshore energy sector's uncomfortably close proximity to areas under militant attack has ratcheted up fears for these oil majors. In fact, reports surfaced in early February that Total and ExxonMobil demanded Maputo send additional security to protect their assets. Mozambican defence minister Jaime Neto has given assurances that the government “is doing everything so that these multinational [firms], including their workers, can operate with tranquillity and security.”

Nevertheless, despite the government's ongoing efforts, the insurgency shows no signs of waning. Instead, Mozambique's political class and military are woefully unprepared to deal with a problem of this magnitude. For one, the country's security forces must grapple with the tyranny of distance, as Maputo to Palma – the base of the growing LNG sector in the far north – is over 2,700km, representing a significant logistical challenge for the largely underfunded and poorly-trained Mozambican military.

In truth, much of the conflict can be laid at the feet of Maputo. Decades of alienation from the more prosperous south have increased resentment in Cabo Delgado province, where Palma is located. Largely undeveloped, the province became



Members of Mozambique's Defence Forces march past the stage during the inauguration of Filipe Nyusi at the Independence Square

the near-exclusive property of predatory local political and economic elites who pilfered government resources meant to improve education and infrastructure. In addition to rampant corruption, security forces in the area are notorious for their heavy-handed responses. Consistent reporting suggests that mass arrests, disappearances and

possible torture are not uncommon and have escalated in lock-step with militancy.

Moreover, journalists have been largely prohibited from traveling to the area, both as a reaction to the rising danger and because Maputo seeks to strictly control the flow of damaging information. Nevertheless, this has made it difficult to ascertain

the exact nature of the conflict between the insurgents and their enemies. Many details about the insurgents, including their leadership structure and aims, remain shrouded in mystery. And the response from the government of President Filipe Nyusi, who actually hails from Cabo Delgado, has not been promising. Maputo's rhetoric has focused on

Maputo is struggling to protect its oil fields from militant groups, and shows no signs of learning from the experience