

# The Resurgence of Conflict in Mozambique

Ghosts from the Past and  
Brakes to Peaceful Democracy



**Stephanie REGALIA**

May 2017

The Institut français des relations internationales (Ifri) is a research center and a forum for debate on major international political and economic issues. Headed by Thierry de Montbrial since its founding in 1979, Ifri is a non-governmental, non-profit organization.

As an independent think tank, Ifri sets its own research agenda, publishing its findings regularly for a global audience. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, Ifri brings together political and economic decision-makers, researchers and internationally renowned experts to animate its debate and research activities.

With offices in Paris and Brussels, Ifri stands out as one of the rare French think tanks to have positioned itself at the very heart of European and broader international debate.

The opinions expressed in this text are the responsibility of the author alone.

ISBN: 978-2-36567-715-8

© All rights reserved, Ifri, 2017

### **How to quote this document:**

Stephanie Regalia, “The Resurgence of Conflict in Mozambique. Ghosts from the Past and Brakes to Peaceful Democracy”, *Notes de l’Ifri*, Ifri, May 2017.

### **Ifri**

27 rue de la Procession 75740 Paris Cedex 15 – FRANCE

Tel.: +33 (0)1 40 61 60 00 – Fax: +33 (0)1 40 61 60 60

Email: [accueil@ifri.org](mailto:accueil@ifri.org)

### **Ifri-Brussels**

Rue Marie-Thérèse, 21 1000 – Brussels – BELGIUM

Tel.: +32 (0)2 238 51 10 – Fax: +32 (0)2 238 51 15

Email: [bruxelles@ifri.org](mailto:bruxelles@ifri.org)

**Website:** [ifri.org](http://ifri.org)

# Author

**Stephanie Regalia** is a graduate student at the Sciences Po School of International Affairs (PSIA). Having graduated with a dual degree in English Law and French Law from King's College London and Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Stephanie has previously interned at Pinsent Masons LLP, and Herbert Smith Freehills LLP working on energy and construction projects in Africa. She is now specializing in International Energy and African Studies at Sciences Po.

# Table of contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>  | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>HISTORICAL BACKGROUND .....</b>   | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>RESURGENCE OF CONFLICT (2013-PRESENT):<br/>NEW CONFLICT, OLD TACTICS .....</b>  | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>THE ROOTS OF THE RENEWED CONFLICT:<br/>CHANGES AND CONTINUITIES IN THE MOZAMBICAN<br/>POST-CIVIL WAR POLITICAL SYSTEM .....</b> | <b>12</b> |
| <b>Renamo's Difficult Transition into an Institutionalized<br/>    and Functioning Political Party: Old Habits Die Hard .....</b>  | <b>12</b> |
| <b>MDM: Rise of a Post-Civil War Party .....</b>   | <b>17</b> |
| <b>Frelimo's Dominance on National Governance:<br/>    An Ever-Lasting One-Party Government?.....</b>                              | <b>19</b> |
| <b>CEASEFIRES AND CONTINUOUS PEACE TALKS:<br/>TRACES OF AN IMPERFECT DEMOCRACY .....</b>   | <b>24</b> |
| <b>CONCLUSION .....</b>  | <b>26</b> |

# Introduction

2016 proved to be a most challenging year for Mozambique. Small-scale conflict, which started reappearing between the government and the opposition party Renamo in 2013, intensified over the course of the year, whilst peace negotiations stalled. Secret loans guaranteed by the government and amounting to USD 1.4 billion were revealed,<sup>1</sup> prompting international partners, including the IMF and the World Bank, to suspend their aid. To make matters worse, the country was plagued with droughts for the past two years, compromising agricultural production, and pushing it to seek food aid.<sup>2</sup> However, on 27 December 2016, Afonso Dhlakama, leader of Renamo, declared a week-long ceasefire, which was extended for two months on 3 January 2017.<sup>3</sup>

Since then, the opposition party and the government have agreed on a new format for peace talks, forgoing the use of international mediators, as had been done all throughout 2016, instead picking Mozambican representatives and engaging in direct communication.<sup>4</sup> This ceasefire announcement could not have come at a more crucial time, as the Mozambican government is under scrutiny by international partners to clarify its hidden debt situation and audit the public companies which were involved, and as the government seeks to keep investors interested in the country's offshore gas potential. In an effort to reassure the climate investment within Mozambique, the next leg of talks between the government and the insurgent Renamo leadership will prove crucial in securing peace. In determining the chances of success of such talks, it is important to revisit the causes of this recent resurgence of conflict, trying to understand why after two decades of peace, Mozambique was once again a country marked by conflict between the same parties of its past civil war. A closer look reveals that signs of instability were very much present in the peacebuilding model, which Mozambique had come to be known as.

---

1. World Bank, "Mozambique Economic Update. Facing Hard Choices", December 2016.

2. "Southern Africa: UN Food Agency to Assist 700,000 People in Drought-Hit Mozambique", *allAfrica*, 8 February 2017, retrieved at: [allafrica.com](http://allafrica.com).

3. "Renamo Announces Two-Month Ceasefire" Agencia Informa  o Mo ambique (AIM), report No. 539, 12 January 2017.

4. A. Barbier, "Au Mozambique, le leader de l'opposition fait volte-face et la paix s'installe", *Le Monde*, 7 February 2017, retrieved at: [www.lemonde.fr](http://www.lemonde.fr).

## Map of Mozambique



Mozambique administrative map, @shutterstock

# Historical Background

During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Mozambique had been the stage of decades of violent armed conflict, first in its fight for independence from Portuguese rule (1964-1975), and then in the post-independence civil war (1977-1992), which deeply divided the country and is estimated to have accounted for the deaths of nearly one million people.<sup>5</sup> The latter can be credited for having shaped the modern Mozambican state, as the two parties which fought the war, ruling party Frelimo and opposing guerrilla faction Renamo, are still to this day the biggest political entities in Mozambique.

The immediate causes of this civil war however were imbedded in international considerations. Frelimo had seized power after independence and established itself as a Marxist-Leninist party, in line with the USSR ideology. Renamo on the other hand was not only set up as an opposition to this socialist rule, but was heavily funded and supported by neighbouring countries in an effort to weaken Mozambican support to anti-apartheid movements in the region, first by the then Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation (credited for the creation of Renamo), and later on by South Africa.<sup>6</sup> As the cold war came to an end, and apartheid was simultaneously on the road to abolition, both sides lost their main sources of funding, and peace negotiations soon unfolded, leading to the 1992 Rome General Peace Accords (hereon, 1992 GPA), signed by both factions.

The 1992 GPA put an end to the civil war and established a new democratic framework for Mozambique. When the first 1994 general elections were held, it came as a surprise to many observers that guerrilla-faction turned opposition party Renamo managed to secure a significant percentage of the vote<sup>7</sup> (though ultimately losing both the presidency and the majority control of Parliament, as it did in all subsequent elections).

---

5. This number includes estimated deaths linked to famine, whereas direct deaths as a result of combat operations is estimated to be about 100,000. Source: P. Domingues, "The Health Consequences of Mozambican Civil War: An Anthropometric Approach", *Documents de Travail du Centre d'Économie de la Sorbonne*, January 2010, (Working Paper), p. 8.

6. The South African army provided secret assistance to Renamo even after the signing of the Nkomati Accord. This was then fiercely debated in the South African security establishment. See N. Barnard, *Secret Revolution, Memoirs of a Spy Boss*, Tafelberg, 2015.

7. A. Vines, "Renamo's Rise and Decline: The Politics of Reintegration in Mozambique", in *International Peacekeeping*, 7 November 2013.

Up until 2013, it appeared that the democratic framework then established had been a rare case of post-civil war success: the political scene was dominated by the two former enemies (Frelimo and Renamo), political violence ceased and regular general elections were held every 5 years. Mozambique was then seen as a successful case of liberal peacebuilding, where electoral politics took precedence in the negotiation of political agreements.<sup>8</sup>

Mozambique also seemed to have a promising economic future lying ahead. Not only was GDP growth averaging 7 to 8% annually, but the country struck gold when in 2010-2011 large gas reserves were discovered offshore by American company Anadarko, and Italian giant Eni. Yet this perfect story of development came to an end, when in 2013, more than two decades since peace agreements had been signed, conflict struck again between the same parties of the civil war. Soon reports were coming of refugees flooding into Malawi.<sup>9</sup> And though the conflict was of smaller scale, and hasn't reached the levels of destruction witnessed during the civil war, it came as a surprise in a country where international observers and investors had expected peacebuilding to be essentially over, and stability guaranteed.

---

8. C. Manning, "Peacemaking and Democracy in Mozambique: Lessons Learned, 1992-2014", *Africaplus*, 24 March 2015, retrieved at: [africaplus.wordpress.com](http://africaplus.wordpress.com).

9. By March 2016, the UNHCR was reporting over 10,000 refugees in Malawi trying to avoid violence perpetrated mainly in the northern and central provinces of Mozambique, [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org).



# Resurgence of Conflict (2013-present): New Conflict, Old Tactics

Although tension between Frelimo and Renamo has always existed, even in times of peace, smaller scale conflict (compared to the civil war) re-emerged in 2013. The following table is a timeline of key events, some reflecting the type of attacks which have occurred, both on reportedly Renamo and Frelimo sides. This table is not meant to be exhaustive.

| <b>2013</b>   |   |
|---------------|---|
| April 2013    | Renamo attack on Muxungue police station. <sup>10</sup>   |
| June 2013     | Renamo announces it will create a security zone from the River Save to Muxungue and that it will cut railroad linking Beira to the Tete coal mines. <sup>11</sup>                                   |
| November 2013 | Renamo boycotts the November 20 municipal elections. <sup>12</sup>  |
| <b>2014</b>   |   |
| August 2014   | Ceasefire signed by government and Renamo before October general elections. <sup>13</sup>   |
| October 2014  | 2014 general election.<br><br>Filipe Nyusi (Frelimo) is elected President, Frelimo maintains majority control of the Assembly. Results (seats): Frelimo (144), Renamo (89), MDM (17). <sup>14</sup> |

---

10. "36 Mozambique Soldiers, Police Killed: Renamo", *Times Live*, 13 August 2013, retrieved at: [www.timeslive.co.za](http://www.timeslive.co.za), see also supra note 7, p. 387.

11. Supra note 7, p. 388.

12. M. Mucari, "Local Election Gains Boost Mozambique's MDM Opposition Party", *reuters*, 4 December 2013, retrieved at: [hwww.reuters.com](http://hwww.reuters.com).

13. "Mozambique Rivals Agree Ceasefire ahead of Elections", *BBC News*, 25 August 2014, retrieved at: [www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com).

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| October 2014 | Renamo claims electoral vote manipulation by Frelimo following general election results. <sup>15</sup>  |
| <b>2015</b>  |   |
| March 2015   | Constitutional law expert, Gilles Cistac, Renamo supporter, is killed in Maputo. <sup>16</sup>  |
| June 2015    | Dhlakama orders ambush in the Moatize district against government forces, reportedly violating the ceasefire agreement of 2014. <sup>17</sup>   |
| October 2015 | Frelimo orders disarmament of Dhlakama's bodyguards. <sup>18</sup>  |
| <b>2016</b>  |   |
| January 2016 | Dhlakama vows to take control of 6 central and northern regions of Mozambique (out of 11 total) – reports of refugees due to government counter-insurgency action appear. <sup>19</sup> |
| June 2016    | Renamo gunmen attack coal train operated by Brazilian company Vale in Sofala province. <sup>20</sup>  |
| October 2016 | Renamo gunmen attack another coal train from Vale in the Nampula province <sup>21</sup> & health unit in Nampula as well. <sup>22</sup>   |
| October 2016 | Renamo negotiator in ongoing peace talks, Jeremias Pondeca, is killed in Maputo. <sup>23</sup>  |

14. C. Manning, "Peacemaking and Democracy in Mozambique: Lessons Learned, 1992-2014", *Africaplus*, 24 March 2015, retrieved at: [africaplus.wordpress.com](http://africaplus.wordpress.com).

15. P. Fauvet, "Mozambique: Renamo Claims Victory in Elections", *allAfrica*, 29 October 2014, retrieved at: [allafrica.com](http://allafrica.com).

16. A. Barbier, "Un avocat critique du pouvoir assassiné à Maputo", *Le Monde*, 4 March 2015, retrieved at: [www.lemonde.fr](http://www.lemonde.fr).

17. "Mozambique: Dhlakama Admits Ordering Ambush", *allAfrica*, 23 June 2015, retrieved at: [allafrica.com](http://allafrica.com).

18. "Mozambique: Once Again, Dhlakama Threatens to Seize Provinces", *allAfrica*, 17 December 2015, retrieved [allafrica.com](http://allafrica.com).

19. "Renamo Leader's Coup Scheme – Dhlakama's Decision to Seize Control of Six Provinces Is 'Irreversible'; Tete Province Residents Flee Renewed Violence", *Africa Research Bulletin*, 2016.

20. "Attack Continue – As Peace Talks Remain Elusive, Accusations of Summary Executions and Fear-Mongering Emerge", *Africa Research Bulletin*, 2016.

21. "Mozambique: Renamo Attacks Coal Train in Nampula", *allAfrica*, 8 October 2016, retrieved at: [allafrica.com](http://allafrica.com).

22. "Mozambique: Renamo Attack in Nampula", *allAfrica*, 4 October 2016, retrieved at: [allafrica.com](http://allafrica.com).

23. "Talks between Government and Renamo Resume", AIM report, No. 534, 19 October 2016.

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| November 2016 | Political figures on both sides are being murdered as peace talks keep stalling (Arao Chiguemane and Antonio Macurreia for Frelimo; Juma Ramos and Luciano Augusto for Renamo). <sup>24</sup> |
| December 2016 | Dhlakama unilaterally declares a one-week truce; No Renamo attacks have since been reported.  |
| <b>2017</b>   |   |
| January 2017  | Dhlakama announces a 2-month extension of the December ceasefire. <sup>25</sup>   |
| February 2017 | President Nyusi briefs third-party leader Daviz Simango (MDM) on the ongoing talks between Frelimo and Renamo. <sup>26</sup>  |

This resurgence was characterised by the accumulation of small-scale attacks mainly localised in the central and northern regions, which Renamo claims to have overtaken (Sofala, Manica, Tete, Zambezia, Nampula and Niassa), with the exception of certain killings, which occur for some in the capital Maputo (for example that of Jeremias Pondeca, which hasn't officially been attributed). However, referring to small-scale attacks may be misleading as to the impact of this renewed conflict. Although each individual attack is definitely smaller in size, logistics and victims compared to past civil war insurgencies, their cumulative effect has had larger scale impacts. By March 2016, the UNHCR was already reporting over 10,000 Mozambicans fleeing to Malawi.<sup>27</sup>

Drawing parallels with the past civil war can be of limited use, due to the sheer difference in scale of both conflicts. This may in part be due to the disarmament which took place following the end of the civil war. Although disarmament had not been considered a central priority to the UN peacekeeping mission ONUMOZ, which came to stabilize the country following the 1992 GPA, subsequent civil society efforts proved more effective.<sup>28</sup> This and the lack of foreign funding of the current conflict,

24. "Mozambique : au moins trois responsables politiques assassinés en une semaine", *Jeune Afrique*, 2 novembre 2016, retrieved at: [www.jeuneafrique.com](http://www.jeuneafrique.com).

25. Supra note 3.

26. "Mozambique: Nyusi Briefs Daviz Simango on Peace Talks", *allAfrica*, 13 February 2017, retrieved at: [allafrica.com](http://allafrica.com).

27. K. Shimo, "Growing Number of Mozambicans Flee to Malawi", UNHCR, 16 March 2016, retrieved at: [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org).

28. Supra note 7, p. 381.

which appears wholly internal to Mozambique, may explain that the events which have occurred so far are always of a more limited scale.

Nevertheless the purpose of Renamo's insurrection should not be underestimated. By targeting specific areas and industries strategic to the country's economy, Renamo has been resorting to its old guerrilla and destabilisation strategy,<sup>29</sup> whereby it seeks to weaken the government to then force concessions,<sup>30</sup> which it hasn't otherwise been able to obtain through the ballot. Central to this strategy has been the disruption of transport routes, which damages commercial operations, and, indirectly, Frelimo's source of income as ruling party.

For example, the repeated attacks on the activities of Brazilian mining company, Vale, had a profound impact on the perceived investment climate in Mozambique. In 2016, two railroads linking coal production from the Moatize mine in the Tete region to first Beira and then Nacala port have suffered attacks from Renamo.<sup>31</sup> As a consequence of this insecure operating environment and low commodity prices, Vale has cut back on production and investment in Mozambique, and is estimated to have lost \$212 million in local operations in the first half of 2016 alone.<sup>32</sup> Disruption of key transport axes, and resources was something which Renamo was already renowned for during the civil war era, and is something it has successfully re-implemented in recent years. The timing of these attacks is all the more crucial, as Mozambique is now facing a dire economic situation, commodities markets are still yielding low prices and international investors seem uneager to commit to final investment decisions.

---

29. L. Hultman, "The Power to Hurt in Civil War: The Strategic Aim of RENAMO Violence", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4, December 2009, p. 821.

30. L. Reppell, J. Rozen and G. de Carvalho, *Planning for Peace – Lessons from Mozambique's Peacebuilding Process*, ISS Paper, No. 291, June 2016, p. 9.

31. "Mozambique: Renamo Attacks Coal Train in Nampula", *allAfrica*, 8 October 2016, retrieved at: [allafrica.com](http://allafrica.com).

32. E. Wilson, "Mozambique Runs on Empty", *euromoney.com*, September 2016, p. 214.

# **The Roots of the Renewed Conflict: Changes and Continuities in the Mozambican Post-Civil War Political System**

While Mozambique is now seen as a new gas and a future resource rich country, the political balance has changed since the 1992 GPA. The Mozambican political scene can no longer be seen as a bipartisan system since the emergence of an important third-party, the MDM (Mozambique Democratic Movement), which put an end to Renamo's status as the only opposition party in the country. At the same time, Frelimo maintains a strong grip on power with a winner-take-all mindset, despite growing popular criticism and new financial stakes with the discovery of gas. In contemporary Mozambique, politics is a combination of continuities (Frelimo's long-term domination and Renamo's unchanged leadership) and changes (the emergence of a new opposition party, Frelimo's increasingly apparent corruption, and new rent-seeking strategies regarding natural resources). This tension between consolidated dynamics and new opportunities plays a central role in Renamo's decision to take up arms and resort to its old confrontation strategy with a well-known enemy. This old/new conflict reflects Renamo's fear of marginalisation as well as its old leadership style, but also the consequences of Frelimo's long-term grip on power.

## **Renamo's Difficult Transition into an Institutionalized and Functioning Political Party: Old Habits Die Hard**

Renamo's transition into a peaceful political party after the 1992 GPA was not as automatic and successful as the lack of conflict for over two decades would have suggested. Though it managed to adapt its agenda to new economic and social concerns, Afonso Dhlakama's unchallenged leadership of the party has been seen as a brake to the party's chances of fully transitioning into a successful *political* party, although reported electoral irregularities have also contributed to Renamo's sidelining in the exercise of power.

## ***Renamo's Agenda: Decentralisation and State Resources Allocation***

As the conflict is no longer motivated by an anti-communist stance, Renamo's political agenda has centred on the exercise of power and the distribution of wealth generated by the country's new hydrocarbon industry. More specifically, as was recently repeated by Dhlakama in a press conference, Renamo is pushing for greater decentralization of power, asking that provincial governors be elected directly by local population, rather than appointed by the ruling party in Maputo.<sup>33</sup> According to Dhlakama, the current nomination system leads to provinces, which had voted in majority for Renamo in the presidential election, being exclusively governed by Frelimo representatives, appointed by the President. Back in March 2015, Renamo had already proposed a bill to the National Assembly to institute elected provincial governors, but the bill was rejected, having been voted unconstitutional.<sup>34</sup> Yet, according to the Mozambican Information Agency, ongoing peace talks are currently discussing decentralization, with the idea that a new bill be submitted to the Assembly in the future.<sup>35</sup>

This issue of decentralization is very closely linked to that of state revenue distribution. Much of Renamo's agenda now focuses on issues of social inequality, with the perception that recent resource wealth is not profiting the general population.<sup>36</sup> In fact, far beyond a mere perception, and despite the country's impressive economic growth over the past two decades, averaging 7.9% per year from 1993 to 2014,<sup>37</sup> the World Bank estimates that poverty has fallen only half as fast as what Sub-Saharan Africa achieved on average during the period of 1997-2009.<sup>38</sup> The World Bank also noted that poverty reduction was unequal within the country, with Zambezia, Sofala, Manica and Gaza having actually seen poverty rates increase between 2003 and 2009.<sup>39</sup> With the exception of Gaza, these provinces are all within the territory which Dhlakama threatened to take over in January 2016. In a country with high growth, but also high inequality, Renamo's requests for decentralization, and in particular

---

33. Supra note 4.

34. C. Manning, "Political Tensions Threaten Mozambique's Tenuous Peace", *World Politics Review*, 21 January 2016, [www.worldpoliticsreview.com](http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com).

35. Supra note 3.

36. Supra note 30, p. 9.

37. World Bank, "Accelerating Poverty Reduction in Mozambique: Challenges and Opportunities", 21 December 2016, p. 8.

38. World Bank, *Accelerating Poverty Reduction in Mozambique: Challenges and Opportunities*, 21 December 2016, retrieved at: [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org).

39. Supra note 37.

provincial control over revenues from the hydrocarbon and extractive industries, can in fact generate a strong popular approval.

Prior to the large gas discoveries of 2010-2011, Renamo had been on an electoral decline, losing seats in the National Assembly. Although it started out with 112 out of the 250 Assembly seats in 1994, and grew to 117 in 1999, it then engaged on a consistent decline, winning only 90 seats in 2004 and 51 in 2009. Yet, in the last general elections in 2014, after having re-engaged in small scale conflict, Renamo managed to gain momentum and win 89 seats in the Assembly.<sup>40</sup> This resurgence was testimony of Renamo's message resonating within specific voter groups, and in particular in resource-rich provinces (Nampula, Niassa, Zambezia, Sofala and Tete).<sup>41</sup>

### ***Renamo's Electoral Grievances***

Lack of funds have made campaigning more challenging for Renamo in recent years, and these difficulties may be exacerbated by an institutional framework controlled by Frelimo, and seemingly manipulated to favour Frelimo.

Renamo had benefitted from a US\$17 million UN Trust Fund in the lead up to the first general elections in 1994,<sup>42</sup> but later received a subsidy from the state depending on the number of seats it held in parliament.<sup>43</sup> Essentially, as Renamo's electoral results worsened over time, so too did its finances, a fact also explained by its lack of effective collection of membership dues.<sup>44</sup> This must be contrasted to both Frelimo and MDM's finances. Frelimo evidently as the ruling party has access to more abundant resources, whereas MDM is seen as a basket for international donors, as a newer alternative to the old belligerent parties.<sup>45</sup>

Renamo has often claimed electoral manipulation by Frelimo to limit Renamo's number of seats in the National Assembly, and to deny it the presidency in particular in the 1999 election, when Dhlakama received 47% of the vote. In fact, the majority of observers agree that Frelimo has always won, in terms of real vote, the general elections since 1994. However, some irregularities have been noted, which may have led to Renamo gaining fewer seats than it should have had. For example, it is estimated that ballot

---

40. Supra note 8.

41. Supra note 34.

42. Supra note 7, p. 381.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 384.

44. *Ibid.*

45. *Ibid.*, p. 383.

box stuffing in 2004 may have cost Renamo at least two seats.<sup>46</sup> Intimidation and harassment strategies against Renamo supporters have additionally been reported. Dhlakama also claimed manipulation by Frelimo of the voter registry in areas where Renamo garnished important popular support, following Renamo's defeat in the 2009 general election.<sup>47</sup>

Among the most debated issues has been the lack of transparency and the party politics dominating electoral commissions: the vote count and reasons for discarding irregular votes are not always transparently disclosed, and the national electoral commission's independence from Frelimo has been challenged on numerous occasions, in particular after the 2009 general election, when MDM was excluded from the ballot in seven of the eleven provinces.<sup>48</sup> Although in that particular instance, the action of excluding MDM for clouded administrative reasons may have indirectly favoured Renamo, and kept it from losing even more seats that year, it showcased how Frelimo's interests were deeply intertwined in the electoral commission's functioning. In fact, in February 2014, the Frelimo government reached an agreement with Renamo to double the number of opposition-party representatives within both national and provincial election commissions.<sup>49</sup> This type of agreement, however, is unlikely to appease tensions, as long as both parties' leadership remains embedded in past belligerent mentalities.

### ***Afonso Dhlakama: Portrait of an Autocratic Leader of the Opposition***

One constant between civil war and post-civil war Renamo has been its leader: Afonso Dhlakama. Born in 1953 in the Sofala Province, when Mozambique was still under Portuguese rule, Dhlakama took control of Renamo in 1979, two years into the civil war, when its initial leader André Matsangaissa died. Dhlakama thus is not the first person to have led Renamo; however, from 1979 onwards, Dhlakama has been the only leader of Renamo even after it transitioned into a political party post 1992 GPA. It has been argued that Dhlakama's personality and leadership were the determining factors in Renamo's evolution as a political party.<sup>50</sup> Described as an autocratic ruler, Dhlakama has maintained a strong hold on the party, and kept any rival within Renamo at arm's length, going as far as

---

46. Supra note 7, p. 389.

47. I. D. Reid and C. Wimpy, "Defining Opposition: An Interview with Afonso Dhlakama of RENAMO", *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 37(1) (2013).

48. Supra note 34.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Supra note 7.



excluding members who challenged – or could challenge – his political authority. This was famously the case of Raul Domingos, former leader of Renamo's parliamentary group from 1994 to 1999. As Domingos gained influence within the party, and entered in direct contact with Frelimo officials, Dhlakama felt personally threatened, and eventually decided to expel Domingos from the party back in 2000.<sup>51</sup> Soon after, the then secretary general of the party, Joaquim Vaz, had to resign in 2002 for similar reasons, and in particular for his ties with the challenger figure of Domingos.<sup>52</sup>

Dhlakama's inability to let anyone else strive towards the leadership of Renamo and to let the parliamentary group hold its own decisional power, is reflective of what is perhaps still a military hierarchy structure within Renamo: those who don't follow commands or undermine their superior are punished for it. This is further exacerbated by the fact Dhlakama never sat for parliamentary office,<sup>53</sup> he only ever considered the presidential office. It is interesting to notice that Dhlakama personifies better the post-independence autocratic leader figure, which became common in former African colonies, than his Frelimo counterparts. Yet, very obviously, Dhlakama isn't the leader of a country but an opposition party, and such tenure of power within the opposition can also lead to a form of isolation. Dhlakama's lack of democratic practice has been the source of frustration within the party, leading to inner-dissent. This culminated in 2008, when Daviz Simango, a rising Renamo figure elected mayor of Beira in 2003, left Renamo and formed his own political party in time for the 2009 general elections: the *Movimento Democrático de Moçambique* (MDM). The significance of this divide within the opposition, and impact on the functioning of multiparty politics in Mozambique is discussed in a dedicated section below.

Nonetheless, Dhlakama's past as a guerrilla leader clearly has a strong impact on the way Renamo is managed, and also illustrates that as long as Dhlakama held this position within Renamo, there was always the risk, that his many threats, once considered only desperate a couple years ago,<sup>54</sup> could be enacted, and fire opened against his long-time war enemy Frelimo. In his most recent telephone press conference, the leader referenced explicitly the group's past civil-war success, glorifying Renamo's

---

51. *Ibid.*, p. 386.

52. *Ibid.*

53. G. M. Carbone, "Continuidade na renovação? Ten Years of Multiparty Politics in Mozambique: Roots, Evolution and Stabilisation of the Frelimo-Renamo Party System" *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Sep. 2005), p. 436.

54. "Could Renamo Regroup? Dhlakama Threatens Blooshed if Frelimo Resists", *Africa Research Bulletin*, 2011, 18990 & supra note 6 at p. 389.

military past and asserting its current military supremacy on government troops – a more debatable assertion.<sup>55</sup> Dhlakama forged his image during the civil war, when he took control of Renamo at only 26 years old. His expertise is perhaps rather one of military resistance, than electoral competition, and this can be seen in the many electoral grievances that Renamo suffered, in its imperfect transition from guerrilla faction to political party. For example, in protest of the administration of elections by Frelimo, Renamo refused to run for municipal elections in 2013. This resulted in its loss of administrative control over any city, and conversely helped MDM gain geographical coverage, winning three of the four biggest cities in the country.<sup>56</sup> Perhaps sensing Renamo's political decline over time, Dhlakama resorted to violence as a more viable option to reaffirm Renamo's relevance and also his personal relevance.<sup>57</sup>

Overall the combination of military-style governance and the structural difficulties in competing against the ever-dominant Frelimo have made it difficult for Renamo to flourish as a political party, and increasingly appealing to resort to conflict to gain bargaining power in political dealings. Renamo's position has been increasingly fragilized politically, despite its good showing at the latest general election, by the emergence of an alternative force within the opposition: the MDM.

## MDM: Rise of a Post-Civil War Party

Founded in 2008 by Daviz Simango, MDM is somewhat of an oddity in the Mozambican political landscape. Contrasting with Frelimo and Renamo, MDM is a peaceful post-civil war party, with no military aspirations. Its founder, and leader, Daviz Simango, was not a key war figure and did not fight for either Frelimo or Renamo. Daviz Simango was born in 1964 in Tanzania, whilst his father, Uria Simango, was preparing for Mozambique's independence. Uria Simango eventually rose to become the first vice president of Frelimo but was assassinated early on in the civil war, as he did not see eye to eye with the Marxist-Leninist leadership of the party.<sup>58</sup> His son Daviz entered into politics in 1992, at the end of the civil war, and founded the National Convention Party (NCP) with his brother Lutero.<sup>59</sup>

---

55. Supra note 4.

56. M. Mucari, "Local Election Gains Boost Mozambique's MDM Opposition Party", *reuters*, 4 December 2013, retrieved at: [www.reuters.com](http://www.reuters.com).

57. Supra note 34.

58. "Mozambique's poll line-up", BBC News, 27 October 2009, retrieved at: [news.bbc.co.uk](http://news.bbc.co.uk)

59. A. Nuvunga and J. Adalima, "Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM): An Analysis of a New Opposition Party in Mozambique", Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, *Studies on Political Parties and Democracy* (2011), p. 8.

The NCP failed at attracting momentum, and Daviz Simango formally joined Renamo in 1997. His ascension was pretty fast after that, as he became mayor of Beira, the second largest city in Mozambique, in 2003.

In his first term as mayor of Beira, Daviz Simango drew appraisal for the quality of his governance despite Frelimo efforts to obstruct. The support of some Western donors proved crucial to carrying out big projects for the city, including improving the sanitation system, repairing roads and building new infrastructure.<sup>60</sup> As Daviz Simango started drawing attention for his governance skills, Dhlakama felt threatened, and withdrew his support for Simango's reelection in 2008, presenting another Renamo candidate instead: Manuel Pereira. Despite his exclusion from Renamo, Simango still ran as an independent candidate in the 2008 election, winning Beira again. Soon after, MDM was founded, and unlike other third parties, which had been created but never garnished much success in the post-civil war era, MDM actually managed to win 8 seats in the national Assembly after the 2009 general elections.

It has been noted however, that despite MDM's contrasting history, as a non belligerent party in Mozambique, the main motivation for its creation was rather a power struggle between Simango and Dhlakama, than any differing ideology. It comes as little surprise then that MDM's political agenda bears a lot of similarities with that of Renamo's, namely decentralization and wealth distribution.<sup>61</sup> However, MDM managed to distinguish itself by appealing to a younger electorate and presenting itself as an alternative within the opposition. Indeed, as Renamo chose to take up arms again and boycotted the 2013 municipal elections, MDM increasingly appeared like an institutionalized alternative within the opposition. A peaceful party, with no historical implication within the civil war, MDM is more readily able to attract younger and more qualified profiles than Renamo, in particular individuals who would seek individual advancement, without fearing retribution from an authoritarian party leader such as Dhlakama. As reported by Alex Vine in his 2013 article, MDM's leaders admitted having learned from Renamo's mistakes and in particular Dhlakama's.<sup>62</sup>

Concerns have been raised, however, that for all the modernity and vitality, which MDM has brought to Mozambique's multiparty democracy, MDM also presents risks within its structure. More specifically, MDM has been characterised as a family party: it is now led by Daviz Simango,

---

60. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

61. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

62. *Supra* note 7, p. 389.

president of the party, and his brother Lutero Simango, president of MDM's parliamentary group. This observation is further exacerbated by Daviz Simango's habit of employing relatives within the Beira municipal council.<sup>63</sup>

Having increased its parliamentary representation from 8 seats in 2009, to 17 in 2014, and having won the municipal elections in Beira, Quelimane, Nampula, Gurue and Zambezia, MDM has progressively established itself as a force to be reckoned with. For the first time, on 13 February 2017, Frelimo President Filipe Nyusi granted an audience to MDM leader Daviz Simango to brief him on the state of ongoing discussions with Renamo during the ceasefire.<sup>64</sup> Unprecedented in Mozambican politics, MDM, a third party, has managed to assert its need for consultation and information within the Frelimo/Renamo dynamic. In doing so, MDM no longer appears as an outsider, but a confirmed player within the national political arena, threatening both Renamo's appeal as opposition and Frelimo's appeal as an institutionally secure party.

## **Frelimo's Dominance on National Governance: an Ever-Lasting One-Party Government?**

### ***Frelimo's Authoritative Exercise of Power***

Just as Dhlakama's leadership is a constant to Renamo, so it seems a ruling Frelimo party is to Mozambique. As noted in a Centre for Strategic & International Studies report, "Frelimo continues to rule 75 percent of the legislature and 99 percent of municipal assemblies and mayoral positions".<sup>65</sup> Although Renamo is frequently associated to its past guerrilla activity during the civil war, and criticised as unfit to govern, the centralization of power by Frelimo and its virtual dominance of the whole country's politics in practice are also proof of an imbalanced democracy. The murder of Gilles Cistac, a constitutional law expert who held that Mozambique's current constitution allowed decentralization of power despite its definition of Mozambique as a unitary state, in March 2015, shows the difficulty of promoting an ideology at odds with Frelimo mainstream thinking. Indeed, central to Frelimo's ideology is the exercise

---

63. Supra note 60, p. 28.

64. "Mozambique: Nyusi Briefs Daviz Simango On Peace Talks", *allAfrica*, 13 February 2017, retrieved at: [allafrica.com](http://allafrica.com).

65. R. D. Lamb, K. Mixon, S. Minot, *The Uncertain Transition from Stability to Peace*, CSIS report, February 2015, p. 20.

of power from top to bottom within a unitary state, as opposed to a multi-scale localized and decentralized form of governance. Historical considerations seem to explain this Frelimo-specific ideology. As noted by Colin Darch (2016), Frelimo was formed from the merger of separate nationalist movements, and in an effort to succeed in the fight for independence and avoid ethnic, regional or ideological tensions, Frelimo came to adopt in its core beliefs the unity of state and governance.<sup>66</sup>

The issue of decentralization plays in fact a key role in the current social and economic situation of Mozambique, as it would also directly address the question of ownership and management of natural resources, which so far seem to have only benefited Frelimo, the unique party in power since independence. The economic growth, which Mozambique has experienced since the end of the civil war (almost 8% growth on average per year from 1993 to 2014)<sup>67</sup> has not profited the general population at large. As highlighted in the aforementioned World Bank analysis, poverty hasn't decreased as fast as would be expected from Mozambique's high growth rates over the past decade. More precisely, for each percentage point of economic growth from 1997 to 2009, according to the publication, poverty was only reduced by 0.26 percentage points, which is nearly half of the average for Sub-Saharan Africa (0.5 percentage points reduction) over that same period of time.<sup>68</sup>

In light of Mozambique's potential growth if its large gas resources come to be exploited in a favourable market, this form of one-party dominance currently practiced raises worry regarding the proper management of future incomes. Following the gas discoveries, high ranking figures within the party, such as Alberto Chipande and Raimundo Pachinuapa, started creating local companies which will become indispensable when the gas projects are officially launched with international competitors.<sup>69</sup> The very obvious community of interest between the business and political sphere here raises concerns over the competitiveness of these companies, and their potential use for corruption purposes.

The need for proper scrutiny of government action requires a multiparty system, with parties who accomplish this scrutiny work correctly, and have the means to do so. Even though Frelimo no longer

---

66. C. Darch, "Separatist Tensions and Violence in the 'Model Post-Conflict State': Mozambique since the 1990s", *Review of African Political Economy*, 43:148 (2016), p. 320.

67. Supra note 37.

68. Supra note 38.

69. B. Augé, "Le développement du secteur gazier en Tanzanie et au Mozambique. Les prémices de deux expériences dissymétriques", *Notes de l'Ifri*, Ifri, October 2016, p. 15.

advocates a communist agenda, it seems to have maintained a certain Marxist-Leninist structure to power hierarchy within the party. In fact, studies on post-communist countries in Eastern Europe and Eurasia show that many then transited into an authoritarian regime, possibly as a way of stabilising power and public affairs, after decades of organized politics and economics.<sup>70</sup> Mozambique does not exactly fit the mould of the post communist country turned authoritarian regime as ex-soviet countries have, because Mozambique hasn't fallen within the hands of a single leader, but has in fact remained in the control of the former communist party. In this sense, Mozambique's transition from civil war to peace in 1992 can perhaps rather be compared, structurally, to China, where the communist party stayed in power post-liberalisation.

Nonetheless, authoritarian tendencies within Frelimo have been observed, in particular, some argue, during Armando Guebuza's presidency from 2004 to 2014, when dissidents more often became the target of aimed repression.<sup>71</sup> This was the case, for example, of the economist Carlos Castel Branco, who was detained and tried for publishing an open letter criticizing Guebuza. Since Guebuza's departure from power however, crackdown on dissent doesn't seem to have lessened, as refugee testimonies of government repression on Renamo supportive areas have shown. A 2016 Freedom House report on Mozambique details testimonies of refugees having to flee their villages due to Frelimo killings and burnings in targeted areas to eliminate the possibility for Renamo troops to be supported and fed by locals.<sup>72</sup>

### ***Weaknesses from Within Revealed***

There seems to be a contradiction between the violent repression which Frelimo has been engaging in, and the message of open dialogue and peace negotiation which President Nyusi has been expressing in the media.<sup>73</sup> The *Africa Research Bulletin* reported, regarding this issue, that there may in fact be an internal split within Frelimo between the current President Nyusi's publicly stated engagement towards peaceful negotiations with Dhlakama and former Frelimo combatants carrying out military offensives

---

70. E. Huskey, "Authoritarian Leadership in the Post-Communist World", *Daedalus*, Summer 2016, Vol. 145, No. 3, p. 70.

71. Supra note 34.

72. Freedom House, *Mozambique: Violence, Refugees and the Luwani Camp*, December 2016, p.11.

73. "President Nyusi Promises to Work for Dialogue with Dhlakama", AIM report, No. 529, 6 June 2016.



practised in the past.<sup>74</sup> This would explain certain events, such as the murder of Renamo peace negotiator Jeremias Pondeca, presumably by old-guard members of Frelimo.<sup>75</sup> Such a divide would be appearing at a wrong time, as Frelimo tries to hold account of its economic governance.

Indeed, with the discovery of secret loans guaranteed by the government and amounting to USD 1.4 billion in April 2016, Frelimo has revealed what is in fact a difficult economic situation for Mozambique, alarming international donors and investors. These loans, which officially were supposed to help key economic sectors such as fishing, were kept secret to divert the funds for military and security purposes, and essentially, according to IMF Director Christine Lagarde, to conceal corruption. It is presumed that much of the funds have actually benefitted Senior Frelimo officials under President Guebuza's government.<sup>76</sup> In an attempt to rebuild a working relationship with the IMF, which suspended its aid, President Nyusi's government has agreed to an independent audit of the public companies whose loans it had guaranteed.<sup>77</sup> Yet, corruption such as this has been omnipresent under Frelimo's rule. For example, the *Mail & Guardian* listed President Guebuza's business interests, and those of his family at large, in a 2012 article, noting that the President made critical economic decisions, which profited his businesses directly. One example of this was a contract signed between the Mozambican government and Tata Mozambique, a company in which the former President held a 25% stake, for the provision of 150 buses to serve the Maputo municipality. The contract had not been subject to an international tender, as was required by law.<sup>78</sup> This type of systematic conflict of interest and barely hidden corruption explains Mozambique's poor ranking in Corruption Perception. In 2016, Mozambique ranked 142 out of 176 on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index,<sup>79</sup> the discovery of the extent of hidden debt having unsurprisingly made it drop from its 2015 position of 112 out of 168.<sup>80</sup>

---

74. "Renamo Leader's Coup Scheme – Dhlakama's Decision to Seize Control of Six Provinces Is 'Irreversible'; Tete Province Residents Flee Renewed Violence", *Africa Research Bulletin*, 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> January 2016.

75. "Senior Opposition Figure Shot Dead", *Africa Research Bulletin*, 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> October 2016.

76. P. Fabricius, "The Resource Curse Comes to Mozambique", *ISS Today*, 9 June 2016, retrieved at: [issafrica.org](http://issafrica.org).

77. "Government committed to winning back trust", AIM report, No. 540, 30 January 2017.

78. L. Nhachote, "Mozambique's 'Mr Guebusiness'", *Mail & Guardian*, 6 January 2012, retrieved at: [mg.co.za](http://mg.co.za).

79. Transparency International, Corruption Perception Index 2016, [www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org).

80. Transparency International, Corruption Perception Index 2015, [www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org).

Yet with today's dire economic situation, and international donors pulling out their aid, the state needs to increase its revenues, and needs for the offshore gas projects to begin operation; but the combination of localised violence and economic slowdown has discouraged international companies from committing to final investment decisions. First, commodities markets are not at their strongest to start exploitation with maximum profitability. Second, the disruption which Renamo has been capable of, especially in the example of the coal industry with Vale, is strong incentive to put off exploitation until the security improves. This fragile situation may explain the resumption of talks, in particular on the issue of decentralization, to calm security worries, which investors may have. Whether Frelimo will cave, and review its fundamental ideology of the unity of state, is another issue altogether.



# Ceasefires and Continuous Peace Talks: Traces of an Imperfect Democracy

Throughout this resurgence of conflict, one aspect has been striking: the continued existence of peace talks and communication between Renamo and Frelimo. Instead of going through the democratic routes to negotiate the reforms it wishes, Renamo has consistently sought concessions from Frelimo through direct negotiations between both parties' leaders. Ever since the 1992 GPA, there has been a continuous peace talk habit between these two parties in moments of tension, following national demonstrations staged by Renamo, or as is currently the case, following threat of violence and disruption. On the one hand, this form of communication may be considered a success from the 1992 GPA, ensuring that parties maintain direct communication, as a better chance of maintaining peace. On the other hand, peace talks are not parliamentary debates. They are not reflective of a democratic process, and their continuance comforts Renamo's status as an essentially ex-parliamentary force. For example, in this most recent bout of conflict, three agreements had been reached between Frelimo and Renamo:

- in February 2014, Frelimo agreed on a reform of the electoral commissions, doubling the number of opposition-party members within them;
- in August and September 2014, both sides agreed to a ceasefire in time for the 2014 general elections;
- in June 2015, another agreement was reached regarding the separation between the ruling party and the state, keeping civil servants from engaging in partisan activities during working hours for example.<sup>81</sup>

As noted by Carry Manning, these additional agreements actually stem from Renamo's demands that the 1992 GPA be fully implemented, suggesting that to a certain extent, post civil war peacebuilding has been a continuous and still unfinished process in Mozambique. This can be clearly seen on still contentious issues, such as the reintegration of former

---

81. Supra note 34.

Renamo combatants. Although the 1992 GPA set up a framework for the creation of the new Mozambican army with the integration of former Renamo and Frelimo troops, the actual integration of former troops did not meet Renamo's demands to integrate into ranking positions in the military and the police.<sup>82</sup> In addition, Renamo combatants could not benefit from the full reintegration benefits which were offered by the government: they were not eligible for pensions like former Frelimo troops, as these were based on pension contributions deducted from their salaries, whereas Renamo troops had obviously not received government salaries during the civil war.<sup>83</sup> This created an inequality between benefits received by former Frelimo troops and benefits received by former Renamo troops, and one which has been addressed through peace talks rather than parliament.

The recourse to regular peace talks has seemed to circumvent the electoral process, ensuring that both Renamo and Frelimo remain the two most powerful political entities in the country. The continuous nature of these talks may be the sign of an imperfect democracy, where parliamentary routes and elections are not sufficient to address political disagreements.

---

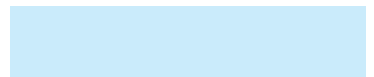
82. Supra note 30, p. 9.

83. Supra note 7, p. 381.

# Conclusion

The resurgence of conflict in Mozambique is the result of unnoticed but deep grievances, namely control of the country continuously maintained in the hands of the same party pre- and post-war, ineffective participation of opposition parties on the political scene, and unequal benefit from economic growth. However, it is worth underlining that communication channels have since the war been successfully implemented, such as direct peace talks between the former belligerent parties, even if these don't occur within the democratic structure set in place.

In this context, does the current ceasefire declared at the end of December 2016 by Afonso Dhlakama have a chance of succeeding into sustainable peace? One has reason to remain pessimistic regarding the potential outcome, as a previous ceasefire agreement in 2014 was short lived, and because Dhlakama has made it clear in his last press conference that peace would depend on the concessions made by the government regarding decentralization of power. The recent economic crisis and drought have fragilized Frelimo, explaining its willingness to negotiate with Renamo at this point in time. Whether Frelimo will ever let centralized power be compromised to answer Renamo's claim for more decentralized management is however debatable. A short-term concession by Frelimo is more realistic.



institut français  
des relations  
internationales

