



Colin Darch

**A Success Story Gone Wrong?**

# **The Mozambican Conflict and the Peace Process in Historical Perspective**

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## Cover Art

A RENAMO election rally in northern Mozambique, 1994 Photo by Michel Cahen

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## INTRODUCTION

Opinion about the devastating sixteen-year armed conflict in Mozambique and the subsequent quarter century of peace has shifted significantly over time. The war between the Frelimo Government and the rebel group RENAMO (*Resistência Nacional Moçambicana*)<sup>1</sup> began in 1976, shortly after independence, and ended in 1992 when a General Peace Accord (GPA) was signed. By the mid-1990s, Mozambique was widely regarded as a role model for a successful, economically and socially stabilising post-conflict society (e.g. FCO 1999; Manning 2002; Phiri 2012). But in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the country no longer occupies its former position as a ‘beacon of hope’ and a rare success story demonstrating the effectiveness of models of post-conflict reconciliation that help to produce sustainable economic growth. The Mozambican peace process, and its juridical expression in the GPA, is being interrogated anew, and the question – unthinkable ten years ago – is being asked, “is peace failing?” in Mozambique.<sup>2</sup>

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1 RENAMO (the “Mozambican National Resistance”) is a political-military hybrid. It originated in the 1970s as an armed anti-Marxist rebellion against Frelimo’s agenda of radical socialist transformation. Most analysts believe that it was cobbled together under Rhodesian sponsorship from various small dissident groupings, and, after 1980, continued fighting with the support of the South African apartheid regime. After the 1992 peace agreement, RENAMO was required to transform into a party, but it did not disarm completely. In fact, while operating as the parliamentary opposition, it simultaneously maintained a small but significant military wing.

2 The emergence of an Islamist insurgency, called Ansar al-Sunna, in Cabo Delgado, beginning with an attack on Mocímboa da Praia in October 2017, also clearly constitutes a threat to peace. The government has reportedly responded with considerable violence. However, although local figures have blamed poverty and inequality for the phenomenon, it is insufficiently documented at present for detailed analysis in this paper (Fabricius 2017; Hanlon 2018a).

The unravelling of the country’s image, especially in the last five years or so, has largely been the consequence of two factors. These are, *first*, the dramatic return to low-level armed conflict by RENAMO, now the main opposition party, between 2013 and December 2016, when a cease-fire came into effect. The *second* factor is the revelation in April 2016 that massive and secret loans had been negotiated in 2013-2014 by elements in the state security structures and the ruling party, in complete disregard for existing judicial and democratic norms (the so-called “secret debt”).

In May 2016, as soon as the existence of the secret debt was discovered, the international community, led by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), cut off a significant part of its economic assistance. At the time of writing, with relations between the donor community and the Government in stalemate, economic growth continues to slow, and the IMF is maintaining its demands for a complete disclosure of information about how the secret debt was transacted, alongside cuts in Government spending and a significant restructuring of existing and inefficient state enterprises.

The purpose of this paper, in this context, is to analyse the structural roots of the present situation, and to identify the key factors in Mozambique’s post-independence history which have contributed to and perhaps determined the current, ongoing and destabilising political-economic crisis.

## THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The history of armed conflict and violent unrest in Mozambique goes back a long way and is part of the inheritance of colonialism. During most of the colonial period, Portugal was generally not strong enough to impose any kind of unitary and organised rule over the whole territory of what was to become Mozambique. Indeed, until the early twentieth century the colonial state was in constant and usually armed competition with various powerful local African polities. In the late nineteenth century, Portugal's weakness had led to the leasing of vast areas in the northern and central regions to foreign concession companies, known in Portuguese as *companhias majestáticas* (the Company of Niassa and the Company of Mozambique). The areas under the control of these commercial enterprises were notoriously lawless, as the main interest of investors was the exploitation of commercial resources, not the imposition of law and order beyond what was minimally necessary. So-called "primary resistance" by the African population (Ranger 1968a, 1968b) to Portugal's long-drawn-out struggle to impose its writ ended only in 1916-1918, when the Bárúè revolt, in the central province of Manica, over forced labour and military conscription was finally and brutally suppressed by the Portuguese army (Isaacman and Isaacman 1976: 156-185). The Portuguese campaign in Bárúè was the last of a series of so-called "pacification campaigns" in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that finally established colonial rule over the whole territory.

But Mozambique did not remain "pacified" for long, even if we count decades of colonial oppression as merely negative peace: in less than half a century, the nationalist movement

FRELIMO<sup>3</sup> had launched the armed liberation struggle, leading to independence in 1975, after ten years of fighting. Within two or three years armed conflict was renewed yet again when the RENAMO movement launched its rebellion against the new government, a rebellion that lasted until 1992. In its first phase, the conflict was ostensibly a foreign-supported war of destabilisation against the "communist" policies of the Frelimo government, with RENAMO conducting, as its primary strategy, a campaign of terror against rural populations alongside sabotage of infrastructure. However, over time the rebels began to exploit local dissatisfaction over such government policies as forced resettlement into "communal villages" and to build a base of popular support, especially in the central provinces. By the late 1980s it had become clear to both sides that the war was unwinnable militarily, and the government and the rebels reluctantly sat down to negotiate a mediated end to the fighting. When the Acordo Geral de Paz (General Peace Agreement or GPA) was eventually signed in late 1992, a multi-party political system was established, and centralised economic planning was abandoned.

As we can see from the above outline, periods of peace have been rare in the medium and long view of Mozambican history, and far from being the normal state of affairs.

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3 The word "Frelimo" – no longer considered an abbreviation – originates from the acronym FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique or Mozambique Liberation Front). This was a broad front constituted in Tanzania in 1962 with the objective of achieving independence from the Portuguese. The Front fought a ten-year war against the colonial power, from 1964 to 1974, and independence was finally attained in 1975. In 1977, at its Third Congress, the movement formally became a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party, but later abandoned this ideological orientation under economic and political pressure. The Frelimo Party is dominant in Mozambique and has won all multi-party general elections since 1994.

Even after the end of fighting in 1992, and under the GPA, sporadic political violence has continued to occur (food price riots, political assassinations). Nonetheless, the country has appeared for a couple of decades to have achieved some kind of viable, if imperfect, peaceful settlement. Unfortunately, both the material and political conditions for further conflict were still present – the opposition party, RENAMO, still controlled a small army, quantities of arms and ammunition had never been surrendered, the administrative structure remained highly centralised in what was effectively a winner-takes-all system, and the growing exploitation of significant mineral and natural resources raised high elite expectations of access to “windfall” rents.

## Economic Shifts

From the late nineteenth century, the economy had been characterised by increasing integration into the Southern African regional system, centred on the South African mining industry, and by the development of Mozambican ports and railways to serve the needs of neighbouring colonial territories in the hinterland. Domestically, the Portuguese colonial state relied on the development of agricultural production of cotton, cashew, sugar, tea, timber and other commodities, exploiting coercive and oppressive forced labour methods to compel African peasants to produce export crops for the metropolitan centre. The system, involving hundreds of thousands of peasants, expanded under the Salazar regime until the early 1960s.

However, in the later colonial period, by the mid-twentieth century, the character of the domestic economy had shifted towards import substitution, as the growth of the settler

population fuelled local demand for consumer goods. At independence in 1975, this economy came close to collapse, with a large-scale flight of skilled white settlers, combined with acts of sabotage by the departing Portuguese and the already looming crisis of colonial capitalism. For the first nine years after independence, Mozambique’s socialist economic policies focussed on self-reliance, the implementation of programmes that could provide health services, education, and mass literacy to the majority of the population, and a broad political refusal to accept foreign aid with its accompanying loss of sovereignty and likelihood of increased indebtedness. However, the departure of the Portuguese had led to the disappearance of the network of *cantinas*<sup>4</sup> essential to agricultural marketing in the rural areas with disastrous effects, and this situation was exacerbated from the late 1970s onwards by the war with RENAMO, at that time driven primarily by support from the white minority regime in Rhodesia, and after 1980, from apartheid South Africa (Hanlon 1991). After an initial period of slow economic growth, the war began to impact directly – exports fell catastrophically from US\$225 million in 1980 to under US\$19 million by 1984.

By this time Mozambique was well on the way to joining the World Bank and the IMF, abandoning the socialist project and liberalising economic policy, while relying increasingly on foreign aid. The policies adopted in these conditions were oriented towards satisfying donor conditionality rather than national constituencies or even party policy: as Joe Hanlon asked in a book published at the time (1991), “who calls the

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4 The *cantinas* were small-scale trading posts, usually owned and operated by Portuguese settlers, and scattered all over the country, that performed an essential role in agricultural marketing, and provided seeds, textiles, domestic utensils and agricultural implements for local populations.

shots?” But from the late 1990s onwards, with the coming of conditions of peace and the discovery of large-scale mineral resources, circumstances changed: it became possible to attract investment for the exploitation of these resources. It is now estimated that Mozambique has coal reserves of 23 billion tonnes (in the top ten globally) and natural gas reserves of 100 trillion cubic feet (in the top three in Africa). A new pattern of local capitalist growth has emerged, in which massive investment has been made in a few ultimately unsustainable mega-projects, with little local infrastructural or employment impact. This pattern, sustained over time, evidently contains the necessary social and cultural seeds of the “structural and indirect violence” that is a major causal factor in the present crisis, and has played a critically important part in the Mozambique’s generalised failure to move from merely “negative” peace to a potentially prosperous form of positive peace, in the sense of Galtung and Jacobson (2000; see also Borges Coelho and Macaringue 2002).

## Political Adversaries

Despite the establishment after 1992 of “multi-party” democracy under a functioning parliamentary system, however, the two main political groupings have remained to a large extent trapped in their own pasts. The Frelimo Party, which as a liberation movement led the armed struggle against Portuguese colonialism, insisted at independence that it be recognised as the only legitimate political organisation in the country, and soon afterwards, in 1977, declared itself a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party. In 1991, at its sixth congress, the party dropped Marxism, but has been unable to shake off the sense of entitlement to power that comes from having defeated the colonial

enemy and brought political independence. Similarly, RENAMO – whose very name, the Mozambican National Resistance, seems to constitute a form of self-definition only in relation to its arch-enemy – has had immense difficulty in acquiring the political skill-set required of a parliamentary opposition, and has continued to think and behave in many ways like the guerrilla force that it originally was. Nonetheless, to frame the political struggle after the GPA as being merely “a socialist liberation movement against foreign-financed reactionary rebels” is clearly inadequate. Even during the peace negotiations in Rome in the early 1990s, both sides stubbornly refused to recognise the other’s legitimacy: Frelimo could not accept that an opposition group could have a right to exist, or could be based on genuine popular support; for its part, RENAMO could not bring itself to acknowledge the Mozambican state that had come into juridical existence in 1975 (Della Rocca 2012). Although both sides moved grudgingly towards mutual acceptance and eventually signed the GPA, post-conflict politics has remained rooted in these original suspicions.

Subsequently, the RENAMO leadership and its supporters have been largely excluded from access to political power both nationally and locally, as well as from access to rents.<sup>5</sup> In April 2013, therefore, in the run-up to the 2014 presidential and legislative elections, RENAMO’s residual armed forces, never fully demobilised (under the pretence of guarding the leadership), decided to “return to the bush” and begin a drawn-out campaign of terrorist attacks in what was in effect a kind of “armed propaganda.” Initially RENAMO had two demands, the restructuring of the national

<sup>5</sup> The term is used here in its standard technical sense to denote unearned and excessive benefits derived from non-productive economic activity, including corruption.

elections commission (CNE), which was eventually conceded, and a belated renewal of the process of integration of RENAMO fighters into the national army at parity, which was not (Darch 2016). Attacks continued even after the elections, which were won by Frelimo, but with RENAMO increasing its share of the vote. Subsequently RENAMO demanded control of six central and northern provinces where it claimed to have received a majority of the popular vote in the national elections.<sup>6</sup> At least some of these provinces are also, not coincidentally, resource-rich. At the time of writing this new “conflict” – the peace that failed – may or may not have come permanently to an end with a cease-fire that was first announced in January 2017 and extended indefinitely in May of the same year.

## The General Peace Agreement

The process leading to the Mozambican peace agreement 1992 was unusual in several ways. First, it was not a single, linear process, but consisted in fact of multiple initiatives by a range of potential intermediaries, including state and religious actors and laypersons, in which eventually one, the Catholic Sant’Egídio community, ended up – unusually at that time – winning the confidence of both sides, and facilitating a lengthy and fraught process of negotiation with plenty of drama from the participants (Della Rocca 2012). In formal electoral terms as well, the GPA has provided an adequate framework: the end of large-scale fighting in 1992 has been followed by five

more-or-less open multi-party elections in 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, and 2014, all won by Frelimo Party candidates (admittedly with the results rejected by the opposition), and with RENAMO occupying all or most of the opposition seats. In addition, during much of the period between 1994 and 2013 it was possible to travel freely in the Mozambican countryside, and there was impressive economic growth, with per capita GDP rising from around US\$185 to US\$405 over the fifteen-year period. Although some of this growth may be attributable to a post-conflict boom, nonetheless the perception of political stability and careful macro-economic management attracted significant amounts of foreign aid and investment. Mozambique, in summary, has been widely regarded until very recently – at least by international observers – as a model of post-conflict reconciliation and economic growth.

The GPA was hence broadly successful in bringing an end to fighting for a prolonged period. But the GPA did not prepare a solid base for processes that would constitute positive peace in the fullest sense: not merely an end to armed conflict, but the democratization of the state, political accountability and transparency, decentralisation in both political and administrative senses, and a better life for the majority of Mozambican citizens.

## Renewed Conflict

In 2012, Afonso Dhlakama, apparently frustrated with what he saw as then President Armando Guebuza’s intransigence, moved to his bush headquarters in the Gorongosa Mountains, and remained there, at least partly because of what seem to have been serious attempts by the army to capture or kill him. Dhlakama had been described by

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<sup>6</sup> In the existing and highly centralised Mozambican system, provincial governors are named by the President. However, in an agreement reached in February 2018, governors will in future be nominated by the majority party in the provincial assemblies. The mayors of municipalities, who had previously been elected directly, will be now chosen in the same indirect way (Hanlon 2018b).

President Joaquim Chissano in an interview in 2011 as someone who “failed to transform his mentality from a guerrilla leader to post-war Mozambique. He has never reintegrated properly” (Vines 2013: 375) and the recent return to the bush supports the hypothesis. He is also reportedly somebody who keeps control of his party both personally and in detail. He stays in touch with parliamentary deputies by telephone during legislative sessions, and is intolerant of initiative from subordinates – a trait that may have led to the departure from RENAMO of e.g. Raúl Domingos or Daviz Simango.<sup>7</sup> This kind of leadership style obviously does little to strengthen a parliamentary party’s ability to develop policy or to respond with agility to new circumstances.

After months of armed clashes, in September 2014 a “cessation of hostilities” agreement was signed to allow RENAMO candidates to run in the elections in October of that year. Tensions rose again after the elections, as RENAMO accused Frelimo of fraud and violent suppression of opposition, and demanded direct control of six provinces (initially as “autonomous regions”) where it had allegedly won a plurality of the popular vote. It was and remains unclear whether such a demand could have been satisfied within the existing constitutional framework, but any genuinely open debate was chilled by the assassination in March 2015 of the academic constitutional lawyer Gilles Cistac, apparently for exploring

positive ways to realise the proposal (Darch 2016). Questions of decentralisation have consequently been brought back sharply into focus in the period since the last elections.

This so-called “return to the bush” was not driven primarily by electoral calculation, although RENAMO’s share of the vote did improve after years of decline, but was probably linked to natural resource discoveries, especially given that lucrative natural gas contracts were about to be signed. It also seems likely that the government’s military response to the new low-level conflict was at least partly facilitated by the strengthening of the “forces of defence and security” through the notorious undeclared loans of around two billion US dollars that were revealed to the public in April 2016.

It is evident that the 16-year conflict that ended in 1992, and the conflict that started in 2013 (and may now have ended, although it has not been resolved), are fundamentally different in their origins and character. The current circumstances require new solutions, perhaps more far-reaching than the GPA, which was essentially a stabilising mechanism, despite its radical elements. RENAMO’s return to violent armed opposition before the 2014 elections took place in a new context, one with relatively little or no international political repercussions, and in a situation in which no neighbouring state was willing to provide logistical support. To what extent did the return to low-level violence represent frustration within RENAMO at its own inability to achieve electoral success, and with such success, access to sources of patronage? To what extent was Dhlakama leading the return to armed propaganda, and to what extent was he responding to internal (and perhaps especially military) pressures within the movement?

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<sup>7</sup> A senior party figure who played a key role in the peace negotiations leading to the GPA, Domingos was the leader of the RENAMO benches in the Assembly of the Republic from 1994 to 1999, but was expelled in mid-2000, later forming his own party, which has had little success. Simango, the son of a prominent FRELIMO dissident, was elected mayor of Beira in 2003 on the RENAMO ticket, but after being de-selected, ran successfully for a second term as an independent. In 2009 he founded the MDM (Mozambique Democratic Movement), which is now the third largest party.

Peace in Mozambique since 1992, therefore, turns out on closer examination not so much to have failed – in the dramatic sense of an instant collapse and an immediate return to full-scale fighting, as happened between the MPLA and UNITA after the ill-fated Angolan elections of 1992. It rather seems to have become, quite slowly, unsustainable within the framework of the existing centralised political and administrative system, and in radically different economic circumstances. The remainder of this paper explains this assumption in historical terms. To understand the processes that have led to the present situation it is necessary to examine a series of defining issues and moments in Mozambique's post-independence history. These are, first, the long-term effects of the process of coercive "reframing" of Mozambican political discourse that Frelimo initiated in 1975 and continued into the 1980s; second, the disputed and fluid nature of the sixteen-year conflict with RENAMO and its importance for understanding the GPA; third, the GPA itself, seen not so much as an innovation but as an attempt to stabilise existing power and property relations; fourth, the incomplete character of disarmament, demobilisation and military integration after 1992-1994; fifth, the partial character of administrative decentralisation; sixth, the elite expectation of natural resource windfalls and their impact on political process; and seventh and last, the question of whether some form of "parliamentarisation" is realisable, and if so, whether it might provide a solution to what might be perceived as a likely future scenario of ongoing conflict.

## THE STRUCTURAL FEATURES OF CONFLICT AND PEACE IN MOZAMBIQUE

### Ideological "Reframing" in the Transition to Independence<sup>8</sup>

The national liberation movements of Southern Africa, including Frelimo, came to power in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s in positions of significant party political dominance, on waves of popular support deriving largely from their success in expelling the colonial power and/or breaking settler supremacy. In 1974, Frelimo's central demand in the negotiations that led up to the Acordos de Lusaka – the agreement with the Portuguese granting unconditional independence – was quite explicit: recognition as the only legitimate representative of the Mozambican people, and hence as the only possible political organisation. Frelimo was thus able, from a position of hegemony, to occupy all available political space, to delegitimise all other political positions and forms of nationalism, and to exercise complete freedom in the composition of the government and the definition, not only of the policy agenda, but also of what constituted "*moçambicanidade*" or "Mozambican-ness". The definition was very simple and entirely logical: if you supported Frelimo you were Mozambican, if not, you were something else.

With hindsight, we can see that the liberation struggle in Mozambique – like those in neighbouring countries – had as its primary

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<sup>8</sup> The term "reframing" is used here in the sense of a rhetorical framing contest, in which the basic assumptions of political discourse are coercively shifted towards the concepts of socialist transformation, leaving no "space" for any kind of socially sustainable rebuttal (Darch and Hedges 2013: 56-57).

objective not so much democracy in the formal sense of a multiplicity of political parties contesting for power in regular elections, but rather membership of the community of sovereign nations on terms of full equality. Roger Southall (2013) has called this democracy for “peoples” as nations rather than for “people” or persons as individuals. Frelimo’s success in winning this specific kind of liberation initially guaranteed the party a high level of popular support, and its position as the only legitimate political organisation meant that this support did not have to be tested electorally. Indeed, the idea that competitive elections might be held at all was dismissed out of hand. However, this dominance was exercised in a situation where the ruling party had not established full and effective control over the state apparatus – as the later need for the various “ofensivas” or campaigns clearly shows. These campaigns in the early 1980s were centred on issues such as legality, politics, and organisation, and clearly arose from Frelimo’s almost visceral mistrust of the apparatus of public administration inherited from the Portuguese. Mozambique was also threatened directly or indirectly by interests hostile to its socialist project and to its principled support for liberation struggles in Rhodesia and South Africa.

All this led inexorably to increased central control; the takeover of the administrative structures of the state by the party, and the delegitimisation of alternative forms of nationalism and opposition, whose adherents were characterised, not always unjustly, as infiltrators, the enemy, xiconhocas (a corrupt and opportunistic cartoon character), and saboteurs. Nevertheless, even if we agree that the primary objective of liberation is in most cases not structured democracy, the actual moment of national liberation is likely to contain within it the “democratic moment” as

defined by the Italian scholar Luciano Canfora (2006; 2009), a moment in which existing social, political and property relations are threatened by the large excluded majority (the “demos”), those without property or power. This was likely the case in mid-1975, as the vast majority of impoverished Mozambicans saw their former colonial masters fleeing, but the moment passed. Frelimo never saw any point in establishing formal structures and institutions that would have constituted a wider and more conventional form of pluralism.

The process that I have called “reframing” or “reenquadramento” elsewhere (Darch and Hedges 2013) began in earnest soon after the Portuguese coup in April 1974, and even before formal independence in 1975. The purpose, explicitly or implicitly, was to establish a new form of transformed political discourse and behaviour. In the analysis of political rhetoric, reframing describes the attempt to shift basic assumptions about society towards a new kind of politics – in the Mozambican case, the politics of independence and socialist transformation. The formerly dominant colonial discourse was thus supplanted, in such a way that there was no socially sustainable rebuttal available to those who disagreed or opposed particular policies. This process continued into the early 1980s, and had the effect of appropriating all available political space, as already mentioned.

There are multiple examples of this reframing at work. The series of speeches that were delivered by Samora Machel in May and June 1975 during the Viagem Triunfal – the “triumphal” journey, passing through every province and introducing the new Frelimo provincial governors (Darch and Hedges, in press) – are early instances, and indeed there is testimony that the speeches were heard as discourse differently by different segments of the population. Africans seem

to have heard them as often astonishingly frank critiques of colonial discourse, while the Portuguese heard them as menacing and openly hostile (Rita-Ferreira 1988).

The reframing process went beyond rhetorical coercion, into what might be termed political performance. The *Viagem Triunfal*, apart from the daily speeches broadcast and excerpted in the newspapers, can be understood as a kind of symbolic spatial inscription of *moçambicanidade*, with the new provincial governors presented as representatives of a new source of power. Other events such the parading of traitors at Frelimo's Nachingwea camp in southern Tanzania in early 1975 or the identification of the *comprometidos* ("compromised ones" or collaborators with Portuguese colonial fascism) in December 1978 and the subsequent meetings in February and May 1982 can all be seen as part of the same prolonged process of defining what it meant to be fully Mozambican in the new circumstances of independence. The inevitable consequence of this coercive reframing process was the growth of a discourse in which any opposition was represented in terms of sabotage and conspiracy by enemies of the people. This is not, of course, to say that the Mozambican socialist project was not under real threat by real enemies: it is rather to draw attention to the long-term impact of a political discourse framed almost entirely in such binary and even Manichean terms.

Despite the formal introduction of political pluralism and the ending of the planned economy after 1992, the reframed discourse of the victorious liberation movement continues to inform contemporary Mozambican politics in multiple ways, up to the present. When former president Armando Guebuza testified, on 28 November 2016, to the Parliamentary

Commission of Inquiry on the secret loans, his remarks illustrated implicitly and exactly this sense of unchanging entitlement based on sacrifices made in the past. If we had to make the same decision today, Guebuza remarked, "we would do exactly the same thing today, in defence of the beloved homeland" adding that he had played his part in the liberation struggle, and was proud of his patriotism and his achievements as president (Hanlon 2016: 3; Nhampossa 2016: 2). The tone and implications are clear, the sentiments widely shared.

### The Nature of the Conflict with RENAMO, 1976-1992

At present the term "civil war" is widely used in academic and popular discourse to describe the 16-year armed conflict between the Mozambican government and RENAMO. At the time, however, the characterisation of the conflict was the subject of controversy, not least as a result of the refusal on both sides to concede even minimal legitimacy to their opponents. It is significant that although the so-called "12-point document" circulated informally by Frelimo in June 1989 as an opening gambit in the peace process insisted that the conflict was "a destabilising operation that must not be confused with a struggle between two parties", it went on to argue that constitutional and legal change could only be brought about through democratic participation – in other words through recognition of the status quo, however unsatisfactory it might be. RENAMO's response, in the "16-point document" asserted its own political legitimacy – "RENAMO is a political force that is active in the Mozambican political arena" – and criticised "insulting verbal attacks" and propaganda from the government as unhelpful wishful thinking.

Clearly the conflict did exhibit the key characteristic of civil war – it was fought between two organised groups, primarily within the national territory of Mozambique, and was, despite Government rhetoric, in fact “a struggle between two parties”. Historically, however, it is both possible and desirable to construct a periodization of the war as it shifted over time from one driven primarily (but not exclusively) by the desire of the Rhodesian and South African white minority governments to destabilise Mozambique, to one in which RENAMO gradually developed the capacity to take advantage of unpopular Government policies (e.g. the communal village programme) and to sustain military action more-or-less on its own. A grasp of the fluid and contested nature of the conflict as it was in reality and over time, in sharp contrast to the analytical rigidity of the positions of the protagonists, is essential to understanding the complexity of the process(es) that eventually led to the GPA.

This inflexibility in Frelimo’s analysis of the changing nature of the conflict with RENAMO was the logical consequence of the process of “reframing” already described, that aimed to establish Frelimo as the only possible legitimate expression of national political will. Frelimo was logically incapable of recognising the RENAMO movement even as a movement, much less as articulating any kind of legitimate political grievance. The group was consistently and invariably referred to as merely “armed bandits”. This was not an entirely irrational position. RENAMO had originally been founded and supported by the Rhodesian secret services as the MNR or Mozambique National Resistance (even the name, at that point, was in English). It had been put together opportunistically from various dissidents and others who had reason to dislike Frelimo’s socialist project. After Zimbabwean independence, the role of support and direction was taken over by the South

African apartheid regime, but RENAMO’s basic character remained the same for a considerable time.

Frelimo’s position did not change throughout the 1980s. In March 1982 President Machel, in a memorable and contemptuous turn of phrase, characterised the relationship between the South African regime and its agents, RENAMO, as being analogous to that between an organ-grinder and his monkey (National Forum Committee 1985: 47). It followed, therefore, as Sebastião Mabote<sup>9</sup> insisted in a speech in August 1985, that the conflict could not logically be described as a “civil war” because it had not arisen from a domestic Mozambican dynamic, but was driven by the interests of property owners who had been expropriated by the nationalisations of the late 1970s (FBIS 1985). The conflict could therefore only be seen as a war of aggression or destabilisation – the position taken in 1989 in the 12-point document. The now-dominant political discourse, the “reframed” view of the essence of the independent Mozambican state, allowed no rhetorical or conceptual space for even the possibility of legitimate forms of opposition.

The book *La cause des armes* [The origins of the war], published in 1990 by the French anthropologist Christian Geffray, had the effect of opening up heated academic debate about the character of the war. To summarise his argument in extremely schematic terms, Geffray attributed a much more important role in the origins of the conflict to peasant dissatisfaction with government policy and to attacks on local belief systems. The role of Rhodesia and then South Africa was given much less emphasis: what was important was an internal, local dynamic.

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<sup>9</sup> A former guerrilla commander who was at the time Chief of Staff in the Mozambican army

This is all, of course, ancient academic history, but it is important to recognise that simple acceptance of the term “civil war” may serve to obscure significant points about the development of the conflict over time, and about how it ended. These points have implications for the present situation – first that multiple regional and international interests were in play in the context of the late Cold War; and second that these profoundly affected the way in which peace was finally negotiated. Regionally, interested parties included not only late-apartheid South Africa, but also Mozambique’s regional allies Zimbabwe and Tanzania, and conservative states such as Kenya and Malawi. The great powers – the United States and the Soviet Union – saw Southern Africa as contested terrain. Portugal was also involved as the former colonial power, with an ongoing interest in Cahora Bassa, and with its government under constant pressure from organised ex-settler groups (the “*espoliados*” or expropriated ones).

From this broad international context flowed not just a single “peace process” but a complex and fluid matrix of peace initiatives, starting as early as 1984, with a range of possible intermediaries, out of which, in the end, emerged a single solution. The process of settling on an intermediary who could be trusted by both sides was lengthy. In late 1988 the South Africans suggested a mediation role for the United States, but the idea was rejected by RENAMO, and not pushed by the Government either (FBIS 1989). The initial contacts with RENAMO, undertaken by church leaders with the quiet encouragement of President Joaquim Chissano took place in Kenya in mid-1989. However, the Frelimo Government mistrusted the then Kenyan president, Daniel arap Moi, who was in any case unable to persuade the two sides to speak directly to each other. Attempts

at mediation involving the British businessman Tiny Rowland and the Malawians failed for similar reasons (Vines 1998). Conversely, Zimbabwe and its President Robert Mugabe were seen by RENAMO as firm allies of Frelimo, and hence unable to act as honest brokers. But the real sticking point was the Government’s long-drawn-out refusal of direct negotiations with RENAMO.

### The GPA as an Attempt at Stabilisation and Reconciliation

In the end, the GPA was hammered out in Rome between representatives of the government and RENAMO, with the mediation of the Catholic Community of Sant’Egídio. The actual text consisted of seven protocols and four attachments, covering inter alia the recognition of political parties, electoral law, the make-up of the military and the cease-fire. The GPA has been, perhaps even more than the revised constitutions of 1990 and 2004, a touchstone for Mozambican politics for over two decades. It is revealing that when RENAMO wanted to emphasise the seriousness of the then still developing conflict in October 2013, the threat that was made was to put an end to the Rome agreements, which it saw as the real touchstone.

The political system that emerged after the GPA can perhaps best be understood, not as a radical democratisation and abandonment of Frelimo’s framing of the dominant political discourse, but as a reconfiguration that made room for such institutional arrangements as free elections and a multiplicity of political parties, but did not fundamentally change the existing map of power. The new electoral legislation, for instance, imposed stringent requirements for party registration and a

threshold for representation in the Assembleia (parliament) in such a way as to make it difficult for small parties to do anything more than just participate in electoral competitions. It resulted, effectively, in a binary rather than a multi-party system, with access to political participation excluded for all except for the two (armed) parties. In addition, while elected deputies were linked to geographic regions in a formal sense (the provincial party lists), there was no mechanism that made them answerable to particular communities or constituencies. This arrangement has the advantage – from a party viewpoint – of limiting the possibility of political figures building local bases of power, which has actually happened in recent years with the directly elected “mayors” of municipalities. The most notable example of this was the successful candidacy of Daviz Simango as an independent mayor of Beira, in 2008. The news in January 2018 that the Government and RENAMO had agreed to the nomination of provincial governors by party leadership, rather than by popular election, tends to support the view that both parties are opposed to significant loss of their own central control (Hanlon 2018: 1-2)

In this way, the sequence of five national elections – all won by Frelimo – have at base functioned to reinforce the grip on power of the already powerful. Unsurprisingly, public frustration and disillusionment with the capacity of the electoral process to promote change or even well-being has expressed itself in such ways as sporadic outbreaks of rioting over prices and low levels of voter turnout, to say nothing of RENAMO’s adoption of a debased form of armed struggle.

In this sense, although the GPA was successful in 1992 in bringing an end to fighting and establishing a new juridical framework within which the two major political forces

could operate, it was much less successful in achieving reconciliation in the broadest sense. This is not to deny that serious and innovative programmes were developed and implemented – for example – for the social reintegration of instrumentalised children into their communities of origin (see, e.g. Honwana 2002). However, broader reconciliation in the social and quasi-theological sense of releasing the resentments of the past in a spirit of mutual forgiveness has proved much more difficult to achieve. This is perhaps attributable to a popular perception of a Faustian bargain in which the egalitarianism of the revolutionary period after independence, with its concomitant limitations of individual freedoms, has been replaced by notional forms of political liberty accompanied by sharp increases in social and economic inequality. As already mentioned, Southall has argued that in Southern Africa generally “the struggle for liberation was more one for majority rule than it was for political democracy” (2013: 69). Frelimo’s revolutionary project was always one in which suspicion of the character of the (inherited) colonial state combined with Marxist theory in support of the idea of party supremacy. In a situation in which maintaining or gaining power is regarded as something to be achieved at any cost, there is low tolerance for opposition and little chance of reconciliation – including the mutual acceptance of electoral outcomes.

Mozambique has not yet achieved a shift to a system in which political opponents are viewed as co-participants within a stable and responsive system in which differences are debated and worked through – in other words, to an acceptance of a new and broadly democratic idea of national unity. A statement in a recent interview by Afonso Dhlakama is, in this respect, less than encouraging, in its complete refusal to let go of past resentments:

*Remember that I never lost the elections. I was always cheated and RENAMO knows it. I consider myself President of the Republic since 1994. What I've done for this country and for my party – without wanting to boast, I think I'm above a President of the Republic [Lembre-se que eu nunca perdi as eleições. Sempre fui roubado e a Renamo sabe disso. Considero-me Presidente da República desde 1994. O que já fiz por este país e pelo meu partido, sem querer vangloriar-me, sinto que estou acima de um Presidente da República]*  
(Dhlakama 2018).

## Incomplete Disarmament and Military Integration

The return to armed struggle in 2013 was made possible by the earlier, and ongoing, failure to completely disarm RENAMO in 1992-1994, and fully to implement the GPA's military agreement. In part, this can be attributed to the attitudes of ONUMOZ, the United Nations peace-keeping mission which operated from 1993 to the end of 1994. The mission was generally considered to have been a success, "despite certain deficiencies (failure to demine, an inadequate disarmament process, shambolic handling of demobilisation)" in the possibly ironic assessment of the British Foreign Office (FCO 1999: 4).

As late as 26 October, a day before the voting started in 1994, Aldo Ajello – who apparently never really believed that disarmament was a priority for ONUMOZ – warned that large quantities of weapons and ammunition were still hidden in various parts of the country, and refused to respond when asked if he was personally confident that these weapons would not be used again (Savana 1994). Ajello, former President Joaquim Chissano, and the senior Frelimo figure Teodato Hinguana are all on

record as believing (with hindsight) that this was a missed opportunity, and subsequent research has shown that the misjudgement was even more serious than it was thought at the time, mainly because the quantities involved turned out to be much larger than earlier estimates (Vines 2013: 200, 381; Littlejohn 2015: 23). However, it seems to have been agreed between ONUMOZ and the government, with the recent example of the collapse of the Angolan peace process after the unsupervised 1992 election in view, that to insist that RENAMO submit to a rigorous and comprehensive disarmament process was to risk pushing them too hard.

The relative equanimity of ONUMOZ – and indeed, Frelimo itself – about the incomplete character of disarmament, as part of the larger process of DDR (disarmament, demobilization and reintegration) turned out to have been misplaced. The caches have turned out to be larger than estimated, in circumstances in which trust between the parties and between the population and the government has eroded (Littlejohn 2015). The hoarding of weapons may not have been, from a RENAMO military viewpoint, an irrational strategy however, given the Government's outright rejection (following perhaps the Angolan example) of the idea of a power-sharing government of national unity, despite some international pressure (Africa Confidential 1994). Subsequent and much more recent attempts at disarmament have been significantly more problematic: for example, RENAMO refused to consider demobilisation during talks in the first half of 2014, and still had a small army after the October elections of that year.

Various efforts at disarmament have taken place in the intervening years, including over 20 missions known collectively as Operation Rachel, carried out in cooperation with a specialised

unit of the South African police, which collected over 50,000 small arms between 1995 and 2008. Other campaigns have included TAE (Transforming Arms into Ploughshares), set up by the Christian Council, which collected nearly 8,000 weapons, and FOMICRES (Força Moçambicana para Investigação de Crimes e Reinserção Social) which emerged from a reorganisation of TAE in 2006 and collected a much smaller quantity of weapons. Despite the efforts of these various missions and campaigns, it soon became clear that most of the arms and ammunition in hidden caches had not yet been recovered (Littlejohn 2015).

Closely connected to the failure of disarmament was the failure to complete the integration of the two armed forces according to the GPA's prescriptions. It had been agreed a 30,000-strong army would be formed, with 15,000 soldiers coming from the government side, and 15,000 from RENAMO – at the time, the numerical strength of the two sides together was around 110,000 fighters. However, the process was made more difficult by low morale and poor discipline, with intermittent mutinies on both sides. The new army was eventually able to recruit only a little over 12,000 effectives, of whom 8,600 were from the government and 3,600 from RENAMO. Integration was made more difficult because many RENAMO fighters lacked basic qualifications. Middle-level officers were over-represented, and eventually troop strength dropped to 11,500 in total. In subsequent years, despite the appointment of RENAMO's Mateus Ngonhamo as deputy chief-of-staff, it has been argued that the government was concerned about the future loyalty of an army made up of significant numbers of former rebels, and former RENAMO cadres were deliberately marginalised. Certainly RENAMO has complained about what it alleges were compulsory retirements and a general lack of

access to senior positions. By 2013 the most senior former RENAMO commander in the army was a major-general.

The question of the incomplete implementation of the GPA military agreement emerged in 2013 as one of the two main RENAMO demands, together with a reorganisation of the electoral commission – quite possibly because high military rank was seen as providing a path to access to resource benefits, rather than from any practical desire to reconfigure the armed forces. Nevertheless, these two factors taken together – the availability of weapons, and dissatisfaction of one kind or another over the armed forces – provided most of the means and at least part of the motive for a re-launching of political violence.

In an interview in late 2017, Dhlakama advanced a security justification for the demand for parity in the armed forces. He argued that the attacks in September 2015 on a motorcade that he was travelling in, and on one of his residences the following month, showed that President Nyusi was not completely in control of the army and security forces, and that there were military personnel who were following a secret agenda. Full integration of RENAMO military personnel at parity was therefore necessary (Dhlakama 2018).

## The Decentralisation of Political Power and Administration

The constitution promulgated at independence in 1975 explicitly described the new republic as being the fruit of the struggle led by Frelimo (article 1). Articles 2 and 3 continued along the same line, emphasising the supremacy of the liberation movement: power belonged to the people united and led by Frelimo, which was

described as the leading force in both state and society. All true patriots would support the party. These formulations were logical corollaries of the process of “reframing” described above, and an implicit acknowledgement of Frelimo’s weak grasp of the inherited state apparatus, against which the movement could only juxtapose its limited experience of administration in the former liberated zones. Both the constitution and the new nationality law were apparently approved just before independence at the 7th Central Committee meeting in Tofo, in Inhambane, in June 1975, but little is known about this meeting or the processes that produced these two key judicial instruments: there certainly seems to have been no public debate.

The constitutional framework thus laid down unsurprisingly resulted in an extremely high degree of centralised control of administration in the provinces, districts and localities. Local state functionaries (who combined the role of local party secretary) were appointed by and were responsible to central government in a system that did not require them to answer to the communities that they administered. For example, under presidential decree no. 1/81 of February 1981 the government directly appointed 99 district administrators and in a second decree laid out the specific powers and responsibilities of provincial governors. A few months earlier, in October 1980, President Machel had called a first meeting of district administrators from all over the country, and in a lengthy speech had emphasised that the primary responsibility of each one of them was to the party and the state, in other words, upwards to the centre.

Frelimo’s highly centralised administrative practices in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s were not only the consequence

of practical considerations of tight control. Decentralisation seems to strike at the heart of Frelimo’s ideological conception of Mozambique as a unitary state, itself an idea that can be traced back to the years of the armed struggle (Darch 2016: 320-321). Key components of the grand narrative of that struggle are that Frelimo was established through the unification of competing nationalist movements, and forged into a cohesive group by the victory of the revolutionary position in the “struggle between the two lines” in 1968-1970. Frelimo’s fear of ethnic, regional or ideological fragmentation and the need to prevent it was a political constant, reflected in such specific areas as, for example, language policy. It is easy to see that the theme of national unity is an unbroken thread running through the discourse of Frelimo in general, and Samora Machel especially, from the late 1960s onwards.

Even before the conclusion of the GPA, in 1994, there was an attempt to legislate some kind of devolution of both power and control of resources to local level (Law 3/94). The GPA did not deal explicitly or adequately with the issue of the centralised system of governance and administration, or regional and provincial inequalities in access to resources and control over policy. RENAMO’s success in the 1994 elections, when it won 38 percent of the popular vote and 112 seats in the 250-seat legislature, alarmed Frelimo and made the party more cautious, slowing down the pace of change even further. Legislation was passed in the mid-1990s which enabled the selective devolution of specific powers to elected local authorities: there was some resistance on constitutional grounds. It was clear that conservative elements within Frelimo were concerned about what was termed “back door federalisation” and loss of control, often couched in the familiar discourse of “national unity.” In 1997, some

elected municipal councils were established, with more added in 2007 and again in 2013. In the second iteration of local elections in 2003, RENAMO managed to win control of five of these municipalities. It must also be recognised that the relative autonomy achieved benefited Frelimo at the local level, freeing local power-brokers from central control that had previously been justified in the name of national unity. In 2003 some more specific powers were devolved to local government.

Decentralisation of administrative functions to the local level, together with the responsibility for the delivery of services was not initially accompanied by a sufficient decentralisation of finances, either in the form of direct subsidy from the centre, or by allowing for the levying and collection of local taxes. This has, however, now begun, with legislation on municipal finances passed in 1997, and reformed in 2008, mainly in the form of the transfer of funds from provinces to districts, but not from the centre (Weimer and Carrilho 2017: 75-76).

Political contestation about decentralisation continues. The existing model is inefficient and effectively discriminates between municipalities, where citizens are voters, and districts, where citizens are the subjects of administration, and almost certainly, as a consequence, in a weaker position in the competition for financial and human resources, investment, infrastructure, and so on. Decentralisation remains a highly problematic and contested concept, to be approached with caution. While local democracy is clearly virtuous, there are real dangers of fragmentation, as RENAMO demands at various times for partition and/or autonomous regions have indicated.

## The “Resource Curse” and the Expectation of Windfall Rents

Known natural resources in Mozambique at present consist of natural gas, coal, hydro-electric energy, mineral sands, and (possibly) oil. Much ink has been spilled in debate around the idea that there is an inverse relationship between natural resource wealth and broad socio-economic development in poor countries, a concept known as the “resource curse”. Broad statistical indicators sometimes point to substantial growth in macro-economic terms; but they do not necessarily show whether overall poverty has been reduced or socio-economic inequality, between social classes or between geographical regions, has dropped. Indeed, the opposite effect may be seen, caused by the inflow of foreign direct investment pushing up domestic prices, the creation of scarcity of capital and labour as the new resource sectors absorb whatever is available, and the absence of wider impact benefits in the economy as a whole.

Large-scale investments in mineral resource exploitation began in the 1990s during the mandates of President Joaquim Chissano, who was seen as technocratic in his policy orientation, with significant decision making powers passing to bureaucratic structures rather than to party functionaries per se. Major projects included MOZAL (the Mozambique aluminium project, owned by the Australian company BHP-Billiton), and SASOL’s natural gas developments in Pande and Temane (including the Temane-Secunda pipeline). Exploitation of the Moatize coal fields was also renewed, initially by the Brazilian mining company Vale, and more recently by Mitsui of Japan. These “megaprojects” have been subjected to criticism over the years for their failure to provide tax revenue, new infrastructure, employment

opportunities or pretty much any kind of spill over benefits even to nearby communities.

Under the leadership of President Armando Guebuza, however, expectations of an imminent gas and coal-fuelled economic boom rose sharply, not least as a consequence of the president's and the government's optimistic rhetoric about poverty reduction, job creation, and social security measures, leading to the possibility of Mozambique climbing up the development ladder to middle-income status. Frelimo had apparently not learned the lesson, after the "decade of victory over underdevelopment," about the risks of giving hostages to fortune. In any event, as Macuane, Buur and Monjane argue (2017), the now entrenched expectation of future resource-based prosperity with large revenue windfalls has had a significant impact not so much on the actual ideological terminology of the ruling party, as on its meaning and content. The focus on national unity, with its roots in the dangers of factionalism during the struggle against the Portuguese, reinforced to some extent by the terms of the GPA and the politics of the intervening twenty years, has now come to assist in the construction of networks of "patronage and clientelism" that consciously exclude the weakened opposition, and are designed to weaken it further.

"Frelimo" can now be seen as operating at some level as a horizontal coalition or network, while factions or parties that are excluded are unable to exert any leverage within existing political institutions at national level, such as parliament. In the absence of meaningful decentralisation they have no opportunities at local level either. As long as Frelimo's networks continue to control access to rents, this situation is unlikely to change.

The appeal to unity has also been deployed in the "legalisation" of the secret debt (itself a consequence of raised resource expectations). As Macuane, Buur and Monjane have persuasively argued

*The state guarantee is ... more than just a guarantee of debt, it is also what allowed the civil war to end, as the war-mongers among the ruling Frelimo elite were protected from financial liabilities. The move also allowed the continued drive towards maintaining 'national unity' organized in and around the continued dominance of the Frelimo party, not only as the sole legitimate government of the country, but also as the continued guarantor of peace ... (2017: 23).*

We can therefore begin to see that the question of peace cannot be considered in isolation from the current (and historical) politico-economic features of the structure of the Mozambican polity.

### Is "Parliamentarisation" Desirable or Possible?

A constitution is considered – at least by legal realists who see law as a social phenomenon and not just an enclosed and self-referential thought-system – as a map of power. What then are the prospects for an institutional reconfiguration that might restore popular trust in the political process?

The term "parliamentarisation" as used by Charles Tilly (1997), described a perhaps idealised political process in which the legislature assumes an increasingly important role in influencing and acting as a check on executive decision-making, by exercising "significant collective control over ... the decisions of

government.” Importantly, the legislature also begins to provide a mechanism for “protecting citizens from arbitrary state action.” As the process advances, popular confidence in the effectiveness of the legislature (and by extension, the state) rises, and discontented citizens become less likely to resort to violent means to assert their rights. The practice of popular politics changes, as does the exercise of broad and equal citizenship.

Parliamentarisation in this sense has not yet taken root in Mozambique, as various indicators show. When popular feeling about some aspect of daily life reaches a certain temperature, the outcome is not peaceful demonstrations or parliamentary pressure, but citizens resorting to violent protest (e.g. the food price riots of the period 2008 to 2014 (Brito and others 2015; Brito 2017). RENAMO’s resort to armed propaganda is in itself a strong indicator. If measured by voter turnout, it also seems that Mozambican citizens do not believe that “multi”-party elections will make much difference in their lives. Voter turnout dropped steadily over the first three general elections, from a high of 88 percent in 1994, to 68 percent in 1999, to 34 percent in 2004. The last two elections were marked by a slight upturn (to 44 percent in 2009 and 48 percent in 2014).

Mistrust is not only focused on Frelimo. RENAMO has a record of poor party management, and when in power at the local level, has failed to achieve adequate service delivery. Afonso Dhlakama, after decades as leader, has shown himself to be unequal to the task of transforming RENAMO into a modern-day political party, and is widely seen as continuing to view politics as a form of combat and the party as a kind of militia. The opposition has been notably ineffective as a parliamentary opposition, and has never really threatened Frelimo’s hegemonic position.

This weakness had the effect of creating the opportunity for the rise of the MDM as a third party, but more importantly, has blocked, and will likely continue to block, the emergence of an effective “parliamentarisation” in which citizens see the opposition as an effective means for channelling grievance, limiting corruption, influencing policy, and blocking arbitrary state action.

## CONCLUSION: THE RETURN TO CONFLICT AND ITS LESSONS

The purpose of the paper has been to examine some structural social, political and economic features of the Mozambican polity since independence, as well as the key choices made, over time, by key actors within that structure. The focus has been on the ways in which liberation movement objectives and ideology have been ill-equipped to deal with shifting political, social and economic pressures in the domestic, regional and international arenas, and have, to a significant extent, pre-disposed Mozambican political actors towards a resort to conflict as a means of finding an (imposed) solution.

The key points in the analysis of Mozambique's two decades of success in establishing negative peace, alongside the broader failure to develop the necessary elements of a positive and egalitarian peace in which structural forms of violence are absent can be summarised as follows. *First* is the absence of generalised political tolerance even after the fighting stopped: members of "other" political groupings in functioning democratic systems are usually considered to be opponents rather than enemies, and to have the same ends in view – prosperity, full employment, economic and social development, etc. – even though there is probably disagreement as to the means of achieving them. *Second*, closely related to the absence of tolerance is the high level of mistrust and consequently violence – not improved by the policies of the two Guebuza administrations – between political actors, both individuals and parties. Dhlakama's flight to Gorongosa in 2013 in fear for his life, the assassinations of public and political figures, such as Gilles Cistac in March 2015, the MDM's Mahamudo Amurane in October 2017, two Frelimo Party officials in

Dondo in the same month, RENAMO's José Naitete in December 2017 – amongst other cases – are manifestations of this mistrust in an atmosphere of intimidation and suspicion.

*Third*, legalistic but non-trivial squabbles over the implementation of the provisions of the GPA have functioned as both cause and consequence of mistrust and intolerance. The purpose of the GPA – to bring an end to fighting and to provide a broadly stable political framework – meant that its provisions could not realistically serve as touchstones for the development of democratic behaviours and practices, parliamentarisation, or "justice-and-reconciliation". These objectives, essential for positive peace, required more confidence, altruism and ambition than was generally available in the system at the time. Indeed, the GPA essentially locked into place a *two-party* rather than a multi-party system, a situation that clearly needs to change. In addition (and *fourth*), the continued availability to RENAMO of arms and ammunition, together with the generalised failure to complete the "Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration" (DDR) process, meant that the objective conditions for a return to conflict were permanently present, despite attempts to negotiate a mediated solution.

*Fifth*, despite the successful organisation of a series of presidential, legislative, and municipal elections in difficult conditions, the process of administrative and political decentralisation has proceeded at a snail's pace. The party list system used in elections means that political figures cannot build local bases of support, and conversely, local electorates – in the absence of any kind of geographically-defined parliamentary constituencies – have no organic connection with their supposed representatives. Accountable governance becomes a chimera.

Indeed, it is clear from the recent agreement on the nomination of provincial governors that both major parties actively want to prevent the development of genuine local political dynamics, and to retain central control over their own cadres.

*Sixth*, but by no means of lesser importance, is the impact of and contestation over windfall rent-seeking by narrow groups of political elites. As long as competition over access to benefits from mega-projects with little infrastructural or employment impact continues, it remains highly unlikely that the basic reasons for popular discontent will be addressed. *Finally*, and closely related to elite behaviours, is the fact that economic growth, although sustained at high levels over long periods after the GPA, failed to deliver concrete benefits (prosperous positive peace) to the wider population, especially in rural areas and in the north (where Islamist fundamentalists began violent attacks in late 2017).

In a paper jointly published in October 2016 by IESE, CIP, the Fundação MASC, and the OMR, authors identified several key conditions for a hypothetical constituent assembly, to establish conditions for sustainable peace in Mozambique. These were

1. *Negotiation of the cease-fire and restructuring of the defence and security forces, under non-partisan premises;*
2. *To rethink the foundations and rules of the game of the political-administrative system, the public services, the tax system, the economy, the justice sector, the electoral system, etc., and the interrelations between them ;*
3. *Make amendments to the 2004 constitution, reflecting the results of processes 1 and 2;*

4. *Invest in a culture of citizenship based on universal human rights of tolerance, respect for the other, and the recognition that individual and collective selfishness and cultural, social, economic and political exclusion or marginalization are major causes of conflict and war (IESE and others 2016).*

Without going into detailed discussion of these four conditions, which are both reasonable and appealing, it seems to me that they – and similar radical proposals for change – rely heavily on the as-yet-unproven idea that the present crisis is intolerable to the political elite. They provoke a key question that should be considered in the light of an *historical* understanding of the roots of present-day Mozambican political discourse, ideology, and practice, namely: why would the political elite agree to such changes? In what way would it be more advantageous to accept them than to refuse them – in other words, how would the political cost of maintaining the status quo be worse than the high risks of adopting a new and unpredictable constitutional system?

One hypothetical answer, given President Nyusi's and Frelimo's intransigence regarding the stand-off with the IMF and the donor community over the suspension of aid because of the "secret debt" (Nyusi 2017), is that some combination of a major electoral shock in 2019, loss of control of provincial structures and perhaps even quasi-secession, and popular expressions of discontent *may* change the calculus unexpectedly and irrevocably. The fall of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe and the premature recalling of President Jacob Zuma in South Africa have both shown that the old systems can indeed be shaken in unanticipated and unpredictable ways. Whether such a process would be as tidy and democratic as the IESE-CIP-MASC-OMR proposals seem to suggest remains to be seen.

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### About this study

Opinion about the devastating sixteen-year armed conflict in Mozambique and the subsequent quarter century of peace has shifted significantly over time. The war between the Frelimo Government and the rebel group RENAMO began in 1976, shortly after independence, and ended in 1992 when a General Peace Accord (GPA) was signed. By the mid-1990s, Mozambique was widely regarded as a role model for a post-conflict society. But in the second decade of the twenty-first century, the Mozambican success story of post-conflict reconciliation started to crumble, when a low-level armed conflict between supporters of the main opposition party and the government forces flared up again in 2013 and the revelation of massive so called "secret debts" affected the relations with the international donor community and resulted in a serious blow to the national economy.

Colin Darch's article looks at the structural roots of the present situation and identifies key factors in Mozambique's post-independence history which

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have contributed to the current political and economic crisis. The author argues, that peace in Mozambique has not so much failed in the dramatic sense of an instance collapse since the signing of the GPA, but that it rather seems to have become unsustainable within the framework of the existing centralised political and administrative system and in radically different economic circumstances. By revisiting structural features of conflict in Mozambique - such as the consequences of ideological reframing and the white spots of the Peace Agreement that looked more at stability and less at reconciliation and the democratisation of the state - he shows that the necessary conditions for a possible "parliamentarisation" of conflict are currently still difficult to achieve. But growing internal pressures as well as the recent political shifts in the region of Southern Africa might change the political economy of reasoning and open windows for a further consolidation of peace in the country.