

Full Length Research Paper

RENAMO: From military confrontation to peaceful democratic engagement, 1976-2009

Baxter Tavuyanago

Department of History and Development Studies, Great Zimbabwe University, P. O. Box 1235, Masvingo, Zimbabwe.
E-mail: baxterkov@gmail.com.

Accepted 22 April, 2015

This article examines RENAMO (Resistencia Nacional Mozambicana) in the context of Mozambican politics. The study seeks to illustrate that although the movement was widely cast as a band of armed bandits (*bandidos armandos*), it was founded on firm political principles of democracy. It will be argued that any link by the movement to forces of imperialism and retrogression was merely a matter of expediency rather than being puppetish. Again the study will show that RENAMO's resort to armed confrontation was part of its strategy to push for the democratic agenda. The study will also reflect on RENAMO's change of tactics from armed confrontation to peaceful engagement and argue that the change formed the core of the movement's quest for peace and democracy. It will be revealed that ever since its participation in the democratic process, RENAMO has not returned to war in spite of the contested results in the country's elections and the various threats made by the movement.

Key words: Belligerents, ceasefire, civil war, Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), general peace agreement (GPA), re-education programme, Resistencia Nacional Mozambicana (RENAMO).

INTRODUCTION

Although RENAMO has for many years constituted something of an enigma, its origins are reasonably well documented as given by Morgan (1990), Flower (1987), Young (1989) and Minter (1998). According to Minter (1998) the Portuguese acronym Resistencia Nacional Mozambicana (RENAMO) was adopted by the organisation during its early days of operation and was more widely used than the English language acronym Mozambique National Resistance Movement (MNR). Minter (1998) goes further to say that the Mozambican government referred to the movement as '*bandidos armandos*' (armed bandits) while the most common term used by Mozambican villagers was '*matsanga*', after the movement's first leader and commander Andrea Matada Matsangaissa. Some villagers in Mozambique referred to the movement as '*chomusango*' because its fighters stayed in the '*bush*'.¹ This paper will consistently use the term RENAMO and only refer to other acronyms where

it's contextual.

This paper begins by examining the origins of RENAMO and in the process, discusses the various schools on the subject. The paper further looks at the aims of the organisation with a view of announcing its war programme and its subsequent engagement in Mozambique's democratic experiment. This engagement is largely explored through an analysis of the movement's participation in Mozambique's democratic elections and the movement's contribution to the development of peace and democracy in the country.

ORIGINS OF RENAMO

The origins of RENAMO can be traced by looking at two contrasting schools. The first school propounded by Chingono (1996), Tungamirai (1987) and Hanlon (1984) argues that RENAMO was a Rhodesian creation, which was primarily created to serve as an anti-insurgency proxy movement. The school, supported by Flower (1987) and Johnson and Martin (1986) argues that the

¹ Interviews with villagers (2005) in the Sangwe area of Chiredzi District in South East Zimbabwe who were victims of cross-border raids between 1986 and 1992 confirmed the use of the names '*Matsanga*' and '*Chomusango*'.

Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) formed it in 1976 with the aim of countering guerrilla activities of the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA).² The school therefore argues that the movement was formed to protect the interests of external forces, particularly Rhodesian, South African and Western. One of the chief proponents of this school, Chingono (1996) argues that the Mozambican conflict was caused by political, economic and strategic interests of these forces and that RENAMO had no independent political existence.

This school examines the RENAMO war within the context of Rhodesian, South African and Western destabilisation. RENAMO is seen as a foreign bandit force imposed on the people of Mozambique by foreign imperialist forces. The proponents of the school further argue that the movement could not have survived without external support. The school tend to exaggerate the role of external forces to the extent of reducing Mozambicans to "mere passive victims of manipulations and machinations by powerful external forces" (Chingono, 1996). The school fails to address the question of why RENAMO was creatable, if it was created.

The second school, the 'revisionist', attributes the RENAMO war to internal problems rather than external forces. The school blames FRELIMO (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique) for creating problems for itself through its poorly conceived policies. FRELIMO is blamed for its heavy-handed attempt to displace existing social and economic institutions in the country without prompt and effective replacements. According to Chingono (1996) the FRELIMO party and government were also blamed for introducing policies that were insensitive to peasant aspirations. The party was also blamed for introducing flawed government policies that included the adoption of a one party Marxist policy and the establishment of a haphazard forced villagisation programme.

The government's ideological orientation and its marginalisation of traditional institutions, such as the chiefship institution in the country deepened a sense of distance and antagonism between FRELIMO and the population and this explained the unpopularity of FRELIMO in some areas of the country. Marginalised institutions and provinces (especially central and some northern) naturally turned into fertile support grounds for anti-FRELIMO sentiments. RENAMO capitalised on this and became an outspoken defender of traditional customs, religious beliefs and all marginalised institutions. The movement became a protector of all those who felt penalised by the regime. It became a party of all those who had been harmed by the government's 'modernisation' programmes.

² ZANLA was the armed wing of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). After Mozambique attained independence ZANLA forces were allowed to establish military bases in the country and to launch their operations against the Rhodesian forces from there.

While acknowledging that the insurgent movement was 'born' by the Rhodesian CIO the 'revisionist' school propounds that it rapidly turned into a 'Mozambican phenomenon'. Chitiyo (1999) propounds that the movement indeed became an indigenous force whose main thrust was resistance to central unpopular authority. Morgan (1990) further argues that the movement was able to exploit the rural crisis engendered by FRELIMO policies. These policies had encouraged either active or passive support for RENAMO. So in spite of its brutal war record, RENAMO enjoyed tacit support from the rural population, at least for its effective opposition to FRELIMO. The 'revisionist' school therefore views RENAMO as a 'genuine popular movement' and its war, a 'bona fide civil war'. They argue that once 'created', the movement took on an undeniable life of its own.

This paper argues that RENAMO was a collective outcome of the two schools. The leaders of the movement were pragmatic enough to manipulate the political climate in Mozambique to their advantage. They were initially able to seize at the opportunities that existed in Rhodesia and South Africa to acquire arms and training facilities. They were also able to come up with an appropriate peasant ideology. The movement was subsequently able to carve out a constituency for itself among the peasants through its exploitation and manipulation of peasant grievances and hence its success in the countryside. The massive support it started receiving throughout the country once it started participating in elections was testimony that it had indeed captured the support of the people. The party became the champion of those excluded from the political cake. Its involvement in the electoral process at the conclusion of the war became total. This participation made a lasting contribution to the democratic discourse in Mozambique.

AIMS OF THE ORGANISATION

The aims of the organisation were clearly spelt out in the Party Manifesto and Programme of 1981. According to Finnegan (1992), Young (1989) and Morgan (1990) the organisation aimed at forming a government of national unity by organising and conducting democratic elections, promoting a free market economy, fighting communism and promoting the freedom of movement and religion. The movement was anti-socialist and anti-FRELIMO. In particular it was against FRELIMO's incomprehensible socialist programme.

While these guiding political principles were clear, the party did not do much to justify the ideological purpose of their war. The party leader, Afonso Dhlakama's limited interviews on the movement's ideology remained obscure. Because he deliberately avoided giving interviews to journalists, the motives of his fighters remained shrouded in mystery. The absence of any substantial political statement and the movement's failure to vigorously sell its programme(s) made the organisation

an even greater mystery. Again the author argues that the vagueness in RENAMO policy was part of the movement's strategy of keeping the enemy guessing about its real intention.

RENAMO AND THE CIVIL WAR (1976-1990)

Hanlon (1984) posits that RENAMO operations started in June 1976 through the opening of a propaganda station in Rhodesia. According to Ellert (1993) this station, the 'Voice of Free Africa' transmitted in Portuguese from Guinea Fowl in Gwelo. It made daily broadcasts against the FRELIMO government and according to Ewechue (1981) these broadcasts had the effect of inciting people in Mozambique to rise against the government. Ellert (1993) further propounds that the Rhodesia CIO provided the station with the logistical support and a secret budget enabling it to prepare its daily programmes. By 1979, the Rhodesian government had established a permanent headquarters for the movement at Odzi, 16 km from the eastern border town of Umtali. New camps were also soon established at Nyanga and Chisumbanje along the border with Mozambique.

RENAMO's first commander, Andrea Matada Matsangaissa was an escapee of the 'Re- Education Programme'.³ Chingono (1996) argues that he had been arrested and charged by the government for his perceived insubordination to his seniors and for hoarding arms of war in preparation for an uprising. According to Minter (1998), Matsangaissa was to recruit and train his first group of fighters in 1977. This group comprised of about 300 fighters he had rescued from a 'Re-Education Camp'. There is no doubt that this group was subsequently motivated by real bitterness against Samora Machel, the president of the country. Also among its early cadres were whites who had fled the country at independence. They were again filled with extreme bitterness and harboured a strong desire to revenge. His deputy and successor, Afonso Dhlakama was also a 'graduate' of the 'Re-Education Programme'. The first core of RENAMO combatants was therefore a group of disgruntled Mozambicans who were guided by the desire for revenge. They advocated for change through the removal of the FRELIMO government.

Serious RENAMO war campaigns only started in 1980 after the transfer of the sponsorship of the movement to South Africa. This followed the success of the liberation movements in Rhodesia and Zimbabwe's attainment of independence. Ellert (1993) postulates that the new sponsor took immediate steps to put a credible political manifesto for the movement and the movement became dramatically successful. The organisation was provided with improved training and logistical support. A concerted

effort was made to give it an improved public profile and present it as a genuine political party. An attempt was also made to build the image of Dhlakama. According to Nkala and wa Mbala (1990), he was coached on how to speak, dress and behave when dealing with journalists and foreign dignitaries. All this was done to enable the movement to receive international respect and support.

In 1981, the movement intensified its activities by expanding its areas of operation from the central provinces of Tete, Sofala and Manica into the Gaza and the Zambezia provinces.⁴ The movement focused its activities more on economic and social destabilisation. This included destroying transport networks, schools, health facilities and disrupting the people way of life in general. The war turned into a brutal civil war with devastating results. It involved rape, murder and mutilation of both the living and the dead. Both sides were involved in the killings with RENAMO employing brutal tactics while the government also resorted to using youth militia to attack RENAMO supporters.

According to Chingono (1996) the movement's army had grown to 10 000 by 1983 compared to just about 1000 during Rhodesia's command. The size of the force further increased to 20 000 by 1990 and this was two thirds of the government's 30 000 soldiers of whom only 5 000 were well fed and well equipped. The movement's army therefore became a rival of that of the government. RENAMO's campaigns continued to target economic and social infrastructure. The aim was to weaken the economy and that way, erode the people's support for the government. Between 1984 and 1986, the movement further extended its operations to cover the whole country. RENAMO received support from the marginalised traditional chiefs and healers who often served as RENAMO administrators and this collaborative arrangement worked well for both the chiefs and the movement.

On the political front, the movement did not do much to sell its political agenda during the war. Being a military organisation, Minter (1998) argues that the movement rarely conducted political meetings with civilians. Occasionally soldiers and villagers gathered to hear speeches from their leaders like Dhlakama. These were more of anti- FRELIMO propaganda than speeches on policy issues. Propaganda pictures and cartoons against FRELIMO and her neighbouring supporters like Robert Mugabe were distributed to peasants to incite them to revolt against the FRELIMO government. Villagers were informed that RENAMO was for capitalism and wanted people to live individually and independently in the 'bush'.

The war intensified between 1986 and 1987 with limited negotiations. The accidental death of Samora Machel in a plane crash in 1986 and the ascendancy to power of a more moderate Joachim Chissano did not improve the negotiation atmosphere either. By the end of 1987, RENAMO had gained substantial ground in the countryside and so was bubbling with confidence. The

³ The 'Re-Education Programme' targeted all those perceived to have 'lost' the revolutionary path and needed re-orientation. The programme was unpopular with many.

⁴ These provinces were traditional strongholds of FRELIMO

war was however taking a heavy toll on Chissano's government and he was forced to seriously consider the negotiation option. Meanwhile RENAMO's reputation as the 'Khmer Rouge' of Africa had spread.⁵ This followed the negative publication of a US State Department report, the Garsony Report (named after the author, Robert Garsony) . The report damned RENAMO for its war atrocities on civilians. Domestic and regional pressure was also mounting on RENAMO to enter into negotiations. Internal conditions such as war fatigue and devastating droughts of the late 1980s forced both parties to seriously consider the negotiation option. By 1989, both parties had realised that the war was not winnable and hence the need to negotiate. This set the stage for serious negotiations that followed.

TRANSITION TO PEACE (1990-1993)

The road to peace was long, bumpy, circuitous and difficult. It involved delicate negotiations. Serious negotiations between the belligerents started in 1989 and were initiated by religious and political regional actors. The president of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe who had been a key actor in the war,⁶ had also become convinced that a military solution had failed and that the only option open was the political one. According to Nzeve (1999) initial talks began in Nairobi, Kenya in 1989 under President Daniel Arap Moi. While these talks continued intermittently into 1990, a major international event in whose framework the Mozambican civil war had been entangled took place in 1989/1990 (the end of the Cold War). The ripple effect of this was the immediate end of apartheid in South Africa. South Africa began to shift to multi-party and multi-racial democracy. This heralded its scaling down of destabilisation in Southern Africa. External support for RENAMO began to dry up and negotiation became the only way out. RENAMO was pragmatic enough to realise the need to change tactics with the shift in the international political climate and hence its serious involvement in the talks that followed. These talks were to culminate in the conclusion of peace between the belligerents.

Meanwhile Chissano took advantage of the changed climate and in 1990 introduced a new constitution. The new constitution was a complete break with the past as it contained three key elements that had been on RENAMO's agenda. These were; multi-party democracy, secret ballot and respect for private property. Article 97 of the new constitution spelt out that all citizens had the right to form political parties of their own (http://crawfund.dk/africa/mozambique_timeline.htm).

⁵ The Khmer Rouge was a notorious communist guerrilla movement that fought a brutal civil war in Cambodia in the 1960s and 1970s.

⁶ Zimbabwe had a large contingent of soldiers in Mozambique who had been fighting alongside the FRELIMO government since 1982. By 1987, this army had grown to 10 000 combatants.

This constitution therefore opened the political arena to other players in the country. The monopolistic politics of FRELIMO was changed to political pluralism and all this came as a result of pressure from RENAMO. The new constitution also created a National Assembly with 250 deputies. FRELIMO dissolved its Marxist-Leninist model and this marked the collapse of a Marxist dictatorship. In line with the new orientation, the country's name was changed from the socialist sounding 'People's Republic of Mozambique' to simply the 'Republic of Mozambique.' Again FRELIMO was trying to be pragmatic and enhance its credibility by 'stealing' some of RENAMO's agenda items.

The next round of talks took place in Rome between 8 and 10 July 1990 under a fundamentally changed political atmosphere. The talks were direct, open and frank. In December 1990, an agreement was reached on maintaining a partial ceasefire along major transport routes and on allowing humanitarian agencies access to conflict zones. The next round of talks (1991) tackled the issues of political and electoral reforms. According to Mlambo (1999) a General Peace Agreement (GPA) was signed in Rome on the 4th of October 1992 between Chissano and Dhlakama. Provisions of the agreement included the dismantling of RENAMO's armed forces and that of various government security forces and the integration of both into the United National Army. The parties also agreed to hold their first multi-party election at the earliest possible time. The signing of this agreement ushered in a new era of peace and democracy and led to the landmark 1994 election. It also meant that RENAMO had to transform itself from a guerrilla movement into a responsible political party. This was no mean a task for a movement that had hitherto known nothing else but war.

RENAMO IN ELECTIONS (1994-2009)

Electoral Instruments

RENAMO has since 1994 participated in four presidential and parliamentary elections (1994, 1999, 2004 and 2009) and three municipal elections (1998, 2003 and 2008). The 1994 election, the first since Mozambique's independence marked a successful transition from war to peace and towards multi-party democracy. This and the subsequent elections were to usher in a period of relative peace and development in Mozambique. RENAMO was vindicated as it had all along advocated for multi-party democracy.

According to the Handbook on Mozambique's Electoral Laws (2004), two important electoral instruments were created to run these elections. These were the National Elections Commission (CNE) and the Technical Secretariat for the Elections (STAE) . The CNE was to be a permanent and independent state body responsible for the direction and supervision of the electoral process.

The STAE was the technical arm of the electoral process. Under the new Mozambican electoral laws, the president of the country was elected by universal suffrage for a 5-year term through a winner take all system. The president served a maximum of two terms. The winner had to score more than 50%. In the event of failure by one candidate to win in the first round, a second round squaring the best two would follow. The president made all key government appointments. The Assembly, with 250 members was also given a 5-year life span. Members (deputies) were elected through proportional representation. Presidential and parliamentary elections were held concurrently. What was significant in this case was that both parties (FRELIMO and RENAMO) had taken part in the crafting of the new electoral laws and this collaborative effort marked the first real step to peace and democracy.

The parliamentary and presidential election of 1994

The 1994 election, the first in Mozambique's history came in October 1994. It ushered in a new era of multi-party democracy and capped a two-year peace process that ended the sixteen-year-old civil war. The election established a formal competitive system, which opened the political arena to RENAMO and other smaller opposition political parties by bringing them into the mainstream of Mozambique's politics.

In spite of some challenges faced during the run up to the election, it was hailed as a vote of peace and Mozambique's success story. It was widely seen as free, fair and successful despite an abortive last minute boycott attempt by RENAMO (Reports by SADC, EU and the Carter Center Election Observation Teams). Voter turn up was as high as 82%. FRELIMO won the election. The Carter Center reported that in the parliamentary vote, FRELIMO captured 57% of the urban vote while RENAMO captured only 28% and in the rural vote, RENAMO had a slight edge over FRELIMO taking 41% of the vote against FRELIMO's 40%. In total FRELIMO got 129 seats out of 250, RENAMO got 112 and other smaller parties got 9 seats. In the presidential count, FRELIMO scored 53.3% of the total vote while RENAMO got 33.7%. Joaquim Chissano who had served as the unelected president since 1986 became the first elected president of Mozambique. The RENAMO leader Afonso Dhlakama acknowledged the results though he did not formally accept defeat as he complained of gross irregularities during the whole electoral process.

What was clear from the 1994 election was that despite its reputation as a brutal pawn of Rhodesia, South Africa and the West, RENAMO was able to win up to 112 seats of the 250 seats in parliament and 33.7% of the presidential vote. In the parliamentary election RENAMO even beat FRELIMO in the rural areas. This was no mean achievement for a party that until yesterday was considered as nothing more than just a band of bandits.

This clearly pointed to the fact that the movement had indeed worked hard to create a strong support base in the communal areas during its sixteen-year war. It had indeed turned itself into a formidable rural political party. The results further showed strong support for RENAMO in the heavily populated central provinces of Manica, Sofala, Zambezia, Nampula and Tete that the movement had controlled during the war. The return of traditional chiefs and healers to villages also strongly influenced results in favour of RENAMO (http://crawfund.dk/africa/mozambique_timeline.htm). FRELIMO managed to control the Southern provinces of Inhambane, Gaza and Maputo and the extreme northern province of Cabo Delagoa.⁷ The voting pattern clearly revealed regional cleavages created during the war. It reflected some ethnic and regional identities with the centre (Shona/Ndau and Sena areas) mainly voting for RENAMO while the south (XiChangana areas of Inhambane, Gaza, Maputo Province and Maputo City) and extreme north (Makonde area) voting for FRELIMO.

FRELIMO realised for the first time that it no longer had the total support of the people. This came as some wake-up call for the party that had all along taken the people for granted. On the other hand RENAMO proved to be a formidable new player in Mozambique's competitive politics. It had indeed passed the litmus test of being a serious political contender to FRELIMO.

The presidential and parliamentary election of 1999

As per the new Mozambican constitution, the next election was held between 3 and 5 December 1999. Pottie (2000) posits that this election again recorded a high voter turn out of 70%. This had been preceded by a massive voter education and registration campaign, in itself a sign of a budding democracy. It was held under the amended Law 3/1999. The amendment was meant to strengthen the electoral supervision bodies. During the run-up to the election, there was a lot of tension between the main rival political parties-FRELIMO and RENAMO and several clashes were reported. RENAMO accused the media of bias and the Carter Center also reported of the intimidation of RENAMO representatives in districts like Tete. The opposition, which included RENAMO's election allies, the UE, also complained against delays in the disbursement of election campaign funds from the government.⁸ On the other hand the state media (Noticias and Domingo) accused RENAMO of constantly threatening to go back to the bush if the party lost the election, an attempt to intimidate the electorate. This was against the RENAMO spirit of contesting all democratic

⁷ Cabo Delagoa was a FRELIMO stronghold because during the armed struggle it served as the main FRELIMO entry point into Mozambique from Tanzania.

⁸ All political parties represented in government were eligible for some financial support from the government. In the case of this election, funds were only released by the CNE two weeks before the election. The credibility of the CNE was therefore compromised.

Table 1. Voting pattern in Mozambique's parliamentary elections, 1999.

Province	FRELIMO	RENAMO-UE
Niassa	6	7
Cabo Delagoa	16	6
Nampula	24	26
Zambezia	15	34
Tete	8	10
Manica	5	10
Sofala	4	17
Inhambane	13	4
Gaza	16	0
Maputo Province	12	1
Maputo	14	2
Total	133	117

Source: Pottie (2000: 2).

elections. Again RENAMO flatly denied that it harboured any plans to go back to war if it lost the election

While the 1999 election was held between 3 and 5 December, the final results were only announced three weeks later on 22 December. This delay created a lot of anxiety and suspicion among, especially the opposition. When finally announced they showed once again that FRELIMO had won both the presidential and parliamentary elections. Chissano was re-elected president with a slight majority of 52.3% against Dhlakama's 47.7%. In the parliamentary count, FRELIMO had won 133 seats (48.5%) and RENAMO-UE had increased its toll to 117 seats (38.8%). The distribution of these seats was as indicated by Table 1.

The voting pattern continued to reflect ethnic and regional cleavages. FRELIMO got the majority of its seats in the south except for Cabo Delagoa in the north and RENAMO continued to win in its strongholds of Nampula, Zambezia, Tete, Sofala and Manica. It is worth noting that smaller parties in the coalition won 18 out of the 117 seats won by the opposition. This was indeed a good show. While the parliamentary election did not show a major shift from the 1994 election, RENAMO scored highly in the presidential election (47.7% compared to 33.7% in 1994). It is also important to note from the above results that RENAMO got seats in all provinces, except one, Gaza. It is therefore evident that the movement had managed to transform itself into a national party and Dhlakama was gaining ground as a national opposition leader. The party had done a lot of ground work to sell itself to the electorate since the last election. It had further shown its continued commitment to participation in the country's democratic process.

RENAMO's reaction to the results was once again an outright rejection as the party claimed that they were fraudulent. The party accused the CNE of stuffing ballot boxes with FRELIMO votes. Its main complain was on

unprocessed tally sheets from 550 of the country's 8322 polling stations. These had been rejected on grounds that they were irreconcilable and therefore unusable in the final count. According to the report presented by the Carter Center (2000), the CNE's argument was that these results came from polling stations in all provinces and therefore no party was individually prejudiced as a result of their exclusion. RENAMO insisted that they were mainly from its strongholds and that the rejected results represented 377 773 potential valid votes and this figure was significantly larger than Chissano's margin of victory which was 205 593 votes. There were bitter RENAMO complains. RENAMO refused to validate the results and filed an urgent appeal with the Supreme Court to have them nullified but the appeal was thrown out. RENAMO's eventual acceptance of the results, though grudgingly, however accorded the new government some semblance of legitimacy.

The 1999 election was seen as a litmus test for Mozambique's budding democracy. It consolidated the coalition government as it turned out to be crucial for both the political and economic recovery of the country. It indeed showed positive signs of a maturing political system through high voter turn out (70%) and full citizenship participation. Major political parties had worked together to come up with a reformed electoral law that provided for a new registration process and a representation of political parties in the CNE and STAE. The campaign period had been generally peaceful and voting was orderly, clean and tranquil. The results themselves revealed tight contest (53% FRELIMO and 47% RENAMO). According to Pottie (2000) the South African observer mission recognised the election as free and fair and the EU hailed it as 'broadly free and fair' The Carter Center (2000) observed that there were no serious irregularities that would affect the overall outcome of the election. The fact that RENAMO contested the final results through established legal channels and that the CNE followed due process (Supreme Court) to address RENAMO's concerns were positive signs of a nascent democracy. The credibility of the election was however dented by lack of total transparency during the vote tabulation.

RENAMO protests against the results came in November 2000. This came through spontaneous national protests that turned violent. Up to 40 people were killed in these protests in Montepuez. Of those arrested, 83 were to die in prison under unclear circumstances.

The presidential and parliamentary election of 2004

The 2004 election was, according to Gloor (2006) held on 1 and 2 December 2004 under a reformed electoral law (Law 7/2004). According to this law, all contesting parties were to receive result sheets at the counting centres and counting was now confined to provincial and national

Table 2. Voting pattern in the 2004 parliamentary and presidential election.

Party	Parliamentary	Presidential
FRELIMO	160 seats (62%)	63%
RENAMO	90 seats (29%)	32%
Others		5%

Source: Gloor (2006). Electoral conflicts p. 285.

Table 3. Results of the presidential election of 2009.

Party representative	No. of votes	Percentage
Guebuza Armando (FRELIMO)	2 974 627	75
Dhlakama Afonso (RENAMO)	650 679	16.41
Simango Daviz (MDM)	340 579	8.59
Total	3 965 785	100

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozambique election, 2009](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozambique_election,_2009) (extracted 17/3/10).

centres only. Mozambicans in the Diaspora were for the first time allowed to vote. They were given 2 seats out of the 250 seats. This meant that contesting political parties were now to fight for 248 seats in the 10 electoral provinces. Twenty political parties and coalitions and five presidential candidates contested the 2004 election.

The campaigning period was once again generally peaceful as only a few isolated cases of intimidation and disturbances were reported. The EU observer team noted that there was fair media coverage during the run up to the election. During voting no major clashes were reported. There were however complains of some voters who failed to find their polling stations and others who walked long distances to their polling stations. National voter turn out had however plummeted to its lowest ever (36%). This was not good enough for a nascent democracy.

The results were again announced three weeks later on 21 December and again FRELIMO was the winner in both the presidential and parliamentary count. It was clear that FRELIMO had even won with a wider margin than in 1999. In the presidential vote, FRELIMO's Armada Guebuza, the new presidential candidate won with 63% against Dhlakama's 32%. Chissano had stepped down in line with the demands of the new constitution that allowed a maximum of only two (2) presidential terms. Again this respect of the country's constitution was a positive sign in the consolidation of Mozambique's young democracy. In the parliamentary election FRELIMO had won 160 seats (62%) against RENAMO-UE's 90 seats (29%). Table 2 summarises the results.

The results in Table 2 show that RENAMO had a poor showing in both the parliamentary and presidential count.

This was even evident in its own strongholds. In

response to these results RENAMO once again claimed 'massive fraud' and 'electoral crimes'. Dhlakama declared the results null and void and called for the holding of another round of elections in the next six months. On 28 December RENAMO presented a 108-page report to the CNE citing acts of intimidation, arbitrary imprisonment of its members, threats to voters and fraudulent invalidation of ballot papers during counting and collating.

RENAMO complains were once again thrown out on 3 January 2005 on the technicality that they had not been submitted in time. Again the major observation teams concluded that the results were a fair reflection of the will of the Mozambican people. RENAMO attempt to mobilise opposition to the results was once again unsuccessful.

The presidential and parliamentary election of 2009

The 2009 presidential and parliamentary election, the fourth since 1994 was conducted on 28 October. It was guided by SADC principles which among other things directed that they be held over one day. Campaigning had begun on 13 September and 17 political parties were involved. The main contending parties were FRELIMO (under Guebuza), RENAMO (under Dhlakama) and a new kid on the block, the Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM) (under Daviz Simango).⁹ According to Wikipedia- Mozambican Election (2009), during the campaigning period the RENAMO leader Dhlakama promised his electorate that if he lost this election he would not run again.

Final results were officially announced by the CNE on 11 November 2009 and were validated by the Constitutional Council on 28 December 2009. While voter turnout had improved from that of 2004, which was now 42%, it nevertheless reflected growing apathy on the part of Mozambican voters. Again this did not auger well for a budding democracy. Tables 3 and 4 summarise both the presidential and parliamentary election results.

The results showed dismal performance on the part of RENAMO in both the presidential and parliamentary elections. The dent on RENAMO was partly caused by the division in the party that had led to the formation of the MDM. On the other hand Guebuza was credited with managing the economy well since the last election and Mozambicans were prepared to give him another fresh mandate to rule the country.

These results, like the previous ones were given a near clean bill by all election observers. SADC said they were a clear reflection of the will of the people of Mozambique and the EU said they were well organised, peaceful and guaranteed universal freedoms of the people of Mozambique. (<http://www.elections2009.cip.org.mz>)

RENAMO did not agree with the above observations. It condemned the results once again as fraudulent and a

⁹ Daviz Simango was the Independent mayor of Beira, the second largest city in Mozambique. He had broken ranks with RENAMO to form the MDM accusing Dhlakama of dictatorial tendencies.

Table 4. Results of the Parliamentary election of 2009.

Party	No. of votes	Percentage	No. of seats	Gained/lost seats
FRELIMO	2 907 335	74.66	191 seats	+31
RENAMO	688 782	17.68	51 seats	-39
MDM and others	152 836	3.93	8 seats	+ 8
Total	3748953	100	250 seats	

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozambique_election,_2009 (extracted 17/3/10).

sham. It specifically accused the CNE of stuffing ballot boxes with FRELIMO votes. As required by law the CNE forwarded RENAMO's appeal against the results to the Constitutional Council. RENAMO complaints were once again rejected on grounds that they were not submitted in time. In a strongly worded protest of 3 November 2009 entitled 'RENAMO rejeita resultado das eleccoes' (RENAMO rejects election results), the party predicted that the country would 'burn'.

The party threatened 'further action.' This was construed to mean that they could even go back to the bush. The party demanded a cancellation of the results and called for a fresh poll. Again these kinds of protests had become the norm with the party following an election defeat. In all cases they came to nothing other than just mere threats. Other than the fact that RENAMO had never contemplated taking up arms since the end of the civil war, its capacity to do so had been greatly weakened by the changed geo-politics of Southern Africa. These threats have therefore been mere tricks to pressurise the government to acquiesce to their demands. Taking an AK and going back to the bush is no longer an option. The party has to find other survival tactics within the democratic dispensation.

Local government elections of 1998, 2003 and 2008

Another political area where Mozambicans were able to exercise their democratic right was in local government elections. According to Giovanni (2003), the first Mozambican municipal election was held in June 1998 and was marked by a RENAMO boycott. RENAMO was protesting over administrative issues. The electorate was also unfamiliar with the new local governance system. The Carter Center (2000) reported that FRELIMO ran unopposed in 81% of the municipal assemblies and in 58% of the mayoral seats. In total only 15% of the eligible voters turned up to vote. Independent candidates and members from other smaller parties who participated won a significant share of seats in several cities including Beira and Maputo. The government on its part took RENAMO boycott as a non-event and argued that RENAMO failure to participate was an acknowledgement that the party was happy with FRELIMO rule and that they were going to face defeat anyway.

The population also poorly supported the municipal elections of 2003 and 2008. It is important to note that the politics of boycott adopted by RENAMO was itself a progressive democratic political strategy. It indeed sent a strong message to the governing party that it could not be taken for granted.

RENAMO'S CONTRIBUTION TO MOZAMBIKAN PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

The RENAMO parliamentary wing was formed in 1994 during the first session of the first parliament of Mozambique. Dhlakama ran for president in 1994 and in the subsequent elections. Because he lost in all cases, he remained outside parliament and in a way remained excluded from the government. Parliamentary participation by RENAMO however represented a new challenge to democracy in Mozambique. RENAMO pushed for the introduction of several bills. By 1999, more than half (53%) of the bills passed by parliament had originated in the Assembly. One of the bills was the creation of a bigger role for traditional chiefs, RENAMO's chief allies during their struggle. Some of their proposals were however shot down by FRELIMO's majority deputies since voting almost always followed party lines. The opposition engaged in several parliamentary boycotts but despite these, parliament continued to function relatively well. RENAMO managed to keep the government under check and on its feet through its role as a vibrant opposition party.

RENAMO's lack of parliamentary experience, especially during the first parliament saw the party coming up with haphazard policies especially on constitutional reforms. The autonomy of the party's legislative wing was also undermined by the absence of Dhlakama from government and parliament. The parliamentary *bacada* (caucus) tended to be guided by external decision making from Dhlakama. According to Giovanni (2003) elected deputies often clashed with Dhlakama's effort to maintain a personalistic and extra-parliamentary leadership style. The RENAMO leader interfered with the operation of his deputies thus compromising their performance in parliament. He viewed with suspicion any of his members who associated with FRELIMO members. In 2000, Raul Domingos (RENAMO leader in parliament)

was expelled from the party for what was said to be his shoddy dealings with the FRELIMO government. Because of this there tended to be limited fruitful contact between RENAMO and FRELIMO deputies except in Parliamentary Committees. Skilful people in the party were seen as potential challengers by the leadership and were marginalised. This naturally weakened the party's democratic operations.

On the whole RENAMO's participation in parliament has not been a dismal failure. The fact that the party has continued to engage the government from within has been a strong factor in reinforcing the country's democracy. The party has provided checks and balances to the Mozambican political discourse. This has come in the form of promoting coalition politics such as the RENAMO-UE coalition of 1999. It has been striving for political balance of power through dialogue, negotiations and at times threat of war. The party's boycott tactics have also served them well in that the government has often responded positively to some of their demands.

Perhaps, Mozambique's success story came through RENAMO's embodiment of reconciliation. It was spearheaded by traditional chiefs using traditional rituals. Both parties (RENAMO and FRELIMO) exhibited a high level of understanding and little retribution and vengeance after the war. The country has experienced limited violence since the end of the war. One important feature of the post-war period was the encouragement of open dialogue from both sides. Soldiers from both sides were encouraged to open up, talk about the war and ask for forgiveness. Home coming soldiers were cleansed from evil spirits and integrated into civilian life. Former belligerents were brought together during the cleansing ceremonies. Traditional village leaders acted as local 'psychologists' and social workers in the whole process of reconciliation. This assisted the country in its healing process.

Further, RENAMO's participation in Mozambique's democratic process was an important step in Mozambique's conflict management process. Two protagonists were forced to bury their hatchets, sit in the same government structures and work together. They agreed on the electoral reforms and accepted the principle that winners and losers are political partners who must work together. They both committed themselves to peace, democracy, development and reconciliation and worked together towards achieving these.

The sharing of power with FRELIMO was crucial for sustainable peace in a country that was coming out of a brutal war. The birth of the MDM and many other smaller political parties has been another plus to Mozambican democracy. While it is undeniable that MDM has created a big dent in RENAMO's support base, it is also worth noting that it has enhanced democracy by challenging the bi-polar politics of Mozambique. The MDM has opened up more democratic space by giving Mozambicans a wider choice in elections.

Conclusion

The Mozambican political climate has remained dominated by the two political parties-FRELIMO and RENAMO. The two have continued to base their support on their deep-seated historical origins and well-established regional roots. The 1994, 1999, 2004 and 2009 elections have confirmed FRELIMO's dominance as the ruling party of the country though with some controversies. Joachim Chissano won two elections and his successor Guebuza won the last two with an even wider majority. There is no doubt that FRELIMO is in total control of the country now.

The relative stability displayed by party competitive politics in the last four national elections is apparent. It is clear that RENAMO has indeed accepted the new political dispensation. Dhlakama's former guerrilla movement has indeed succeeded in delivering and safeguarding peace and democracy in Mozambique. Its political participation has indeed led to the entrenchment of democracy and political stability in post conflict Mozambique. The movement has also succeeded in gaining legitimacy among the broad section of the Mozambican population. It has also managed to maintain serious electoral challenges to FRELIMO. The fact that there has not been a domestic rebellion since the peace agreement is a good sign of the acceptance of the new order by RENAMO. The party has never really been close to re-starting the war as it has avoided violence. The post-war settlement still holds in spite of RENAMO's threat to pull out.

So in spite of RENAMO's vicious past, the party now enjoys a broader legitimacy among a large section of the Mozambican population. Except for a few, Giovanni (2003) argues that "society does not blame RENAMO for the war, or at least no more than it blames FRELIMO." There is no doubt that RENAMO will continue to maintain its role as the principal opposition party in Mozambique. There is also no doubt that the party has embraced multi-party politics quite successfully.

What the party need to do is to build strong internal structures, strengthen its links with grass root supporters and improve intra-party democracy. It should further broaden its support base in urban areas. The party also need to examine its ideology and policies with the view of remaining relevant.

What however remains to be seen is whether the 'ship' will continue to sail successfully under 'captain' Dhlakama. His pronouncement in the last election that he would not contest the next election if he lost has yet to be tested. The party has been declining in popularity. The 'progressives' in his party have argued that the 'captain' is tired and need to be replaced by a new leadership with new 'tricks'. They accuse the leadership of failing to provide the party with a coherent alternative policy and of its failure to contain internal dissent which is proving to be divisive. The break away MDM is a case in point.

Dhlakama has been accused of pursuing a dictatorial approach by running a one man show. The 'progressives' argue that Dhlakama has led the party in four crucial elections and failed to beat FRELIMO and hence the need to give way to others. It remains to be seen whether Dhlakama is prepared to let go the leadership of his 'beloved' party. The morrow of the party is indeed in his hands.

REFERENCES

- Chingono MF (1996). *The State, Violence and Development. The Political Economy of War in Mozambique, 1975-1992*, Avebury, Aldershot. pp. 3-35
- Chitiyo TK (1999) 'Zimbabwe's Military History', *J. Afri. Confl.*, 1: 1-72.
- Ellert H (1993). *The Rhodesian War: Counter-Insurgency and Guerrilla Warfare, 1962-1980*, Gweru, Mambo Press. pp. 98-102.
- Ewechue R (Ed. In-Chief) (1981), *Africa Today*, Africa Books. pp 924
- Finnegan W (1992). *A Complicated War: The Harrowing of Mozambique*, Oxford, University of California Press. pp. 68-79
- Flower K (1987). *Serving Secretly: An Intelligence Chief on Record: Rhodesia into Zimbabwe, 1964-81*, London, John Murray. pp. 262-273
- Giovanni M (2003). *Emerging Pluralistic Politics in Mozambique: The FRELIMO-RENAMO Party System*, Working Paper No. 23, March, pp. 1-28
- Gloor A (2006). 'Electoral Conflicts: Conflict triggers and approaches for conflict management-Case Study of Mozambican General elections 2004', *Peace Confl. Develop. Inter-Disciplinary J.*, 7: 281-303., July.
- Handbook on Mozambique's Electoral Laws- (2004). *General Election (2004)*, ELSA Election Handbook 14.
- Hanlon J (1984). *Mozambique: The Revolution under Fire*, London, Zed Books Ltd., pp. 220-230.
- Johnson P, Martin D (ed.) (1986). *Destructive Engagement. Southern Africa at War*. Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House. pp. 5-27.
- Minter W (Ed.) (1998). *Mozambique-A Tale of Terror: Told by ex-participants of RENAMO and Refugees*. African Institute, pp. 11-40.
- Mlambo N (1999). 'Raids on Gorongossa. Zimbabwe's Military Involvement in Mozambique 1982-1991', *J. Afr. Confl.*, pp. 22-53
- Morgan G (1990). 'Violence in Mozambique; Towards an Understanding of RENAMO', *The Journal of African Studies*, 28 December 1990. pp 605-619
- Nkala C, wa Mbala K (1990). 'RENAMO's Refugees', *New Africa*, No. 270, March. *Noticias*, 16 July 1998. p. 23
- Nzeve MC (1999).(Unpublished M.Sc. Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1999). *Collective Self Defence, State Survival and Regime Survival. The Zimbabwe Military Involvement in the Mozambican Civil War*, UZ, pp. 72-82
- Pottie D (2000). 'The Mozambican Elections: RENAMO demands a recount', *Southern Africa Report Achieve*, 15(3): 26-30. May.
- The Carter Center (Observing the 1999 Election in Mozambique, Final Report). (2000), *Democracy Programme*, Atlanta, G.A. 30307, August.
- Tungamirai J (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Zimbabwe, 1987.), *From Détente to Destabilization, South African Military Policy in Southern Africa, 1974-1987*, UZ, p. 106
- Young T (1989). 'The MNR/RENAMO: External and Internal Dynamics', *African Affairs*, pp. 495-505

Internet material

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozambican_elections2009 (accessed 17/3/10).
- <http://www.elections2009.cip.org.mz> (accessed 17/3/10)
- http://crowfund.dk/africa/mozambique_timeline.htm (accessed 5/11/10)