DOMINANCE OF THE RULING PARTY AND THE TURMOIL OF THE OPPosition IN MOZAMBIQUE

Elisabete Azevedo-Harman*
elisabeteazevedo10@gmail.com
Catholic University of Mozambique
Research Fellow at Chatham House (London)

Abstract

Mozambique is one of the African countries which embraced democratisation in the 1990s. Following a civil war the two belligerent forces in the country embraced a multiparty system as part of the peace agreement signed in 1992. The political landscape has been dominated since 1994 by the two political parties (FRELIMO and RENAMO) which were enemies during 14 years of civil war. The current evaluation of democracy in Mozambique indicates that it fulfils the criteria of a hybrid regime (Diamond, 1999). The procedural rules of democracy exist and there is a relatively strong and free media. Within the theories of democracy some authors have expressed that in order to be a full democracy the country must have political rotation or at least for the fear of uncertainty to exist regarding the dominant party (Przeworski, 1991; Diamond, 1999), meaning that the rulers have fear of accountability to their electorate' on the day of the polls. For now, it seems that this condition doesn’t exist. As long as democratisation is not successfully entrenched, party dominance alone is not culpable, the opposition holds a significant responsibility in this ongoing process. Division within the opposition and difficulty to adapt from a rebellion movement to a political party made the main opposition party increasingly fragile. In the last five years a new party was created and has been perceived as a promising opposition, but due to its novelty and within the context of dominance of the ruling party alongside hostility from the main opposition party, it would require time to build up as a credible threat to the ruling party. In the meantime, it therefore seems that the country will remain a multiparty regime with a dominant ruling party. Are the authors who defended the definition of democracy exist only once a country has been through a power transfer correct in their assertion or is this theory inadequate to some of the democratisation processes? A comprehensive reply to this question will require more comparative cases and to follow the evolution of the case itself. But for now it is important to recognise that if there is an incomplete democratisation then the ruling party is not solely liable - the opposition also needs to be held responsible for this dominance through its own counter-productive actions.

Keywords: Renamo, Frelimo, MDM, democracy, political parties.

* All responsibility for the content and unnoted errors remains the responsibility of the author.
Introduction

In two of the four multiparty parliamentary mandates these were the only two parties represented. The fourth parliamentary mandate, elected in 2009, gave a two-thirds majority to FRELIMO\(^1\) and the remaining third was divided between RENAMO\(^2\) (the main opposition and historical party) and a new political party, MDM\(^3\), made up mainly of dissidents from RENAMO, or at least factions that RENAMO had created for the election in 2004.

As at the writing of this paper the leader of the main opposition party, Afonso Dhlakama, has been in an unknown location since October 2013. One year earlier he had returned to Gorongoza – the wild area which used to be the headquarters of RENAMO during the war. At that time he gave an interview to France Press, where he stated “I will prepare men, and if necessary we will leave from here and we will destroy Mozambique”\(^4\)” in a clear threat to reignite the civil war in case that FRELIMO does not accept to change the behaviour of its party dominance, not only politically but, as he put it, in access to the economic power. Dhlakama’s accusations were revealing of growing dissatisfaction with the wealth of FRELIMO elites, including the President, stating this accusation in a very finger-pointing and accusatory statement, saying in the same interview “we want to say to Guebuza: if you eat well, we also want to eat well”\(^5\). In 2013, the National Assembly approved an electoral law reform that for the first time did not emerge with the consensus of the main opposition party (Boletim Lusa Moçambique, 2012).

Even though Dhlakama’s threat of a return to a civil war in the current regional and international climate seems unlikely it does illustrate the context of a political rupture between the two main parties. Mozambique, being one of the countries considered as a hybrid regime, where in recent years democratization seems to be in a middle-ground with no clarity if the tendency was to increase democracy or not, it seems that the recent events will make this doubt all the more relevant.

The current evaluation of democracy in Mozambique indicates that it fits the criteria of a hybrid regime (Diamond, 1999). The procedural rules of democracy exist, there is a relatively strong and free media, but there is still control of the state and economy by the ruling party – or rather by party members – which makes it difficult for the opposition to establish itself. However, as

\(^1\) Acronym for Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, see also the party’s website http://www.FRELIMO.org.mz/

\(^2\) Acronym for Resistência Nacional de Moçambique, see also the party’s website http://www.renamo.org.mz/news.php

\(^3\) Acronym for Movimento Democrático de Moçambique, see also the party’s website http://www.mdm.org.mz/

\(^4\) “Eu preparo homens e, se for preciso, sairemos daqui e destruiremos Moçambique”

will be discussed in this paper, ruling party dominance cannot be seen only as the result of, at times, undemocratic behaviour on its part, the opposition also needs to be held responsible for this dominance through its own counter-productive actions: the opposition has been divided, suffers from organisational faults which reveal the difficulty of transforming from a guerrilla movement to a democratic political party. This self-imposed isolation in the bush of the leader of the second Mozambican party carries the symbolism that, for the party, the political game is back as it was before the peace agreements, but with the MPs of the party continuing with their duties in the National Assembly this reveals that the party is actually trying to play on both fronts – keeping a foot in the institutional game and following the rules (their website still states the claim that Mozambique is a full democracy), but at the same time the leadership announces that it is no longer playing according to the rules.

Analysis of this dual behaviour needs to recognise this as a strategy that results from the current ruling party dominance, which continuously places the opposition in a corner, but also reveals the battle between the two opposition parties. Furthermore, with the third party now ruling 13 municipalities, under a leader from a younger generation, this is sometimes taken as a challenge to RENAMO’s image as the main opposition and in particular its leader.

**Is Mozambique’s democratic trend on the on the advance or retreat?**

Legislative and presidential elections have taken place at regular times, and although international and national observers denounced some irregularities none of the elections was considered to be fraudulent. What has been evident from election to election is the growing electoral gain of the ruling party to the detriment of results achieved by the opposition, which has been systematically losing electoral support.

The only significant electoral success that the opposition has managed to achieve were the victories in the 2013 municipal elections. In November 2013 the third political party, the recently-formed MDM (Movimento Democrático de Moçambique) managed to win control of 13 municipalities and managed to secure 365 (30%) of 1,216 municipal assembly seats. Furthermore, MDM mayoral candidates took more than 40% of the vote in Maputo and Matola – Frelimo’s heartlands.

This relative success of the opposition at the local level is seen as motivational for the leadership of the opposition parties, but also adds to the electoral competition an important variable for the consolidation of democracy – political uncertainty. If at the national level it seems that for now the winner is always known before the game, at local level this certainty is being

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6 For the municipal electoral results (2013) see Processo Eleitoral Mocambique em http://www.processoeleitoral.org.mz/
challenged. As it is argued by some political scholars (Przeworski, 1991; Diamond, 1999) the absence of uncertainty violates an essential criteria for democracy; as Przeworski states “Democracy is a system in which parties lose elections”. Furthermore, democracy is made up of losers and winners. Other scholars (Reddy, 2005; Suttner, 2006) have opposed this view, saying that party dominance has existed in several democracies (such as Sweden and Japan) and does not constitute a dilemma in democracy. Reddy (2005), uses the example of India where the ruling party’s dominance after independence was actually seen as positive and as a source of stability and democratic consolidation. Nonetheless, concern with party dominance in recent multiparty systems in Africa seems to be a mainstream view of this phenomena as possibly undermining the consolidation of democracy (Giliome & Simkins, 1999; Van de Walle & Butler, 1999, Diamond, 1999).

Besides the concern around the consequences of party dominance in the new democracies in Africa, the political parties in Africa have been studied in order to classify and measure party systems and the phenomenon of party dominance (Boogards, 2004; Burnell, 2001; Van de Walle, 1999). Yet, these attempts have been in most cases narrowed to the analysis of national electoral results and may not necessarily catch variations of dominance within the country or take into account the performance of the parties in decentralized elections such as provincial or local elections. The empirical analysis of the extent of electoral dominance is obviously important, but it is also important to add to this analysis e regional dynamics in electoral competition, and dominance that goes beyond the electoral framework –economic and state dominance. To foresee the future of this dominance it is also important to understand the demographics of these countries. The countries studied are countries where the large majority of the electorate are less than 30 years old. Therefore, it is also important to study the evolution of the rhetoric and programmes of these parties and how these influence the young electorate. This may be a key influence on an electorate for whom the political speeches of the former liberation movements (and the classic opposition parties) seem to be losing significance as the young generation are more educated and urban. The consequence of this is an increase in abstention during elections.

For now, the electoral dominance of the ruling party in Mozambique seems to be guaranteed for the near future. Dominance will endure nationally, with any breach of this dominance only at local level as is already happening. The dominance of the ruling party is not only electoral. It goes beyond the number of parliamentary seats. The country has been showing positive economic results and in the last years vast natural resources have been found. The problem, as has been evident in similar contexts is that political power in the context of a recent and limited business class will have an impact on the political game. The transformation of Mozambique from a poor country to a country with substantial natural resources will mean that any political analysis needs to take into account the political impact if this change.

In spite of the advance of political and civil liberties in the early years of the multiparty period, the country is still not considered a democracy, and has been included in the group labelled as
no longer authoritarian, but still not a full democracy. As is known a transition to democracy is followed by a process of consolidation of democracy. Analysing the chart below of the evolution of political and civil liberties there is evidence of a kind of stagnation in the middle ground. It is therefore relevant to explore if the tendency will be to an evolution towards greater or lesser liberty. It is unfeasible to study the future of the democratization process without trying to comprehend the phenomenon of party dominance by the ruling party and the feebleness of the opposition parties. In September 2012 FRELIMO’s 10th congress had taken place, this congress had raised important expectations and debate in the Mozambican media since constitutionally President Guebuza is not allowed to run for a third term. Even though it came as no surprise that he will continue to be the party leader the doubt is whether the party leadership will covertly retain its control of the future President of the country.

Of interest, which on closer inspection can provide a clue to the possible tendency of the democratization process is FRELIMO’s secretary-general’s announcement to the press in June 2012, when explaining plans for the congress, that political parties participating in the congress included the “brothers’ and friends’ parties”, being the communist parties of China, Vietnam and Cuba. These types of international alignments are clearly not perceived as the most conducive towards a promotion of democratic values.

Figure 1: Mozambique’s FH’s Scores

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Origins of FRELIMO and RENAMO

It is important in the analysis of the formation of the two current main parties in Mozambique that the reader keeps in mind that both parties were birthed as a result of the recent wars.

FRELIMO was created out of the colonial war and RENAMO out of the civil war to counter FRELIMO after the independence of the country. This common circumstance of a violent beginning imparts, to this day, a legacy for both political parties, perhaps even more so for RENAMO than for FRELIMO. This is the case because FRELIMO was at the same time, since the 1960s also a political movement with influences from regional and international political forces. This party therefore established, since the beginning, an internal political structure and party rules, and the main decisions of the party were typically made in Party congresses.

The history of Mozambique from independence in 1974 until 1992 can be divided into two main periods: 1974 until 1980, during which time FRELIMO tried to implement a socialist regime, and from 1980 to the beginning of the civil war which would last until 1992. The opposition during this period, RENAMO, was mainly based in the northern region. Key to this paper is the above statement that both political forces were created during wars and were therefore military forces. FRELIMO was running the country but also a war and RENAMO was considered as a rebel group with its people hiding in the bush. As a former RENAMO leader said in an interview to the author, “in 1994, when we arrived in Maputo, we were seen as the bandits who were in town for the first time”.

The exclusivity of FRELIMO as the independence negotiator

In 1974 Portugal, the colonizer of Mozambique underwent a political transition that brought to an end an authoritarian regime, the colonial war and the policy of holding onto colonial territories. The governments that followed the end of the old regime had prioritized negotiations for the independence of the territories. To conduct these negotiations the Lisbon government would consider the liberation forces existing in the former colonies. In the case of Mozambique the only force to negotiate was FRELIMO, via its leaders in exile. This exclusivity of FRELIMO as the negotiator gave the movement the status of one that had not only fought the colonial war but also as that of legitimate representative of the Mozambican people. Hence, FRELIMO has been in power since the independence of the country was negotiated in Lusaka on 7 September, 1974.

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8 Two days after the coup’detat in Portugal, the Central committee of FRELIMO released a statement from the exiles exhorting “in the same way that the Portuguese People have the right to independence and to democracy, the same right cannot be denied to the Mozambican people”8.
Negotiations for the independence of Mozambique were between the former colonizer and FRELIMO, as the only legitimate political representative of the Mozambican people. This historical detail has more importance than as a simple curiosity. There were other political forces that were not just excluded, but stand accused of being involved in the violence organized after 7 September in the capital (now Maputo, at that time Lourenço Marques). From June to August 1974 more than 40 political parties were constituted in Mozambique (Couto, 2011, pp 344). From these political parties there were two political figures that would end up as the first to be executed as traitors to the revolution. These were the reverend Urias Simango, who was for 7 years vice president of FRELIMO before independence, and Joana Simeão, an educated black Mozambican woman who was involved with several political organizations, in the days following independence. Unlike Urias Simango Simeão was killed without due process. Her death was recently a subject in the Mozambican news since no death certificate was issued, and there has been no official recognition from the FRELIMO leadership of their involvement in her death. Her name still raises passions, with several FRELIMO leaders still accusing her of links with the former colonial political police.

FRELIMO signed the independence agreement and its leaders returned to the country on the 16 of September 1974 and as part of the agreement the party was constituted a transitional government, along with a few representatives of the Portuguese government. A referendum which was placed on the table was refused by FRELIMO and therefore the party was the only political force from this date with legitimacy. During the violence and the attempts by some political parties to mobilize the population, still FRELIMO (the only military force against the colonial presence) seemed to gather more popular support, at least from the educated left elite who have been in charge of all the main newspapers since May 1974 (Couto, 2011).

This historical agreement of 1974 defined FRELIMO as the only player with military experience and political support, and therefore the only player in town. It is also important to take into account the regional context of Mozambique at that time, under permanent threat from an Apartheid South African government and the government of Rhodesia, since black leadership of a neighboring country did not suit their racial ideals. This was their argument for a single strong political force, and also, whether fair or not, they argued that other forces were created, or at least supported, by these enemies.

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9 The case was in the news in 2006 since her husband wanted to marry again and could not since there was no proof of her death. This occurred even though, according at least one media source, an important FRELIMO leader confirmed her death in a parliamentary debate in the first multiparty session (see Canal De Moçambique, Caso Joana Simeão - Afirma Sérgio Vieira, retrieved August 11 2011 in http://comunidademocambiciana.blogspot.com/2006/05/caso-joana-simeo-afirma-srgio-vieira.html

10 See for example Chissano, 2011.
The “natural role” of the liberation movement as the ruling party

In 2011 the author conducted several interviews with FRELIMO MPs and with party members at the provincial and local level who expressed a belief that this finger-pointing at FRELIMO for being too dominant is not only unfair but makes no sense. There is a belief among those interviewed that if it was not for the ruling party dominating politics the country would end up in chaos, since it is the only one able to govern. Members of the liberation movement found it hard to understand the ingratitude of people for their achievements in liberating them. It is in this minefield that multiparty parliaments have entered the political landscape, as counter-powers to executive powers that have traditionally been unquestionable.

As a result, there is at present a tendency to view the opposition as ‘enemies’ of the party and subsequently enemies of the state, with the distinction between the state and the ruling party often being indistinguishable (Azevedo-Harman, 2013).

The ruling party's dominance - electoral, institutional, economic and state

FRELIMO’s Institutional Dominance

FRELIMO has political power, with full control of the executive and legislative. Regarding dominance of the assembly FRELIMO has more than 75% of the seats. In terms of executive power the political system is highly presidential with the president of the republic being the chief of government and the State (Macuane, 2009; Azevedo, 2009). Moreover, as a result of the current system from election to election the president does not need to be accountable to any institution and has full powers to appoint and dismiss not only the remaining cabinet, but also provincial governors. Formal presidential powers reach several areas, for example the Vice-Chancellors of the public universities are appointed by the president11. The Provincial governors are appointed by the President, and therefore tare all FRELIMO members. In 2009, there were for the first time provincial elections in the country, and here also FRELIMO had a comfortable dominance: the party not only won all provinces, but with a large victory in all provinces12.

In terms of the National Assembly, currently of the 250 MPs that constitute the Mozambican National Assembly 191 are FRELIMO MPs, 51 are RENAMO MPs and 8 are from the MDM. In the National Assembly FRELIMO has absolute dominance.

Party dominance within parliament by the ruling party is not an exclusive feature of African parliaments. In a parliament context this phenomenon can obstruct competitive politics within parliaments, where party dominance can weaken the relations between parliament and the executive. In order to protect the executive from public scrutiny, members of ruling parties advocate that their government be monitored behind closed party doors. Accountability of the executive to parliament is therefore similarly constrained. The explanation given for a lack of real demand for accountability by the FRELIMO MPs is that this is done behind closed doors in the meetings of parliamentary groups where the FRELIMO MPs oversee their comrades in the government (Azevedo, 2009). Party discipline is strong in the main parliamentary groups. This is more pronounced when the dominant political party was previously the liberation movement in which internal discipline was a fundamental credo. To the advantage of political movements that fought for independence, the creation of the state is often perceived as an achievement credited to the party. In these movements, unity is a doctrine that facilitated the nation-building process and provided a front against any would-be challengers.
The FRELIMO Official School/College (*Escola Central do Partido*) and party cells in the state and enterprises

Since pre-independence times FRELIMO has had a school to train its members and leaders. The school played a critical role before independence and was the first school for many party members. After independence the school continued, but only as a party school providing training in party ideology. More recently the school started to give out certificates like any other school recognized in the education system by the government. The General-Secretary of the party, in a discussion of how the party structures were consolidated under the mandate of President Guebuza, explained that FRELIMO is expanding the “FRELIMO School” to other provinces. It is also part of the plan of the party to extend the school to become a university. The current Vice-Minister for Higher Education, Dr. Arlindo Chilundo, is also the director of the *Escola Central*.

This extension of the role of the central school and its expansion to the provinces is the legacy of the mandate of Guebuza as party president. This mandate has also led to the revitalization of the party cell structures in public or private enterprises, neighborhoods and the state administration. These cells promote the party within public institutions. For example, in August 2011 it was announced to the media that a cell had been created within the public company that manages the airports. When the cell’s leader was questioned about mixing roles of party and state, the answer was that the workers are not forced to be part of the cell. Still there are rumors that non-participation can have consequences with regard to career development.

“*The business companies are the current army of FRELIMO***

This was stated by a FRELIMO business person in an interview with the author, and complimented with the sentence “Mozambique is different from your Europe, here it is not the economy that rules the politics it is the politics that runs the economy”. Domination of business is known to be mostly limited to FRELIMO members or their supporters and families. To explain that FRELIMO itself controls Mozambican business, it was noted that the party has created its own business societies.13 Business societies having political parties as shareholders or owner is not a novelty in the Mozambique multiparty era. The first company created by the party was established before the independence of the country. The company was SUDHEMIS (Sudhesmisphere) created in Paris, according to Jacinto Veloso (former chief of the Mozambican secret services in the 1970's and responsible for what he called the “business intelligence”). The company continued to operate after independence where according to Veloso allowed the

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provision of funds to the party outside the National budget to run special operations, mainly regarding security services\textsuperscript{14}.

\section*{Party Leadership and country leadership – who rules who?}

Between 26 and 28 of September 2012, around 5,000 militants of the ruling party were together in the small city of Pemba to participate in the 10\textsuperscript{th} Congress of the party. The Congress renewed the mandate of the current party president, Armando Guebuza, President of the Republic. A mandate in the Mozambican Constitution dictates that the President of the Republic cannot run for the next presidential election, expected to be in 2014. It is for that reason that this party election is of particular interest. Debate around this issue has been dominating the Mozambican media. The general belief seems to be that due to the party's political dominance Guebuza, the party leader, would be in a position to pull the strings once the country's next President is elected. A good summation of the debate in the media about this issue is that the main reasonably independent newspaper in the country, “Savana” on September 9, 2012 dedicated a full page advert to a debate among prominent intellectuals around where the center of power will lie in the future: with FRELIMO or with the President of the Republic. In this newspaper debate, Cistac, a well-known constitutional lawyer, argued that since 2004 under President Guebuza the country witnessed an increase in the dominance of the state by the party. According to him, under Guebuza’s mandates it was open knowledge that any state official is accountable in the first place to the party. A different opinion was expressed in the same newspaper article by Egidio Vaz, an Mozambican academic, who argued that after elections the president chosen by the electorate will be really leading the country.

In the first week of March 2014 Frelimo’s central committee voted Filipe Nyussi as their candidate for the forthcoming elections of 15 October 2014. Most likely, Frelimo’s candidate will be the country’s 4th president since its independence in 1975. The uncertainty that surrounded the party’s choice for several months contrasted the context which preceded the party’s congress. The central committee has demonstrated a party vitality that many feared has all but dissipated under President Guebuza’s leadership.

\section*{The Opposition}

Within the opposition there are several political parties, but this paper will discuss only the ones with parliamentary seats – RENAMO and the MDM.

\textsuperscript{14} For more information not just in the establishment of this company as well as the transformation in a state company see the biography of jacinto Veloso. Veloso, J. (2011). Memorias em voo rasante. JV Editores, Maputo, Moçambique.
RENAMO, as was stated earlier, was created out of combat during the civil war. The party has been under the leadership of Afonso Dhlakama since 1979\textsuperscript{15}. Dhlakama is considered by his members to be more than just the party president. The majority of MPs from RENAMO, when asked whether they vote for the Party or its President, could not distinguish between the party and the ‘chief’, or the ‘old man’, as he is called as sign of respect (Azevedo-Harman, 2011). MPs from RENAMO also confided that their names appear on the list of MPs as a result of a decision by the ‘chief’ and not as a party decision. This differs from the situation with FRELIMO MPs, who explained that there is no obedience of the party to the chief within FRELIMO, but rather it is the chief that should obey the party (Azevedo-Harman, 2013).

The political system is such that the leader of the opposition has never been part of the parliament, which is precluded by him being a presidential candidate, and this has resulted in the opposition leader being isolated from the political game. Indeed this leader has in the past shown distrust in his MPs, for instance it was ‘normal’ in the mandate from 2004-2009 for the opposition leader to call a press conference at his residence to deny the votes or declarations of his parliamentary group (Azevedo-Harman, 2013).

His fear of potential internal threats has been obvious at least twice, causing ruptures with his political party. There is lack of transparency with regard to the internal procedures of the political party. Still the leader is considered a charismatic figure with regional support. After the last election Dhlakama moved to a city in the North, Nampula, refusing to return to Maputo. In August of 2011 at press conferences he expressed a lack of trust in FRELIMO and threatened to return to civil war.

In spite of its loss of status, at least in the eyes of the international community, the party holds sway for an important part of the electorate, especially in the two most populous regions of the country, Zambézia and Nampula. As showed in the table below the electoral dominance of the ruling party is not consistent throughout the regions, with these two most populous provinces showing strong support for the opposition.

\textsuperscript{15} Dhlakama took over the party leadership after the death-in-combat of the first president of the party André Matsangaissa. See the RENAMO, 2012, Biografia do Presidente, retrieved on September 23, 2012 from http://www.renamo.org.mz/index.php/o-presidente/88-subpages/sec-geral/117-product1
The MDM is a recently established party which started with the elections of 2009 and is led by the mayor of Beira, Daviz Simango, son of the historical figure mentioned in the beginning of this paper, Urias Simango. Daviz was a mayor elected by RENAMO, but a few months before the election, RENAMO decided not to have him as candidate. He won the local elections as an independent candidate and constituted the MDM with several dissidents from RENAMO. The expectations of the party and its young and charismatic leader were great and the party managed to elect 8 MPs even though the registration of their candidates faced several problems, and several of their candidatures were refused by the electoral commission, which was one of the criticisms of the last election.

In 2012 the country witnessed increased tension in Nampula city since RENAMO’s President decided to live there rather than in his house in the capital, Maputo. In March 2012 several people were injured and two policemen were killed in one of the worse confrontation between the authorities and RENAMO supporters. The shooting took place in the street where Afonso Dhlakama resides. Since then his street has been permanently guarded. The police guards explained their presence there was necessary to protect the opposition leader. However, the violence resulted from a perception that RENAMO is rebuilding a military base, despite this being a residential area in the middle of town.

RENAMO’s leader has expressed his frustration with the growing dominance of the ruling party, but has at the same time been losing some of his party’s members to the new party.

A few months after this violent outburst in Nampula RENAMO’s leader moved, as stated above, to Gorongoza and sent the message though the media that this move was a potential step towards restarting a war. For a year (October 2012 to October 2013) Renamo and some 800 armed men have been surrounded in central Mozambique by a strong government military presence. The attacks that have occurred in 2013 were carried out by both sides. The national North-South road (EN-1) and surrounding area have, as a result of the presence of this instability become a “no man’s land”, reminiscent of the civil war days. The violence in the central region has already claimed dozens of deaths from civilians, Renamo’s men and military personnel but

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by no means threatens overall peace in Mozambique. Economically, however there has been impact and it will continue to impact on the economy if no definitive solution is reached. Gorongosa it is a significant area since it is close to the coal mines and the second-largest political city of the country, Beira as well as its harbour which is linked to the mines through the besieged national road and the railway, which the coal companies are reluctant to use at this stage. Since the crisis began there have been more several round of official talks between the government and Renamo. Each party agreed to meet to reach an accommodation both parties returning to semantic word war as was the case with the war in the 80’s which for Renamo was a civil war, and for Frelimo a destabilisation war. Once again, there is divergence on what to call these meetings, with Renamo calling them “negotiations” and the government insisting they are only a “dialogue”.

This process highlights the fragility of state institutions as it is underway outside the umbrella of any of the state institutions, such as the parliament or the State council. The process is therefore muddled and has unsurprisingly failed to reach an outcome. Both sides established an additional team for the negotiations, these two teams constitute of military personnel and will discuss only the military issues. Aside from the announcement of these teams, no further detail was given. For now it seems there is a stand-by without further announcement or recognition of progress by either side. Although the government has accepted the changes to its electoral organs Renamo has demanded the military integration of their man, and the need for a “division” of the natural resources. It is unclear what the economic demands consist of but this demand relies on the sense that now that the country is “rich” this wealth cannot only be seen to profit Frelimo’s party members.

Mozambique held municipal elections in November 2013. Renamo did not participate and threatened to “stop the elections”. Renamo has boycotted the municipal elections but it is the first time it has threatened to disrupt the elections. The elections went ahead and Frelimo and the third parliamentary party, MDM, were the main contenders. MDM contested as the only opposition party and have consolidated their position in two cities (Beira and Quelimane) up to 13 municipalities. The elections were conducted across the country and Renamo’s strategy ended up as a political shot in the foot. Despite this, it does not mean that Renamo will be politically irrelevant but that it will, over time, resort increasingly to ghettoised politics backed by force rather than the ballot.

Renamo is perhaps awakening to the reality that its show of force cannot be sustained. No longer are there external backers prepared to invest in the former rebels and this strategy only exacerbates the growing fatigue of the party inside and outside Mozambique. No one wants to see the country returning to violence and there is little sense of any long-term vision by Renamo. Afonso Dhlakama believes that governmental fraud defeated his presidential victory in 1999 but he has run his own party for thirty three years and over the last decade the party’s internal processes have been opaque, even though the party claims to have introduced democracy to the country through its armed struggle.
Observations

Whether under party dominance the consolidation of democracy will happen or not remains an open question. While theory and common sense dictate that dominance is problematic to the consolidation of democracy, this dominance seems to have arisen as a manifestation of the electoral will.

Until the last municipal and legislative election the political competition was between the two political parties that fought each other in a long conflict. Multiparty elections brought to the game a new party that in spite of electoral achievements is still to see if it is a national level is a real electoral threat to the ruling party.

There is clear electoral party dominance in Mozambique but, as pointed out, this dominance varies by region. There is a growing risk that economic growth and greater access to resources (natural gas, coal, and oil) in Mozambique will intensify the struggle to preserve power which may be detrimental to democratization. This is significant since most of these resources are in the north and centre of the country where the opposition has a greater hold.

After four multiparty mandates with FRELIMO consistently growing and with the opposition weakening each time, a situation arises whereby supporters of the opposition begin to feel disillusioned, fatigued and hopeless leading to difficulties in mobilizing new support and party membership. The new force opposition party is still struggles to proof that is more than a personal political party. Regarding RENAMO its weakness lies not just in electoral failures but in the institutionalization of the party itself, where there is a lack of self-assessment, with members placing the blame for the country’s problems entirely with the ruling party.

On the other hand the ‘hands on’ involvement in development and service delivery by FRELIMO antagonizes FRELIMO’s grassroots members who see their party spending time only criticizing the ruling party.

With electoral support for Renamo in steady decline, a resort to violence seems like a desperate strategy of the party and its leader to remain relevant. Renamo, however, is not the sole cause of this crisis. Frelimo needs to recognise that there is ground for some of the grievances raised by Renamo. There is a growing discontent with the hegemony of the party and suspicions of lucrative ties between some of the party’s members and business leaders. In spite of growing electoral support for the party, which has increased its share of parliamentary seats - it has 191 seats of the 250 - Frelimo should recognise the increasing rate of abstention as a concern and a sign of discontent. Frelimo and Renamo’s behaviour is mainly supported by the institutional political framework which the country adopted. Its presidential system falls short of having adequate checks and balances, enabling the country to effectively become not one governed by a presidential system but an absolute personal monarchy. Regardless of who the President is, the country’s constitution gives absolute powers to the President to the detriment of all other institutions. The parliament is increasingly becoming a rubber-stamping institution.
Also, within the political design of the country, decentralisation has been carried out timidly. Provincial legislative power was established but the executives remain appointed by the government. A real political decentralisation could help give a sense of inclusiveness and empowerment to the regions and opposition parties. These solutions require the recognition of the causes of the problem.

Understanding party dominance and its consequences deserves more research and empirical analysis which needs to include the roles and influence of other political actors in the country.

Party dominance in Mozambique raises important questions, not only on whether democracy is enhanced or not, but also whether national unity is undermined due to the ruling party dominance in addition to the self-isolationism of the opposition and a growing but nascent third force all coming together to sow seeds of discontent, as evidenced by Dhlakama’s ominous threat. This is compounded in the regions which have historically been more skeptical of the monopoly of power by the ruling party and which are the seat of the greater share of natural resources.

References


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