

Historical Context:

War and Peace in Mozambique

Mozambique's 30 years of conflict and attempts to bring about a lasting peace are best understood within a broad historical and international framework. From the initial stirrings of nationalist sentiment under Portuguese colonial rule, through the immense developmental challenges facing the newly-independent state, to the subsequent war of destabilisation waged by the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo) and its backers, efforts to find peace have remained largely out of the hands of Mozambicans themselves. With the signing of the October 1992 peace agreement, this started to change. Given the desperate state of the country's social and physical infrastructure, however, ongoing efforts to consolidate the peace continue to depend greatly on long-term international assistance.

The Struggle for Mozambique

Although Mozambique was under varying degrees of Portuguese influence from the 15th century, systematic colonial rule only took root in the early 1900s. With the

decline of the slave trade a few decades earlier, Portugal established sugar and cotton plantations in Mozambique, and developed a domestic textile industry. These commercial activities were not tremendously successful, however, and Mozambique's formal economy soon became dependent on remittances from migrant labourers and on the transit of goods between its land-locked neighbours and the Indian Ocean. The country was dominated by the British chartered companies and other foreign concessionaries at large in Southern Africa in the early years of this century. It was only after 1941, when the last of the company charters lapsed, that Mozambique was first governed as a single economic and administrative unit.

In 1951, Mozambique became an overseas province of Portugal which, unlike most other colonial authorities of the time, stated it would never decolonise. Echoing this claim, the words *Aqui é Portugal* — Here is Portugal — were emblazoned in the black and white mosaic pavement outside the city hall of the capital Lourenço Marques (renamed Maputo after independence). In tune with other minority white regimes of

**A family home
burned down by
Renamo, Gaza
Province, 1989**

Carlos Mhula/Panos Pictures



the time in Southern Africa, Portuguese Mozambique was also segregated along racial lines. Strict qualification criteria ensured that less than one per cent of black Mozambicans became full citizens.

In 1962, Eduardo Mondlane united various nationalist groups to form the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo), the first concerted opposition to colonial rule. In 1964, with radical African, Arab, Eastern European and Chinese aid, Frelimo launched an armed struggle against the colonial regime. In subsequent years, the movement suffered considerable political infighting which resulted in a series of violent internal purges. In 1969, the party was further destabilised by the assassination of Mondlane in Dar-es-Salaam. Despite persisting internal problems, the new leader, Samora Machel, quickly consolidated control over Frelimo and its military fortunes gradually improved.

Frelimo's expansion in the late 1960s from its strongholds near the Tanzanian border into the north-western province of Tete, represented a major psychological blow to the Portuguese. In response, the colonists

launched Operation Gordian Knot in 1970, their biggest ever counter-offensive, complete with the use of napalm and 'scorched earth' counterinsurgency tactics. During this campaign, the rural poor were treated very harshly and many were forcibly relocated to tightly controlled settlements known as *aldeamentos*. In December 1972, Portuguese commandos massacred hundreds of civilians in an attack on the village of Wiriamu in Tete province. In an attempt to bolster its position, the colonial regime also sought to draw South Africa into the war and to create a white buffer zone across the region, involving its powerful neighbour in the Cahora Bassa hydroelectric project on the Zambezi river. By April 1974, however, domestic disillusionment over the colonial wars in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea Bissau culminated in a military coup in Lisbon. For Mozambique, the Portuguese revolution precipitated the near immediate withdrawal of the 60,000 colonial troops based there.

In response to the coup, and fearing black rule, colonial hard-liners seized the radio station in the capital Lourenço Marques (late Maputo), calling for a Rhodesian-style

Unilateral Declaration of Independence. This achieved little more than spark riots in the black suburbs, however, and on 7 September 1974, the Lusaka Accord was signed, formally ending colonial rule and handing power to a Frelimo-dominated transitional government. The speed of this settlement caught Frelimo by surprise. With little military success in the cities and advances in many rural areas slowing, some rebel leaders had predicted ten more years of armed struggle before independence could be achieved.

A Brave New Dawn?

On 25 June 1975, Samora Machel became president of the independent People's Republic of Mozambique. Even by the standards of post-colonial Africa, however, the Republic was a markedly fragile entity. Physical infrastructure was not extensive and much of what did exist had been established only recently to support the colonial war effort. Much of the Portuguese professional class also fled at independence, leaving the economy and the state administration in the hands of inexperienced Frelimo cadres with little formal training. Over 90 per cent of the population was illiterate, while widespread sabotage by embittered ex-colonists further undermined the country's ability to rebuild.

In the midst of political and administrative disarray, Frelimo asserted its own vision of national unity, swiftly consolidating one-party rule and implementing a range of other measures to limit opposition and establish control over the populace. Several opposition leaders, along with Frelimo dissidents, were immediately arrested and sent to 're-education camps' in the far north. There were reports of torture and other mistreatment at some of these camps, little of which is discussed publicly today. Dynamising Committees (GD) were later set up, exercising extensive powers to supplant traditional authorities in the rural areas and to send 'unproductive' urban residents for re-education. The National Service for Public Security (SNASP) was also established, a secret police service with sweeping authority to detain those suspected of anti-state activities. Finally, there

was a crackdown on religious groups. The Roman Catholic church, judged to have allied itself with the colonial regime, was especially targeted, though an estimated 10,000 Jehovah's Witnesses were also despatched for re-education.

Large-scale social development programmes were simultaneously launched throughout the country to pave the way for a radical transformation of the social and material bases of Mozambican life. Privately-owned schools, hospitals and missions were rapidly nationalised, the number of primary school students doubled in just seven years, while the number of health clinics quadrupled within the decade, winning great international acclaim for the new government.

At Frelimo's 3rd Party Congress in February 1977, the liberation movement was formally transformed into a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party with a mission 'to lead, organise, orientate, and educate the masses, thus transforming the popular mass movement into a powerful instrument for the destruction of capitalism and the construction of socialism'. 'Mass democratic organisations' were set up to mobilise and ensure Frelimo control of workers, women, youth and journalists. Mozambique also established links with the Soviet Union and with Eastern European countries which provided essential political and military support.

Despite its nationalist rhetoric, certain groups received preferential treatment under the new administration and tensions sharpened in some rural areas. State farms, mainly large estates abandoned by the Portuguese, received massive investment, while peasant production for local markets fell into sharp decline. The resentment generated among rural people was heightened further by Frelimo's largely compulsory 'villagisation' programme. Although the proportion of the peasant population living in communal villages never exceeded 15 per cent, this programme and the parallel marginalisation of traditional authorities provided a political environment ripe for exploitation by Frelimo's opponents. With Rhodesian forces and internal opposition groups stepping up

attacks on the government in the late 1970s, the army further promoted the communal villages for their counter-insurgency value. This allowed greater control over the rural population, but reminded many of the colonial *aldeamentos*. This led to increased ambivalence and hostility towards the government which exacerbated the civil conflict.

Neighbourly Terror

Since the late 1970s, the principal group opposing the Frelimo government has been the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR, later Renamo). This group was formed in 1977 by the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) in the face of President Machel's growing support for the Zimbabwean National Liberation Army (Zanla), and his enforcement of United Nations sanctions against the Rhodesians. In its early years, Renamo comprised soldiers who had fought with the Portuguese during the colonial war as well as Frelimo dissidents. Its initial objectives were to destabilise the Mozambican government and provide intelligence on Zanla guerrillas operating within its borders. In pursuing these aims, Renamo initially enjoyed limited grass-roots support and did not pose a serious military threat to Frelimo. This changed, however, after 1980.

With Zimbabwe's transition to majority rule, control of Renamo was handed over to the South African Military Intelligence Directorate (MID). After a year or so of relative calm, while the South Africans reviewed and reoriented Renamo operations, the Mozambican war began to escalate dramatically. South Africa's aims in revitalising Renamo were to counteract Mozambique's support for the armed opposition to apartheid, and to block landlocked Zimbabwe's access to the sea through Mozambique, thus increasing South African dominance of the regional economy. Under the tutelage of the apartheid regime, Renamo's strength quickly increased from 500 to 8,000 fighters. By 1982, the rebels were active in most of Mozambique and posed a serious military threat to the government.

The Nkomati Non-Aggression Pact

In 1984, Mozambique and South Africa signed the Nkomati Non-Aggression Pact which was meant to lay the groundwork for a cessation of hostilities. In exchange for South Africa halting its support for Renamo, Mozambique would close down ANC military operations from its territory. A series of South African-mediated negotiations also took place between Frelimo and Renamo in an attempt to reach a lasting settlement to the war. However, these talks quickly collapsed under pressure from the South African military and other groups. While Frelimo largely stuck to the terms of the Nkomati accord, the South Africans did not, publicly conceding in 1985 that 'technical violations' had occurred. By the year's end, it was clear the Nkomati initiative had failed.

While South African support for Renamo was reduced following the 1984 Nkomati accord, a change in strategy allowed the rebel group to continue functioning. Immediately after the agreement, the South African military covertly airlifted huge quantities of arms to Renamo bases inside Mozambique and advised the rebels to adopt new insurgency tactics. Rather than relying on rear bases in South Africa, Renamo would now have to provision itself from the local population. It would also need to increase efforts to conserve arms and ammunition and to replenish its supplies from captured weaponry.

As part of this strategic reorientation, Renamo restricted its conventional military operations to key strategic areas and began to concentrate increasingly on 'soft', civilian targets. In seeking to control and instil fear in rural populations, they became particularly well-known for mutilating civilians, including children, by cutting off ears, noses, lips and sexual organs. These tactics were part of a standard terrorist strategy intended to advertise the rebels' strength, to weaken symbolically the authority of the government and to undermine the rural production systems on which Mozambique depended. A central aim was to destroy transport links, health clinics, schools, and

all other infrastructure that represented social security and government provision.

With bands of rebels dodging direct engagement and with morale fading fast, the Mozambique Armed Forces (FAM) stood little chance of maintaining control across vast areas of territory. By 1986, more conventional Renamo units had also consolidated their strongholds in west-central Mozambique and pushed deep into Zambézia province, routing poorly supplied army units. Stepping up diplomatic activity, the government enlisted Tanzanian and Zimbabwean support to pressure Malawi into closing Renamo bases on its soil. Though this initiative had some success, assistance for Renamo continued to come from various quarters, including elements within the South African government, Portuguese business interests, and evangelical Protestant groups channelling their aid through Malawi and Kenya.

Immediately following their expulsion from Malawi, Renamo units launched their biggest ever offensive along the length of the Zambezi valley. This threatened to cut the country in two and allow the rebels to set up an alternative government in the north. With the support of Tanzanian and Zimbabwean forces, however, the Mozambican army launched a successful counter-offensive which marked an important turning point in the conflict. Hundreds of thousands of refugees were pushed into neighbouring countries, while some of the war's biggest massacres took place in Inhambane and Gaza provinces. By late 1988, with external support in rapid decline, it was becoming clear to both sides that the war was entering stalemate.

Talking Peace

Under Joaquim Chissano, who became president in 1986, a negotiated end to the conflict was again given serious consideration. In 1987-88, Chissano set in motion a major review of Frelimo's economic, foreign and civil rights policies, which Machel had been considering before his untimely death. As this review unfolded, it opened the way to a number of reforms, including reconcili-

ation with the Catholic Church and a formal retreat from Marxism.

These developments made possible some preliminary progress in the search for peace. In September 1988, President Chissano met South African President P.W. Botha at Songo in Tete province and secured a pledge to abide by the Nkomati accord which this time was largely honoured. He also gave permission to senior leaders of the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Protestant Churches to open direct contacts with Renamo leaders. This led to a significant breakthrough in February 1989 when church leaders returned from talks in Kenya with a clear message that Renamo too was tired of war and open to negotiations.

At Frelimo's 5th Congress in July 1989, Marxism-Leninism was officially abandoned as the party ideology and the principle of negotiations with Renamo was also accepted. Meanwhile, throughout the middle months of the year, Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi and President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe facilitated talks between Renamo and the church leaders in Nairobi. In August, the government and Renamo used this forum to outline their conditions for further dialogue. In the event, these declarations highlighted how far there was still to go before direct negotiations would be possible. Nevertheless, they indicated how a measure of will to end the war now existed on both sides.

Nairobi 1989 — Renamo at the Crossroads

After years of guerrilla warfare, Renamo was poorly prepared for civilian life and for the transition to parliamentary politics. Its major challenge was to transform itself from a purely military organisation into a viable political party. To achieve this, the rebels needed to develop a coherent ideology as well as an organisational structure to explain their views. Renamo's political pronouncements had hitherto been couched in blunt anti-Marxist, pro-capitalist, pro-democracy terms, but its capacity to debate these issues was very limited. Moreover, in exchange for offering Frelimo the benefits of peace, Renamo needed guarantees of security and financial assistance before it would give up fighting.

**The 1988
Gersony Report,
published by the
US State
Department and
drawing
extensively on
refugee
accounts,
blamed Renamo
for the worst
human rights
abuses of the
Mozambican
war**

Joel Chiziane/AIM



President Chissano (left), mediator Mario Raffaelli and Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama announce an impending ceasefire between the warring parties, Rome, August 1992

Direct peace talks eventually began in Rome in July 1990, hosted by the Sant' Egidio Catholic lay community, which enjoyed the confidence of both antagonists. After five rounds of talks, a partial ceasefire was reached in December. In return for the confinement of Zimbabwean troops along the Beira and Limpopo transport corridors, Renamo agreed to cease its attacks on these strategic trade routes, effectively separating Zimbabwean interests from the Frelimo-Renamo conflict. This ceasefire was seriously weakened within the month, with violations by both sides, but contacts between the parties continued through intermediaries.

For most of 1991-92, negotiations were stalled in the absence of a formula that would recognise the 'sovereignty' of the government while guaranteeing Renamo's acceptance as a political party of equal standing to Frelimo. As fighting persisted, however, widespread drought and chronic food insecurity in rural areas injected a new urgency into the peace process. Crucially, Renamo's ability to live off the local population was steadily undermined by the drought. As the rebels were pushed increasingly into a corner, Zimbabwe and other regional powers increased pressure on the two parties to reach a settlement.

After seven more tortuous rounds of dialogue, Chissano and Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama finally signed a General Peace Agreement (GPA) in Rome on 4 October

1992. The Italian government had hosted the talks and given Renamo significant financial incentives to secure its compliance. The United States, Great Britain, France, Portugal and the United Nations had also provided political and technical support, ensuring that implementation of the GPA would have broad international backing. This was crucial because the accord was in many ways flawed. Not only had many practical elements been insufficiently discussed, but both sides lacked the capacity to set up and operate the complex structures required for implementation.

The Perils of Implementation

One week after the signing of the GPA, the United Nations Security Council approved the establishment of the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) to monitor and verify its implementation. The first task of the 6,800-strong force was to monitor the withdrawal of Malawian and Zimbabwean troops from the Beira, Limpopo and Nacala transport corridors. ONUMOZ would also be responsible for overseeing the cantonment, demobilisation and disarmament of approximately 110,000 soldiers from both sides, the creation of a new national army, the resettlement of between five and six million refugees and displaced people, and the organisation of elections. Originally scheduled for October 1993, the elections were delayed by one year due to persisting distrust between the

government and Renamo and the slowness of ONUMOZ deployment.

While the ceasefire was respected more or less promptly by both sides, cantonment and demobilisation were delayed as neither side wished to give strategic advantage to the other. Renamo sought guarantees that areas under its control would not be over-run by the army, while the government feared the rebels would renege on their agreement as the National Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) insurgents had recently done in Angola. UN Special Representative Aldo Ajello diplomatically allowed for delays and placated Renamo with frequent high-level visits to its headquarters. In July 1993, this strategy changed, however, as the UN deployment reached full strength and the Security Council hardened its position.

In response to UN pressure, Chissano and Dhlakama met for the first time on Mozambican soil in August 1993. This summit slightly eased political tensions, although new obstacles soon appeared, notably Renamo's insistent demand for funding to facilitate its transition into a political party. In the face of open signs of Renamo hostility to the UN, and a demand for elections before complete demobilisation, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali visited Mozambique in October to seek a breakthrough. This visit achieved a compromise on sensitive issues surrounding electoral law as well as the cantonment and demobilisation of regular troops.

With conditions in the camps poor and indiscipline widespread, the demobilisation phase was still marked by riots and mutual suspicion and, by late 1994, the national army was only half the strength envisaged in the GPA. Although the shortfall was mostly due to the large number of combatants opting unilaterally for civilian life, both sides also sought to retain a reserve military force, either hiding troops or claiming they were 'non-cantonable'. In short, there were widespread signs of war weariness, but the threat of renewed violence and banditry remained a serious cause for concern. Although both sides had pledged to disarm completely prior to elections, the UN found

it impossible to enforce the over-ambitious commitments made in the GPA.

In the run-up to elections, Dhlakama made increasingly strident demands for a bipartisan 'government of national unity' to be formed following the vote. In response, the churches and several Western countries sought to arrange a Renamo/government pre-election 'deal' to avert a walk-out by Renamo. Despite two meetings with Dhlakama in September, Chissano continued to reject such a deal. Instead, he offered his rival the status of 'Leader of the Opposition', complete with salary and benefits, including a diplomatic passport. Privately, he reserved the right to negotiate a deal, but only in the event of unfavourable election results.

Through October 1994, the government and Renamo waged low-key electoral campaigns. Despite some intimidation in the stronghold areas of both sides, the elections took place peacefully from 27-29 October. Of the 5.2 million registered voters, 85 per cent turned out, despite an abortive day-long boycott by Renamo. In the new 250-seat parliament, Frelimo took 129 seats to Renamo's 112, with a rightist coalition party winning the remaining nine seats. The presidential election saw Chissano re-elected ahead of Dhlakama and other candidates by

Voting Patterns in the 1994 Elections

The voting patterns emerging in the 1994 elections gave grounds both for optimism and caution regarding prospects for reconciliation in Mozambique. At the national level, the relative parity between the two parties could lend itself to enhanced political stability nation-wide. Regional voting patterns confirmed, however, that the ethnic and regional differences traditionally dividing Frelimo and Renamo will continue to play a key role in post-war politics. In some areas, election outcomes were influenced by calls for tactical voting from community and church leaders. Reflecting a widespread desire for reconciliation, many heeded this call, voting Chissano for president, while backing Renamo for the National Assembly.

Women voting
in the 1994
elections, Inlugo
village,
Zambézia
Province

Anders Gunnar/Panos Pictures



a slim majority of total votes cast. On 14 November, some days after the United Nations certified the elections 'free and fair', Dhlakama formally conceded defeat. A new, all Frelimo government was installed in late December.

A Durable Settlement?

The consolidation of peace in Mozambique depends primarily on how the reconstruction process addresses the profound social divisions, political alienation and poverty that sustained the war for so many years. It is particularly crucial that reconstruction meets the needs of Mozambique's desperately poor rural populations who, isolated from large urban and economic centres, have so far seen few tangible benefits of peace. The resettlement of some six million displaced people and refugees continues to be a cause for some concern, raising the spectre of severe and persistent land disputes.

Efforts to meet these post-war challenges have to date been largely donor-driven in terms of both priorities and pace. While the massive influx of international aid agencies into Mozambique has been a boon for reconstruction efforts, it is also a potential obstacle. In 1997, foreign aid made up around 60 per cent of government spending, underwriting the crucial health and educational services on which many Mozambicans depend. In the rush to raise more interna-

tional funds, however, the hidden and perverse costs of this assistance have not always been sufficiently addressed. While there has been inadequate consideration of whether the economy can effectively absorb such levels of aid, the intervention styles of many development agencies and their inevitable — often unwilling — engagement in local power politics can also undermine the legitimacy and authority of the government. If government administration, social reconstruction and political stability is presently dependent on foreign 'experts', this raises the question of who can guarantee these necessities should aid dry up.

While enduring peace ultimately requires the fulfilment of popular aspirations for a better life, much also depends on how Frelimo and Renamo get along. Relations have swung between co-operation and confrontation since 1992, and the government's recent postponement of local elections reflects and reinforces persistently high levels of mutual distrust. Frelimo's refusal to grant Renamo a greater role in government signals a shift towards the mode of dominant one-party politics already established in South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. This may, in the short-term at least, open the way to a new era of political stability in Mozambique. However, with less than two years until the next national elections, much will depend on whether the Renamo leadership continues to be mollified within this system. ■