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MOZAMBIQUE CONFLICT INSIGHT



ABOUT THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide analysis and policy implications to assist the African Union (AU), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Member States and Development Partners in decision-making and in the implementation of peace and security related instruments. The opinions expressed in this report are the contributors' own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies.

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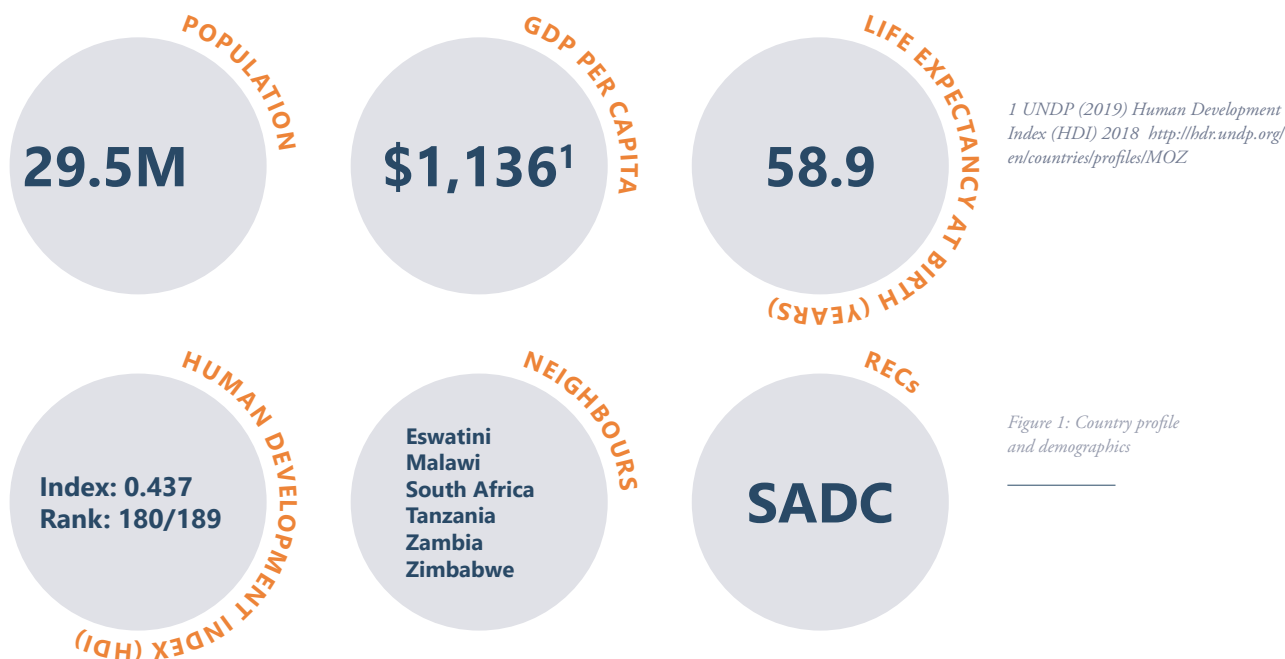
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SITUATION ANALYSIS



The Republic of Mozambique lies in the Southern African region along the Indian Ocean coast and shares borders with Eswatini, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Mozambique’s coastal location gives it geographic and strategic importance not only regionally as it provides a corridor for trade to other markets, but also on the continent linking Africa to the east. After it gained independence from Portugal in 1975, a brutal civil war (1977-1992) followed between the government-led Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) and Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) that resulted in the death of nearly one million people and the displacement of five million. The war ended with the signing by both warring parties of the 1992 General Peace Accords in Rome which led to the transition into a new democratic era.

After emerging from the civil war, Mozambique was seen as a post-conflict success story with close to 20 years of peace and stability. Between 2004 and 2015, the country experienced a stable economic growth of about 8% per annum becoming one of the ten fastest growing economies in the world and was forecasted to continue at this promising growth trajectory.¹ This optimism was coupled with the discovery of gas fields off the country’s coast in 2017 which had the expectation of attracting investment and transforming the economy. While significant changes have taken place in the past decades,

the country has now begun facing multiple challenges one of which is that it has one of the world’s lowest Human Development Indexes (0.437). More than half of its 29.5 million population lives in poverty. Moreover, it is characterised by deplorable socio-economic situation and high rates of illiteracy and youth unemployment, especially in rural provinces.

In 2013, a low-intensity conflict re-emerged between the government and RENAMO when the latter attacked Muxungué Police Station in retaliation of a police raid on its local headquarters in April of that year. A series of clashes ensued, until the signing of a ceasefire that preceded the October 2014 general elections in which President Filipe Nyusi was elected and FRELIMO retained majority status in the National Assembly.² After the general elections, the renewed conflict continued for RENAMO disputed the election results citing irregularities on the government’s part and tensions increased significantly until an unanticipated unilateral truce was declared by RENAMO in December 2016.

1 African Development Bank Group (2019) Mozambique-Country results brief 2018 <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/document/mozambique-country-results-brief-2018-106409>

2 S. Regalia (2017) *The Resurgence of Conflict in Mozambique: Ghosts from the Past and Brakes to Peaceful*, Institut Français des Relations Internationales

Mozambique's instability is no longer limited to the long-established conflict between the government, largely made up of FRELIMO, and RENAMO as the country faces other multifarious challenges. The security situation since then has been aggravated by an Islamist militia group that came up in October 2017 and has since gained traction in northern Mozambique.³

Furthermore, in March and April 2019, Mozambique was hit by consecutive tropical cyclones, Idai and Kenneth, that swept through central and northern provinces of the country causing immense flooding that resulted in destruction of towns, villages and basic infrastructure. The intense cyclones, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), led to almost 648 deaths and 163,927 people reportedly displaced while more than 2.2 million required humanitarian assistance.⁴ This humanitarian disaster raises major concerns for Mozambique's economic and social stability.

In August 2019, an important step was taken by the government and RENAMO to sign a new definitive peace deal paving the way for the upcoming general elections. After one of the most violent political campaign periods in the country's history, Mozambicans went to polls on 15 October 2019. In the elections the ruling FRELIMO party secured a landslide victory (73%) with incumbent President Filipe Nyusi re-elected for a second term and majority control of parliamentary and provincial assembly seats. Following the election results, RENAMO called for the annulment of the elections alleging existence of violence and electoral fraud and accusing the ruling party of violating the peace deal. The election posed major uncertainty in the country's fragile peace, characterised by the conflict between FRELIMO and RENAMO, and decreased the peace deal's viability which is denied recognition by the 'Military Junta' - a faction of RENAMO.

³ E. Morier-Genoud (2019) *Tracing the history of Mozambique's mysterious and deadly insurgency. The Conversation*, 18 February

⁴ UNOCHA (2019) *Southern and Eastern Africa: Cyclones Idai and Kenneth*

CAUSES OF THE CONFLICT

Centralisation of Power and Weak Governance

The FRELIMO-led government has held power nationally since independence in 1975 and its continued strong grip of power has permitted it to gain significant control over state institutions. The complex combination of factors that guides FRELIMO's relationship with the state, added to the political struggle between FRELIMO and RENAMO, has contributed to weak central governance which led to instability of the country. The result of the centralised power is demonstrated through a winner-takes-all system that allowed FRELIMO to have a significant advantage politically and financially over the opposition. Furthermore, power centralisation enabled FRELIMO to ensure its political base and overcome its unpopularity in areas of RENAMO strongholds.

The value placed on central governance calls for greater decentralisation giving the main opposition party, RENAMO, an opportunity to redistribute power through direct election by the local population of provincial governors in the country's 10 provinces rather through appointment by the ruling party, FRELIMO. This change in the electoral process is hoped to bring about potential stability. In addition, decentralisation is fundamental to levelling the playing field in the competition and properly managing and distributing natural resources between the government and RENAMO as it would fairly consider the ownership and control of such resources, which thus far has only benefited the government.⁵ Since the current government's incumbency has remained unbroken, power has primarily been revolving within the party and was not in a neutral state that it could be taken over by another political party. Besides this, the Mozambican Government's inability to exert jurisdiction over the entire country, as FRELIMO and RENAMO have distinct strongholds throughout the country, has contributed to the weak central governance.

Regional Disparities

The divisions that exist between the centre and peripheries of the country can be traced back to the colonial period and the subsequent decentralisation of power. Disparities in Mozambique revolve around regional inequalities between the centre/north and south, rather than around ethnicity and religion. However, these variables cannot be discounted as they could be concealed by regional disparities. The location of Maputo in the south, with proximity to South Africa and centralisation of power, has resulted in the concentration of resources and modern

⁵ S.Regalia (2017) *The Resurgence of Conflict in Mozambique: Ghosts from the Past and Brakes to Peaceful Democracy* Institut Français des Relations Internationales

economic sectors in the capital city. The FRELIMO-led government's constant rule has enabled the regional dominance of the south as reflected in political representation and patronage. However, the central and northern regions continue to be marginalised as they do not get equal benefit from economic growth and are denied even access to economic opportunities. They experience high poverty and unemployment rates, and lack basic amenities and services. In fact, despite the country's economic growth over the last two decades, poverty reduction has not been equal in the country with continued high poverty rates in the provinces of the northern region such as Zambezia (62%), Nampula (65%) and Niassa (67%), which are above the national average rate of 48.4%.⁶ It is against this backdrop that a perception took root that the population in the north does not benefit from the prospective natural resource discoveries and thus emerged the Islamist militia group in resource-rich Cabo Delgado province.⁷

Natural Disaster Mismanagement

In the past three decades, Mozambique has been struck by cyclones and has suffered flooding several times. Before cyclones Idai and Kenneth struck, it had been widely reported that the country was battling with high levels of food insecurity.⁸ The government's lack of adequate preparedness for a country prone to natural disasters and its failure to warn citizens in areas mostly affected could be attributed to lack of planning and resources for unexpected hazards. This is with the exception of the case of Cyclone Idai in which the government issued a red alert a few days before it struck.⁹ After destructions by the cyclone, the areas affected happened to be the same provinces facing food insecurity which, in fact, are situated in the regions marginalised by the government. Food insecurity has been exacerbated by the natural catastrophes deepening citizen's mistrust and frustration with the state and consequently leading to instability.

Inadequate Implementation of the DDR Process

One of the stipulations of the 1992 GPA was to implement Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) process which was to be overseen by the UN Peacekeeping Mission Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ). Failure by the ONUMOZ to

⁶ World Bank (2018) *Mozambique Poverty Assessment: Strong But Not Broadly Shared Growth*

⁷ S.W. Lee (2019) *Mozambique's Resource Curse*, Berkeley Political Review

⁸ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2019) *Mozambique Situation Report*

⁹ The Guardian (2019) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/28/mozambique-mayor-cyclone-deaths-negligence-idai-rural>

follow up the initiated DDR activities contributed to a break in the continuity of the process and it took almost a decade before the government, which lacked the capacity, was able to reactivate the DDR programme. In fact, the DDR process was left incomplete without any clear next steps beyond the collection of arms. What is more, there was significant concern that RENAMO had several hidden stockpiles. Even then, disarmament was not prioritised mainly due to mistrust between the government and RENAMO and there was a fear that insistence by RENAMO not to submit to a rigorous disarmament process would undermine the peace process.

The completion of the process was further impeded by, firstly, the decision to allow RENAMO to uphold its bases and the failure to collect its small weapons and, secondly, the tolerance towards RENAMO combatants' handing over old weapons and withholding new ones as an 'insurance policy'.¹⁰ The concern that RENAMO had hidden stockpiles was substantiated during the resurgence of conflict in 2013 when it easily managed to get re-armed. In relation to integration of the two forces, RENAMO combatants were discontented with their exclusion from the full reintegration benefits provided by the government, particularly from pensions. They were left out because FRELIMO troops had contributed to their pensions from their salaries whereas RENAMO combatants did not because they had no government salaries during the civil war. Despite that, RENAMO made a proposition that pension benefits be extended to its soldiers but the government rejected the idea using the pension debate as an opportunity to demonstrate its political muscle.¹¹ As a result, inequality in the benefits received by the troops was created. The issue was raised twice after the election but had only minimal impact on government policy. This became one of the causes of the renewed conflict.

Economic Mismanagement

With Mozambique's post-conflict success story, donors invested substantially to support the economic and political performance of the country. This led to donor dependency with 40% of contributions made to the budget support.¹² However, despite the economic growth and discovery of natural resources, corruption remained a pervasive issue as indicated by the Corruption Perception Index which ranked Mozambique at 158 out of 180 countries.¹³ Moreover, failure to transform weak state institutions into independent ones that are capable of assuming the role of oversight bodies has deterred inclusive economic growth. This led to a growing discontentment on the part of the citizens towards the government. In 2016, the discovery of secret loans guaranteed by the government amounting to \$2 billion compromised the country's economic growth, leading to the withdrawal of budget support by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other foreign donors, reduction in foreign investments, elevated inflation rates and currency depreciation.¹⁴ The loans were intended for the assistance of economic sectors but were instead diverted to military and security purposes and also benefitted senior FRELIMO officials under former President Guebuza's government who have since been charged for their alleged involvement. There was also a growing threat of illicit trade of narcotics, ivory and timber in the north region. These goods were said to be transited through the region from West Asia to Asian markets. The activity has had serious consequences on Mozambique's fragile economy resulting in easy recruitment of gangs from among the marginalised groups and strengthening of illicit trade networks.

¹⁰ Littlejohn, G. (2015) *Secret Stockpiles: Arms Caches and Disarmament Efforts in Mozambique*

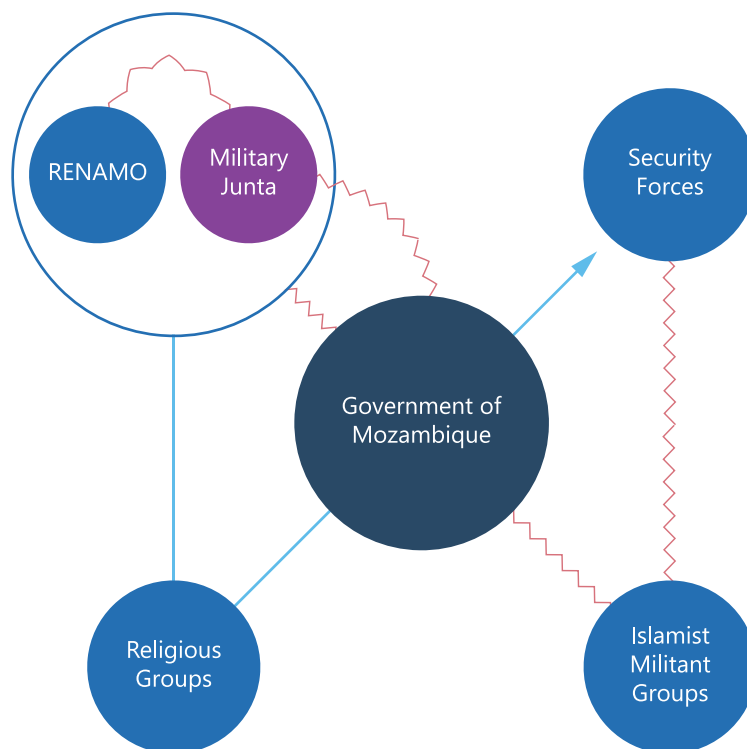
¹¹ A. Vines (2019) *Prospects for a Sustainable Elite Bargain in Mozambique: Third Time Lucky? Chatham House*

¹² B. Machave (2018) *Mozambique's tense elections: How we got here? African Arguments*, 7 October

¹³ Transparency International (2019) *Mozambique Corruption Perceptions Index*

¹⁴ Geopolitical Intelligence Services (2019) *Mozambique: The biggest corruption case in Africa*

ACTORS



KEY

- ~~~~~ Discord/ Conflict
- Links/ Close Relationships
- ➔ Predominant Direction of Influence
- Splinter Group

The Government

The Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) is the ruling party and as previously mentioned has been in power since independence in 1975. It remained the dominant party through the one-party system that ended in 1994 and thereafter came the first multi-party system which has been practiced in all subsequent elections. FRELIMO was formed in 1962 as a unification of separate nationalist movements into a front, with the purpose to liberate the country.¹⁵ The government’s aim is to continue to hold and consolidate its power through a centralised system which has been instrumental for its remaining in power for more than forty years. FRELIMO’s financial support stems from its access to state resources, as well as networks of economic influence and power which have cemented its position at the centre of the Mozambican society. Through constitutionally granted powers, the Mozambique Armed Defence Forces (FADM) and police are under the direct control of the president, which has allowed FRELIMO to stay in power. Externally, FRELIMO has cultivated regional relationships of solidarity with some former liberation movements in the region such as The People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) in Angola and The Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) in Zimbabwe, which is manifested in the continued support for FRELIMO and non-intervention in the conflict with RENAMO.

¹⁵ C. Darch (2016). *Separatist tensions and violence in the ‘model post-conflict state’: Mozambique since the 1990s*.

After a long peace negotiation process, the government signed a definitive peace deal with the opposition RENAMO in August 2019 to end armed hostilities in advance of the upcoming elections. During the pre-election period, FRELIMO partly ensured its victory using state resources by incumbent candidates and conducted the registration of ghost voters onto the voters’ roll. Additionally, there were reports of serious violent incidents perpetrated by FRELIMO supporters: intimidation, arson and restriction of opposition members’ movement.¹⁶ In the October 2019 general elections, FRELIMO’s candidate, incumbent President Filipe Nyusi was re-elected with an overwhelming victory of 73%. This is considerably more than when he was initially elected in 2014 with 57.3%. The party also increased its representation in parliament to 184 out of 250 seats and won seats in all the country’s ten provincial assemblies. On the election day, FRELIMO was accused by the opposition of ballot box stuffing and large scale electoral fraud through non-transparent tabulation at polling stations. Despite this, FRELIMO hailed the elections as free and fair.

RENAMO

The Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO) is the main opposition party and competitor of FRELIMO. It was formed in 1976 as an anti-communist political group with the support of Rhodesia and South Africa

¹⁶ Africa Confidential (2019) *Frelimo Takes No Chances*

to overthrow the government. After the 1992 GPA, RENAMO transformed into a political party, participating in the first multi-party elections in 1994 and has consistently taken part in all elections since then. From the onset, the party has aimed to attain national power and demand for greater decentralisation in favour of provincial autonomy for the local populace to directly elect governors in provincial assemblies, rather than the ruling party. During the past ten years, RENAMO's performance in relation to its regional representation has fluctuated. The refusal to completely disarm and keep arms has meant that RENAMO can use and has, as evidenced in 2013, used violence and the threat of violence as a political tool.

The death of former RENAMO leader Afonso Dhlakama, who led the party since 1979, resulted in the appointment of Ossufo Momade as a new party leader. Momade led the signing of the August 2019 peace deal with the government in an effort to decentralise power, establish a process through which RENAMO combatants can disarm and reintegrate into the security forces, and formally end hostilities between the warring parties. Dhlakama's death and the new leadership raised internal divisions within the party leading to a power struggle that resulted in the emergence of a splinter group referred to as the 'Military Junta'. The group is led by General Mariano Nhongo, chief of the armed wing of RENAMO, who claims to have 500 armed members. However, analysts refute this suggesting he may have about 80 armed members instead.¹⁷ General Nhongo demands the resignation of Momade and the nullification of the peace deal as he believes Momade has no legitimacy to negotiate a peace deal and decide on the fate of RENAMO combatants to be incorporated into society.

The October 2019 elections marked the first time for RENAMO to contest a presidential election with a new candidate, Ossufo Momade, who secured 21.8% of the votes which was a decline from 36.6% won in the last elections (2014). Contrary to expectations, for the provincial elections, RENAMO did not win a single vote under the new electoral laws which would have allowed the party to appoint its governors. RENAMO rejected the results appealing to the Constitutional court to annul the election citing immense electoral fraud and violation by the government of the August 2019 peace deal.

17 A. Vines (2019) *Hope, Peace and Reconciliation: Pope Francis in Mozambique*

Islamist Militant Group

Ahlu Sunna Wal Jammaa (ASWJ) which translates to "people of the Sunnah community" also referred to as Ansar al-Sunna or Al-Shababa locally, is an Islamist militia group in northern Mozambique. The group's existence can be traced back to October 2017 when it attacked three police stations in Mocimboa da Praia, Cabo Delgado province. Since then, it has reportedly carried out over 200 attacks on Mozambican security forces and civilians¹⁸ and the group's membership is estimated to be between 350 and 1500.¹⁹ ASWJ has been forged against the backdrop of economic marginalisation of Cabo Delgado, the country's most underdeveloped province.²⁰ While the discovery of large gas and oil reserves in the province generated expectations for local development, communities have seen only few benefits and this has bred resentment giving rise to militant group traction in the area.²¹ Additionally, the group is allegedly financially supported by trafficking illicit products through Cabo Delgado.²² Before the October 2019 elections, as militant attacks continued despite heavy military presence, the Mozambican government allegedly turned to a private Russian security firm for support although Russia denied any involvement. However, ongoing violence in the area limited citizens' participation in the election.

18 Z. Machado (2019) *Insecurity in Mozambique Leaves Thousands Unable to Vote: Authorities Fail to Ensure All Voters Can Cast Ballots* Human Rights Watch

19 E. Morier-Genoud (2018) *Mozambique's own version of Boko Haram is tightening its deadly grip*. Quartz Africa, 16 June

20 The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (2018) *Clear Threat Murky Objectives: Ahlu Sunna Wal Jammaa and Instability in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique*

21 E. Morier-Genoud (2019) *Tracing the history of Mozambique's mysterious and deadly insurgency*. The Conversation, 18 February.

22 Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (2018) *Where Crime Compounds Conflict: Understanding Northern Mozambique's Vulnerabilities*

Religious Groups

The Catholic Church in Mozambique has been instrumental in mediating Mozambican peace processes, particularly between 1991 and 1992. Other religious groups were also re-engaged to support negotiations after the violence between RENAMO and the government in 2013. In 2016 Sant'Egidio co-led mediation efforts again. Before the October 2019 elections, they also helped convince the Vatican to schedule a three-day visit, September 4-6, to Mozambique by Pope Francis²³ under the theme 'Pilgrim of hope, peace and reconciliation.' The visit coincided with the signing of the landmark peace agreement.²⁴ During the visit, Pope Francis urged the two parties to consolidate the peace deal. Both President Nyusi, a catholic, and RENAMO leader, Momade, a Muslim, greeted the Pope symbolising unity within the country's diversity.²⁵ The Council of Christian Churches, Islamic Council, and the Catholic Church all worked together in the electoral observation monitoring electoral processes.

23 A. Vines (2019) *Hope, Peace and Reconciliation: Pope Francis in Mozambique*

24 A. Vines (2019) *Hope, Peace and Reconciliation: Pope Francis in Mozambique*

25 Associated Press (2019) *Pope takes message of peace, reconciliation to Mozambique*

DYNAMICS OF THE CONFLICT

As already mentioned, after almost 20 years of relative stability, the conflict between RENAMO and the government reignited in 2013 following RENAMO's attack of the Muxunge police station in retaliation of a police raid on their local headquarters. Tensions further deepened when RENAMO announced that it would create a security zone that would cut the rail connection linking Beira to Tete coal mines, and the government introduced military convoys to protect the road between Save River and Muxunge. In November 2013, RENAMO boycotted the municipal elections which caused a surge in strategic voting. This left four mayoral seats for the Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM), an alternative opposition party led by Daviz Simango, in the central and northern regions. MDM contested in the same municipal elections nationally for the first time and managed to secure 30% of municipal assembly seats, including those that were FRELIMO's strongholds. Such a victory had never been gained by RENAMO.

In 2014, RENAMO launched targeted attacks with the intention of strengthening its negotiation power and as peace talks progressed it announced a ceasefire to assist the electoral registration efforts in central Mozambique in preparation for the national elections. After a few armed clashes in August 2014, the government and RENAMO agreed to sign a ceasefire. With the insistence of RENAMO, the peace talks were mediated by an academic and four inter-faith leaders and eventually concluded by the official signing of a ceasefire in September 2014 in Maputo to end hostilities and allow for the contestation of elections that same year. In October 2014, general elections were held and FRELIMO's candidate, Filipe Nyusi, was elected as president. Tensions sparked as RENAMO rejected the election results alleging rigging and suppression of the opposition. In protest, RENAMO boycotted the inauguration of its members in the provincial assemblies and parliament.

RENAMO threatened conflict again in 2015 demanding concessions from the government. In February 2015, the RENAMO boycott was overcome after President Nyusi and Dhlakama had a closed-door meeting in Maputo. The President gestured that he would support the bill for the autonomous provincial governments if RENAMO ended its parliamentary boycott. As debates were going on over whether or not the constitutional framework would allow for the demand, a prominent constitutional lawyer, Gilles Cistac, was assassinated in Maputo in March 2015 by unknown assailants. This indicated the seriousness of opinions that deviated from those of FRELIMO and as such FRELIMO parliamentarians rejected

the bill. Soon after, FADM and RENAMO forces engaged in armed conflict and RENAMO's ability to cause disorder was assisted by weak government forces unable to effectively respond to counter-insurgent acts within central Mozambique, nonetheless, outside of this region the government forces managed to contain the attacks.

In early 2016, Dhlakama demanded to take control of six provinces in which RENAMO allegedly won majority vote. This resulted in increase of tensions with civilians fleeing due to attacks. Additionally, during the second half of the year, Human Rights Watch reported that high-profile political figures on both sides were being killed as peace talks stalled.²⁶ Alongside the political conflict, Mozambique suffered an economic and financial crisis in 2016 due to the fall in commodity prices and disclosure of the government's enormous debt to state-owned companies. In December 2016, the intensity of the conflict decreased after a unilateral truce was declared by RENAMO for a week and afterwards extended twice before it was extended indefinitely in May 2017 to allow peace talks to progress.

Peace talks resumed in 2017 with a contact group comprising Swiss Ambassador as chair, USA, Botswana, China, the EU, Norway and the UK to support the peace negotiations between the warring parties. Significant progress was made with the support of the contract group and the talks led to a decentralisation agreement that incorporated constitutional amendments that allowed for the indirect election at local government level of mayors, provincial governors and district administrators. It also required the signing of an agreement to permit a second DDR process.²⁷ In August 2017, President Nyusi and Dhlakama had a face-to-face meeting near RENAMO's base and in February 2018 they held a second meeting with an agreement that a lasting deal was in sight. However, as considerable progress was underway, in October 2017, three police stations in Cabo Delgado province came under attack and this marked the emergence of the Islamist militant group in northern Mozambique.

Following the second meeting of President Nyusi and Dhlakama in February 2018, it was announced that an agreement was reached between the two. The parliament then approved constitutional amendments in May 2018 bringing an end to the divided electoral system. However, the death of Dhlakama during the same month obstructed the peace process as RENAMO had to wait to replace a successor. After that, the peace

²⁶ Human Rights Watch (2017) *World Report 2017: Events of 2016*

²⁷ G. Faleg (2019) *Conflict prevention in Mozambique: Can there be peace after the storm?* European Union Institute for Security Studies

process resumed in August 2018 when the government and RENAMO signed an agreement making the DDR process definitive.²⁸ The October 2018 municipal elections were relatively peaceful. However, RENAMO's victory in 8 municipalities was concealed by irregularities in other municipalities, setting precedent for a fraudulent electoral process in the next elections. Ossufo Momade, a former general and secretary-general of RENAMO was appointed as interim leader and later leader of the party in January 2019.

After the cyclones Idai and Kenneth struck in March and April 2019 respectively, the mayor of Beira and leader of MDM, Daviz Simango, expressed disappointment with the government's response to the cyclones. He further noted that there had been reports of politicising humanitarian aid by the government threatening the victims would not get any assistance if they did not vote for the government.²⁹ In July 2019, the parliament passed an amnesty bill exempting government forces and RENAMO soldiers from prosecution for crimes committed since 2014 and 2016.³⁰ During that period, the warring parties were embroiled in fighting. In August 2019, a decisive step was taken by the government and RENAMO to sign a peace deal which was the third attempt after previous agreements of 1992 and 2015. The peace deal consisted of different components related to the integration of RENAMO soldiers into the police and army, the disarmament and demobilisation of RENAMO soldiers that fought in the renewed conflict, and better distribution of power through the election of provincial governors rather than through the previous system in which the central government made appointments.

Sometime after the signing of the peace deal, Mariano Nhongo, leader of RENAMO Military Junta, declared himself leader of the party rejecting the peace deal and demanding Momade to step down. He further warned that elections should be postponed and that attacks would continue otherwise.³¹ Ahead of the general elections of October 2019, Mozambique witnessed its most violent campaign periods in the country's history with groups linked to political parties waging serious attacks against rival supporters. In many instances, RENAMO accused FRELIMO and the police of assaulting its members, intimidating supporters and rigging elections. Of note is that the pre-election violence reached a new level when just a few days before the

poll, a prominent head of a local observer group in Gaza province was killed by police officers, following training for national electoral observers.³² Gaza province was under the spotlight during this election after it was discovered that voter registration had more than doubled to over 300,000 voters in contrast to the population indicated by the 2017 census.³³ During the same month, RENAMO's Women League President and her husband were killed by unknown gunmen in Zumbo, Tete province. Meanwhile, the Islamist Militant group continued conducting attacks in the north, deterring campaigns from taking place in specific districts especially in those affected by Cyclone Kenneth and have been inaccessible for a considerable period of time.

The general elections were held on 15 October 2019 in a relatively peaceful manner but with allegations of ballot stuffing and other electoral irregularities. The results indicated that ruling FRELIMO won 73% of the presidential votes followed by RENAMO 21.8% and MDM 2.38%. The ruling party also increased its control in parliament with two-thirds of the seats and majority to elect the governors in all the country's ten provinces. Tensions arose as RENAMO contested the election results and appealed for the election to be annulled accusing FRELIMO of massive electoral fraud and violation of the new peace deal through the use of violence and intimidation on voting day. Following the announcement of the results, attacks intensified in Central Mozambique with the reported killing of a police officer and kidnapping of FRELIMO members.³⁴ Continental and regional election observer missions hailed the polls as generally peaceful and orderly but noted the ongoing violence in the country, with the African Union (AU) particularly highlighting the challenging political and security environment. Alternatively, international observers such as the EU and US Embassy were much more critical of the election raising serious concerns around irregularities and issues likely to impact the credibility of the electoral process. As the voting took place, fighting continued to intensify in the north between the Islamist militant group and government forces. It was also reported that some people were not able to vote and ten polling stations did not open due to risk of attack by the militants.³⁵ Furthermore, Russian military presence to back the government forces was recognised and this may be

28 Crisis Group (2018) *Mozambique Tracking Conflict*

29 M. Webb (2019) *Cyclone recovery key issue in Mozambique election*, Aljazeera, 13 October

30 B. Mavhinga (2019) *Broad Amnesty in Mozambique Likely to Fuel Future Abuses*, Human Rights Watch

31 Crisis Group (2019) *Mozambique October 2019*

32 Human Rights Watch (2019) *Mozambique: Police Linked to Killing of Election Observer*

33 Burke, J. (2019) *Mozambique election is 'rest for democracy' in the wake of peace deal*. *The Guardian*, 15 October.

34 *The East African* (2019) *Mozambique's peace deal at risk over poll fraud claims*, 3 November

35 *Club Mozambique* (2019) *CNE says 10 polling stations cannot open in Cabo Delgado* 14 October

attributed to the discovery of large reserves of gas and oil in Cabo Delgado which may serve as a drive for Russia to strengthen its relations with Mozambique.

The trends in Mozambique are defined by unequal distribution of power characterised by an increasing discontentment of citizens from marginalised regions. This is further exacerbated by the government's corruption as well as inability to foster inclusive growth and meet expectations. Mozambique holds organised elections regularly which have been tainted by violence and allegations of electoral fraud in the lead up to during and after elections. Violence has intensified as an outcome of the elections and unresolved conflict within the country. The escalation of violence has festered within the context of broad amnesty laws that have allowed for the continuance of violations within the safety net of impunity for government forces and RENAMO soldiers.

CURRENT RESPONSE ASSESSMENT

Regionally

Prior to the October 2019 general elections, the AU and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) failed to respond directly to the continued tensions between the Mozambican government and RENAMO, as well as the Islamist militant insurgency in the north. While the AU's African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) sought to help identify governance-related issues³⁶ and South Africa raised concern over the possibility of extremist activity in the north³⁷, these efforts fell short of regional level action. According to the principles of subsidiarity, it was SADC's responsibility to intervene in conflicts within their region. However, its position on Mozambique has largely been taken through silent diplomacy. This response may be rooted in the perception that the conflict between the government and RENAMO is of a domestic nature and warrants no consideration from SADC, due to its limitations for intervening in domestic issues. SADC's failure to collectively respond to the situation in Mozambique may be attributed to the shared perception of the country's successful post-conflict status. Further, FRELIMO's solidarity with SADC member states ruled by liberation movements may view intervention as a betrayal of that solidarity.

The South African National Defence Force led the first regional response followed by SADC launching a regional appeal for humanitarian assistance for the victims of cyclone Idai.³⁸ Generally, SADC under its Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction should have taken more responsibility of relief operations. However, coordination between member states was weak and highly unresponsive. Nevertheless, SADC's diplomacy contributed to a continental response from the AU which established an emergency fund for disaster mitigation and provided a large sum of the fund to Mozambique as it was mostly affected.

During the August 2019 peace deal signing, the African Union Commission (AUC) Chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat, SADC Heads of State and Government and President Paul Kagame of Rwanda supported the landmark deal by witnessing the event taking place between the government and RENAMO leader, Ossufo Momade. Afterwards, the AUC Chairperson³⁹ and President of Namibia and SADC Chairperson, Dr.Hage Geingob, released diplomatic statements welcoming the peace deal.

In accordance with their respective mandates, SADC and the AU deployed observation missions to Mozambique for the October 2019 elections. The SADC Mission declared that the political and security situation was generally peaceful during their observation but noted the violence and attacks reported in some districts and the operations by the Islamist militant group in the northern part of the country.⁴⁰ It concluded that the pre-election and the voting were generally peaceful and conducted in an orderly manner. However, the AU raised serious concerns in relation to the context of the elections particularly, the pre-election violence and reported killing of the head of a local observer group in Gaza province. It also underlined the challenging political and security environment with the Islamist militant group in the north, ongoing peace process between the government and RENAMO, and the outbreak of cyclones.⁴¹ Despite the notable challenges, the Mission stated that the elections were conducted on time and in a generally peaceful environment. Both SADC and the AU election observation missions also commended Mozambique for the implementation of diaspora voting to ensure inclusivity and expansion of citizen participation in the electoral process.

³⁶ Institute for Security Studies (2019) *The AU urges Mozambique to get its act together*, March 20

³⁷ P. Fabricus (2018) *Mozambique's apparent Islamist insurgency poses multiple threats*. Institute for Security Studies, 20 November 2018

³⁸ SADC (2019) *SADC to Launch a Regional Appeal for Humanitarian Assistance for Millions Affected by the Devastating Impacts of Tropical Cyclone IDAI*

³⁹ AU (2019) *AUC Chairperson welcomes the signing of peace deal in Mozambique; SADC (2019) Statement By H.E. Dr.Hage G. Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia*

⁴⁰ SADC (2019) *2019 Mozambique Elections Preliminary Statement*

⁴¹ AU (2019) *AUEOM to General Election in Mozambique: Preliminary Statement*

Internationally

UN

After the severe damage and loss caused by the cyclones, the UN provided immediate humanitarian support through its Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), and to bolster its response to the catastrophe, launched an emergency humanitarian appeal.⁴² The UN and its Secretary-General António Guterres also actively supported the Government to convene an International Pledging Conference held in Beira to secure funding and appeal to the international community to help with the recovery and reconstruction of the country. In July 2019, the UN Secretary-General appointed Swiss Ambassador to Mozambique, Ambassador Mirko Manzoni, as personal envoy to provide support through the facilitation of dialogue between the government and RENAMO leading towards the signing and consequent implementation of the peace deal.⁴³

EU

In November 2018, the EU Ambassador raised concern over the attacks on the population by the Islamist militant group members and reiterated that it was ready to assist Mozambique in fighting and establishing the causes of attacks in Cabo Delgado.⁴⁴ The EU participated in the signing of the August Peace Agreement and made its commitment to making it a success through the allocation of funds to support its implementation through building local communities, implementation of the decentralisation process, support for democratisation, and promotion of reconciliation.⁴⁵ Following an invitation from the Mozambican government, an EU election observer mission was deployed to monitor the October 2018 general elections.⁴⁶ The Mission was very critical prior to and during the elections of various issues including widespread violence, limitations of freedoms, unfair conditions, voter register discrepancies, and misuse of state resources by the ruling party.⁴⁷

⁴² UN Country Team in Mozambique (2019) *Hope for Mozambique: UN and development partners*

⁴³ UN Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (2019) *Personal Envoy Mozambique*

⁴⁴ Club Mozambique (2018) *EU concerned with armed attacks in Cabo Delgado*

⁴⁵ Delegation of the European Union to Mozambique (2019) *Statement by High Representative*

⁴⁶ EU EOM Mozambique (2019) *EU deploys EOM to Mozambique*

⁴⁷ EU EOM Mozambique (2019) *Mozambique Preliminary Statement*

United States

The US Embassy observer mission was even more critical raising significant concerns regarding electoral irregularities and other problems that could impact the credibility of the electoral process.⁴⁸ The Mission further raised concern over the various incidents of serious violence and intimidation, including the death of an election observer, the failure of independent domestic observers to obtain their credentials and lack of transparency.⁴⁹

Switzerland

From the onset of the resurgence of the conflict, Switzerland has played an active role in Mozambique's ongoing peace process. Upon request of President Nyusi and former opposition leader Afonso Dhlakama in March 2017, Switzerland assumed the chairmanship of the international contact group with Ambassador Mirko Manzoni to support the new phase of talks and provided two specialists to help mediate the peace dialogue.⁵⁰ The UN appointed the Swiss ambassador as its personal envoy for Mozambique.⁵¹ Switzerland continued its support when its Ambassador witnessed the signing of the new peace deal in August 2019.

⁴⁸ US Embassy in Mozambique (2019) *Press Release: Embassy Statement Following Observation of National Elections*

⁴⁹ US Embassy in Mozambique (2019) *Press Release: Embassy Statement Following Observation of National Elections*

⁵⁰ Crisis Group (2017) *Mozambique 2017*

⁵¹ UN Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (2019) *Personal Envoy Mozambique*

SCENARIOS

Best Case Scenario

It would be commendable for the Constitutional Court to overturn the results of the election and call for a re-run to be conducted in a transparent, free and fair manner. In so doing, FRELIMO should concede substantive power to RENAMO at all levels of government, especially local level. This is in the hope that the devolution of power will address the imbalance in the country and in turn build mutual trust between the two forces and enable RENAMO soldiers to disarm and integrate into the security forces. It is also important to introduce political inclusivity as a fundamental component of political parties' agenda to increase cooperative efforts and dialogue between parties so as to diminish risks of outbreaks of conflict and foster inclusive governance.

Further, the establishment of independent oversight bodies to foster accountability and transparency would contribute to the efficient management of state resources and curb rampant corruption, enhance inclusive economic growth and decrease the country's debt. The government should address major demands of people from the central and northern regions, particularly those who counter marginalisation and work for the development of the regions. This would be the best way for the government to pledge its commitment to the developmental transformation of these regions. In the same way, if the government can step up its efforts and defeat the Islamist militant group in the north, tensions that trigger violence within the region would dramatically reduce.

Most Likely Scenario

It is possible that the status quo is maintained with FRELIMO as the ruling party and the Constitutional Court not altering the election outcome. The peace deal between the government and RENAMO could collapse as reforms may not be implemented and the opposition party could subsequently revert to violence ending up in renewed conflict. The DDR process could stall due to reluctance on the part of RENAMO soldiers to disarm and reintegrate into the security forces. Given the internal divisions within RENAMO, it is possible that it destabilises, and the Military Junta continues to carry out further armed attacks. Russia's continued military presence may intensify attacks between government forces and militants in Cabo Delgado, hindering recent exploration projects of gas and oil reserves by companies.

Worst Case Scenario

Taking existing situations into consideration, the escalation of violence cannot be totally ruled out. Since the government does not have support in most of the provinces outside Maputo, it would likely be unable to govern and resolve issues within these provinces. Thus, the country could be destabilised as the government, RENAMO and the splinter group engage in conflict in an attempt to secure political power. Failure to implement the DDR process could possibly result in conflict between armed RENAMO soldiers and the government alongside security forces. That will draw the security forces into political disputes and eventually undermine the rule of law, order and safety making the country revert to another civil war. With regard to the Islamist militant group, attacks by government forces backed by Russia may exacerbate the security situation in the north and as the group's motives are unknown, it may surprisingly organise a strong retaliation that may lead to a serious humanitarian crisis.

STRATEGIC OPTIONS

To the Government

The government, together with the opposition political parties and citizens, should appoint a politically neutral panel to facilitate dialogue and consultations among political parties, non-government organisations, the National Electoral Commission and citizens to tackle the various issues affecting the country and allegations raised around the contestation of election results.

As a newly elected member of the AU Peace and Security Council, Mozambique should prioritise the country's peace and security situation based on the continental body's agenda. Thus, it should address issues relating to the insurgency group in the north and implement an effective inclusivity policy that will deal with issues of marginalisation through better management of natural resources that promotes inclusive growth and equal access to economic opportunities.

The government should develop a potential model for disaster response strategies, with community health capacity as a cornerstone, training of community health workers to manage diseases in post-disaster settings, vulnerability mappings and strengthening of infrastructure.

For future elections, in accordance with the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance⁵², the government should engage an independent professional electoral management body to conduct its elections. It should also adhere to the equal distribution of power and enhancement of political inclusion to create a space for different political views.

To the AU and SADC

The AU, SADC and other stakeholders should assist the government to develop an early warning system that responds proactively to all potential political, security and environmental threats. This can be achieved by implementing Article 16(2) of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the AU which calls for consultations with RECS to promote initiatives that prevent conflicts.

SADC should move beyond its silent diplomacy position with Mozambique and actively ensure that the country abides by Article 5 of the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections to implement interventions that promote democratic principles and practices.

The AU should assume an active role in support of the DDR process and in accordance with Article 14 of the Peace and Security Commission Protocol, provide assistance to Mozambique to implement DDR completely. The AU can leverage its continental status to partner with the UN which previously managed to implement a rigorous process.

⁵² Articles 7 and 34

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CONFLICT TIMELINE (1975-2019)

1975 June	The Republic of Mozambique gains independence from Portugal, under FRELMO's one-party system led by President Samora Machel.
1976	RENAMO is formed led by André Matsangaissa as an anti-communist political movement with the support of Rhodesia and later the South African government.
1977	FRELIMO adopts Marxist-Leninist ideology.
1977 May	Civil war starts between FRELIMO-led government and RENAMO.
1979 December	Afonso Dhlakama takes over RENAMO leadership after André Matsangaissa's death during RENAMO clashes with FRELIMO forces.
1986 October	President Machel dies in a plane crash in Mbuzini, South Africa.
1986 November	FRELIMO appoints Joaquim Chissano as president of Mozambique.
1989	FRELIMO renounces Marxism-Leninism and adopts a free-market economy.
1990 November	Government amends the constitution to allow for a multi-party system.
1992 October	President Chissano and RENAMO leader Dhlakama sign the Rome General Peace Accords bringing an end to the civil war.
1992 December	The UN Secretary General approves the establishment of ONUMOZ until 31 October 1993.
1994	The first multi-party elections are held and FRELIMO candidate, President Joaquim Chissano, elected.
1995	Mozambique joins the Commonwealth of Nations.
1999 December	Incumbent President Chissano wins general elections and FRELIMO gets majority seats in parliament.
2004 December	FRELIMO's new candidate Armando Guebuza wins the presidential election amid allegations of electoral fraud and President Chissano steps down after 18 years in power.
2006 July	The World Bank cancels Mozambique's debt under a plan promoted by the G8 nations.
2009 October	General elections are held with FRELIMO and RENAMO contesting the presidency and all parliamentary constituencies.
2009 November	President Guebuza retains power after being declared winner of the October polls and RENAMO disputes the polls citing electoral irregularities.
2010 September	Dhlakama leaves Maputo to settle in Nampula after rejection of the presidential election results.
2011 October	Italian energy company Eni announces the discovery of large gas reserves offshore.
2012 March	Mozambican police raid camp housing RENAMO supporters allegedly waiting for orders to stage anti-government protests.
2013 April	Resurgence of armed conflict between RENAMO and the FRELIMO-led government.
2013 October	RENAMO declares the collapse of the 1992 peace deal after the seizure of its military base by the army.

2014 September	President Guebuza and Dhlakama sign peace deal to end hostilities before October polls.
2014 October	General elections take place with FRELIMO candidate Filipe Nyusi elected as president and FRELIMO maintains majority seats in parliament and RENAMO claims electoral vote manipulation.
2015 February	President Nyusi and Dhlakama hold a closed door meeting in Maputo.
2015 March	Constitutional lawyer Gilles Cistac is killed by unknown assailants in Maputo.
2016 January	Dhlakama demands control of 6 provinces in which RENAMO allegedly won majority vote.
2016	Discovery of secret loans guaranteed by the government.
2016 June-November	Attacks by RENAMO on coal trains and a health unit.
2016 November	Peace talk process at a standstill as high-profile political figures from both FRELIMO and RENAMO are murdered.
2016 December	RENAMO declares a unilateral truce.
2017 January	Dhlakama announces an extension of the December unilateral truce.
2017 August	President Nyusi and Dhlakama hold face-to-face meeting near Dhlakama's base.
2017 October	Islamist insurgency emerges in the northern province of Cabo Delgado.
2018 May	Parliament approves the constitutional amendment bringing an end to the split electoral system.
2018 May	RENAMO's longstanding leader Afonso Dhlakama dies and interim leader Ossufo Momade takes over leadership.
2018 August	Peace talks resume after the government and RENAMO sign an agreement on military issues.
2018 October	Municipal elections are held.
2019 January	Ossufo Momade is elected as RENAMO party leader.
2019 March	Cyclone Idai causes severe flooding, death and infrastructural damage in Zambézia, Sofala, Manica, Tete and Inhambane provinces.
2019 April	Cyclone Kenneth strikes Cabo Delgado and Nampula provinces in the north of Mozambique causing devastating effects.
2019 August	President Nyusi and RENAMO leader Momade sign a peace deal in advance for the October general elections.
2019 August	RENAMO splinter group, Military Junta, emerges led by General Mariano Nhongo.
2019 September	Pope Francis' visits Mozambique for three days.
2019 October	FRELIMO wins general elections, with President Nyusi retaining power. FRELIMO maintains majority control of parliament and secures majority in provincial assemblies, giving FRELIMO power to choose all provincial governors.

2019 October RENAMO rejects the results and submits appeal to Constitutional Court to annul the election due to its claims of violence and electoral fraud.

2020 February Mozambique is elected member of the African Union Peace and Security Council.



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