



Institute for Security Studies

# POLICY BRIEF

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Frelimo government and Renamo should approach negotiations with sincere resolve to reach a political agreement ahead of the 2014 general elections. Moreover, the Frelimo government could implement, monitor and evaluate mechanisms to address the needs and expectations of former combatants.
- Renamo should abandon its war-mongering strategy and embark on a restructuring and review process: reshuffle its leadership and give room to a younger cadre of political actors; reformulate its priorities in relation to the country's economic development; and implement its decentralisation policy, which has largely been dormant.
- Mozambican civil society and the media should continue to urge the leaders of the parties to engage in sincere peace dialogue. Both entities should also monitor the political environment to demand accountability from the CNE and political actors during the electoral process.
- Parties to the conflict could agree on an impartial mediator in whom they have confidence to address the political deadlock.
- Malawi as the current chair of SADC, Zimbabwe as its deputy, and other member states that would be adversely impacted by instability in Mozambique, should consider initiating SADC multilateral diplomacy in the event of a continuing political impasse. In the absence of such an initiative, the established SADC National Committee in Mozambique should be utilised much more to compliment the regional early warning centre's work.
- SADC should consider giving its Electoral Advisory Council a more comprehensive mandate in Mozambique to ensure that the 2014 Mozambique polls are peaceful.
- The G-19 group of donors should continue to urge the Mozambican parties to preserve peace. The influential grouping should exert pressure on the Frelimo government on matters concerning the management of external aid, transparency in the public sector and the extractive industries as well as improving the provision of public goods to facilitate inclusive growth.

## Renamo's war talk and Mozambique's peace prospects

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### SUMMARY

Growing political tensions in Mozambique intensified in October 2013 when Mozambican government forces attacked the base of the Mozambican National Resistance Movement's (Renamo) long-time leader Afonso Dhlakama. In reaction Renamo declared an end to the General Peace Agreement (GPA) which it had concluded with the Liberation Front of Mozambique (Frelimo) on October 4th 1992. The deteriorating relationship between the country's two main political forces has raised fears that Mozambique may return to civil war. Nonetheless, the country held largely peaceful municipal polls on 20 November 2013, which Renamo boycotted. This boycott ensured that many of the ruling party's seats went unchallenged and has further alienated the party from local politics. As a result, Renamo's political future hangs in the balance, particularly in light of Mozambique's next general elections scheduled for October 2014 in which the party's participation remains uncertain. This policy brief analyses Renamo's capacity to wage war and the Mozambican government's ability to contain insecurity. It also assesses the long-term political future of Renamo.

### RENAMO'S WARMONGERING IN CONTEXT

The recent flare-up of tensions between Renamo and the Frelimo government can largely be traced back to Renamo's crushing defeat in the October 2009 general elections, which demonstrated that the party is unlikely to secure political power through the ballots. According to the election results released by the National Election Commission (CNE) in November 2009, Frelimo's Armando Guebuza received an overwhelming 75% of the presidential vote, while Renamo's Dhlakama won 16,41% and Daviz Simango of the new and fast growing Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM) 8,59%. Frelimo also won 191 seats in parliament, more than a two-thirds majority, which allowed it to later make changes to the

country's electoral laws. Renamo won 51 seats, and MDM, 8 seats. This marked a precipitous decline in Renamo's political support, as the party lost 40 seats. Dhlakama rejected what he claimed were fraudulent election results and threatened to hold nationwide demonstrations. However, not a single Renamo protest was held, as Mozambican voters generally accepted the results.<sup>1</sup> Renamo deputies elected in 2009 also ignored Dhlakama's call for them to boycott the new parliament.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding concerns about the independence of the CNE, and a lack of clarity over electoral legislation and logistical problems, election observers generally noted that Frelimo's landslide victory was a true reflection of the will of Mozambique's electorate.<sup>3</sup>

Dhlakama subsequently retreated from national political activities, including participation in the State Council that advises Mozambique's president and went into political hibernation in the northern province of Nampula.<sup>4</sup> In October 2012 he set up camp in the remote Gorongosa mountains along with a small group of Renamo ex-combatants.

Dhlakama has accused Frelimo of pushing his party to war—particularly following the 2009 elections. He has said that Frelimo's political and economic governance strategy since the 1992 peace deal excluded Renamo and the country's wider citizenry.<sup>5</sup> Renamo has three key demands: the first is a demand for greater representation in state institutions, particularly the national security forces, which it regards as dominated by Frelimo cadres; the second is that the electoral system including the CNE be reformed on the grounds that it has allegedly manipulated past electoral processes in favour of Frelimo; and the third demand is that Renamo be granted a more equitable share of the country's natural resources,<sup>6</sup> although Renamo has not specified how this could be achieved. Since the beginning of the year, dialogue between the government and Renamo in addressing the above issues has failed to make any progress.

Frelimo has dominated the political, economic and social set-up of the country since the country's first democratic elections in 1994. Recent events therefore also need to be understood in the context of Dhlakama's concern about waning political support for his party. Much of this loss of support is due to the perception that Renamo has failed to articulate an alternative vision to Frelimo for Mozambique's political and economic development. Dhlakama now clearly feels the need to strengthen his political position in the country in general, and among his party's cadres and sympathisers in particular.<sup>7</sup> Renamo faces two key issues: rifts within its internal structures, and Dhlakama's suppression of leadership renewal and the fight to remain a viable political alternative to Frelimo. Notwithstanding the challenges affecting Renamo, it still has 51 out of 250 parliamentary seats and is the main parliamentary opposition. This provides it with a viable political platform from which it can meaningfully participate in the country's politics without laying recourse to violence.<sup>8</sup>

## CRISIS ESCALATION POTENTIAL

The volatile political situation in Mozambique, which has steadily escalated from initial tensions in October 2012 to outright violence in April and October 2013, magnifies the many challenges facing the country in the areas of governance, political regulation and overall security. Renamo's withdrawal from the GPA and its boycott of recent municipal elections marks some abandonment of multiparty politics and should therefore not be dismissed as mere warmongering. The threats therefore raise serious concerns about the stability of Mozambique, a country whose economy has been growing at over 5% over the last five years and has discovered massive natural gas and coal reserves.

There are two dominant analyses of whether or not Renamo's threat to return to war is credible. The first holds that Renamo's capacity to wage a full-scale war has been greatly diminished because the factors that allowed it to wage a 16-year civil war from 1975 no longer exist or are not significantly relevant in 2013.<sup>9</sup> Renamo's strength then was largely due to the external military and financial support it received from the former white-minority regime in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, from Apartheid South Africa and, informally, from the United States.

Renamo's key supporters disappeared with the end of the Cold War and, later, Apartheid. Today it does not have the resources to launch a full-scale war. Its weakness is exacerbated by the composition of its members who are mostly aging ex-guerrillas now in their 50s and 60s and whose exact number is reportedly low. The recruiting patterns of Renamo in the last decade have also been ineffective, largely as a result of Renamo's reputation as an organization that forcibly recruits people. As a result of these current structural weaknesses, the view is that, at worst, Renamo can jeopardize safety and security through banditry and sporadic armed attacks, but will not be able to launch a full-scale civil war. Nonetheless, recent violent incidents demonstrate that Renamo is capable of sabotaging key infrastructure, such as the North-South road (EN-1) and rail routes in the central Sofala province, and there remain concerns that military clashes and instability may disrupt coal shipments and public transportation in the country.

The second analysis holds that Renamo's recent military actions are not widely accepted within its leadership structures,<sup>10</sup> as those in favour of violence may be at odds with Renamo MPs. The sense is that the fighters in the bush may represent one faction of Renamo which remains stuck in a guerilla movement mindset versus Renamo parliamentarians who seek to organize and further transform Renamo into a viable political party with a political vision sustained by popular support. The relationship between the 'bush Renamo' and the 'city' or 'parliamentary Renamo', however, remains unclear, as do the reasons why this distinction has recently become more pronounced. Whether there was broad consensus over the boycott of the municipal elections is also doubtful, as there have been reported disagreements between Renamo parliamentarians and their deputies over the strategy of

political participation. What is clear from the decision to boycott the 2013 local government elections is that there is a generalised ambiguity over the party's long-term vision. The party has not yet stated whether it will participate in the 2014 presidential and parliamentary polls. An important implication of splits in Renamo is also the probability that Renamo parliamentarians may defect to the MDM, which, although still a relatively small opposition party, has steadily been gaining support.

The recent boycott of the municipal elections could further undermine Renamo's survival as the country's major opposition party. This is because the MDM, which was established in 2009 as an offshoot of Renamo, has built on its control of two of the largest municipalities – Beira and Quelimane – to emerge from the municipal elections as a stronger opposition force in Mozambican politics. In the 2013 elections the MDM garnered overwhelming victories in the two municipalities as well as winning a third, Nampula, and performing strongly in areas once regarded as Frelimo strongholds.

## GEO POLITICAL DYNAMICS

The security situation in Mozambique and possible regional contagion effects are early warning issues that require close monitoring. The transportation corridor running to Beira port in Mozambique is an economic lifeline for landlocked Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Some of these Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries have voiced their concerns at the violent tensions between Mozambique's Frelimo government and Renamo. In June 2013, Mozambique's immediate neighbour Zimbabwe urged SADC to engage the Mozambican parties in order to prevent a dangerous spill-over of the conflict. Zimbabwean officials feared the destabilisation of Zimbabwe's Marange diamond belt and disruption of the 287km-long Feruka pipeline from Beira in Mozambique to Zimbabwe's oil refinery just outside Mutare. Zimbabwe suggested that Renamo should renegotiate the peace deal rather than threaten to wage war, and said that Zimbabwe would send troops to support the Mozambique government against Renamo, as in the 1980s.

The Malawian government, which in April 2013 revised the agreement to connect its electricity grid with that of Mozambique and signed three key cooperation agreements in the areas of security and public order, migration, and science and innovation in April 2013, said that it would watch developments in Mozambique closely. Angola condemned the violence carried out by Renamo and appealed to Dhlakama to solve the conflict through dialogue. South Africa's Presidency also expressed concern over the political and security developments in Mozambique and potential regional spillovers. However, South Africa also held the view that the Mozambican government could deal with the matter without South Africa's involvement, particularly as the Mozambican government had not asked it to get involved.

Despite the initial responses of some of its member states, SADC has been slow to respond to ongoing developments in Mozambique. It only released its

statement condemning the acts of violence and calling upon the parties to cease the confrontations on 4 November 2013, at the margins of its Joint Summit with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in Pretoria. The African Union and the United Nations separately released statements on October 23 expressing concern and urging dialogue between the government and Renamo.

Mozambique has not officially asked for bilateral or regional assistance to address its growing insecurity. However the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation (OPDC) Protocol and the Defence Pact, can guide the nature of issues in which SADC may intervene – even without the express request by a state party – to prevent, resolve or manage conflicts. The political tension in Mozambique since October 2012 certainly falls within the ambit of these provisions. Moreover, the Organ's subsidiary bodies like the Inter-State Defence and Security Committee (ISDSC) which has met more than three times since last year to set the region's security agenda, are well placed to advise on early warning and security issues in Mozambique without Mozambique officially being tabled on the SADC agenda.

When the situation started to deteriorate in October 2012, Mozambique was the chair of SADC's foremost decision-making body, the SADC Summit. SADC's former Executive Secretary, Tomaz Salomão, a former minister in the ruling Frelimo government, also had an opportunity at the time to recommend that Mozambique be placed on the SADC agenda, but did not do so. There must be an acknowledgement however that the executive secretary has limited leeway to engage in independent diplomatic action primarily because of the primacy and hierarchy of SADC's decision-making structures. This is further compounded by SADC's doctrine of non-interference, which guards national sovereignty against early warning and early action.

## THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN MOZAMBIQUE STABILITY

Civil society activists and the media have called upon Frelimo and Renamo to engage in sincere dialogue in pursuit of a political resolution. Prior to the capture of Renamo's base in the Gorongosa mountains, such engagement had included meetings between Dhlakama and a delegation from the Electoral Observatory – a coalition of religious and civil society groups, which is by far the most representative election observation body involved in observing Mozambican elections. The Observatory also met with President Armando Guebuza to influence the resolution of the country's political and security crises. However, the efforts of civil society and the media may be undermined by the fact that, at the time of writing, they had no access to Dhlakama, whose whereabouts were not officially known.

The role of civil society in Mozambique is most instrumental, particularly in the country's electoral processes. Civil society organisations were very involved in the elaboration of the country's new electoral



register, which laid the basis for the November 2013 municipal elections. Despite a problematic start to voter registration, the process improved owing to the intense monitoring by civil society groups.

Moreover, a prominent figure in Mozambican civil society, Sheikh Abdul Carimo Nordine Sau, who is Deputy Chairman of the Islamic Council, and Executive Director of the Electoral Observatory, heads the CNE. The CNE was reconstituted according to a February 2013 law pushed through by Frelimo legislators. According to the new law it should comprise 13 members, but currently operates with only 11 as Renamo has withheld its two representatives in protest against Frelimo's failure to address its political grievances and demands.

## POSSIBLE TRAJECTORIES

First, the Frelimo government and Renamo could choose to prioritise the national interest, detoxify their relationship and reach a political solution to the crisis as opposed to an exclusively military one in order to place Mozambique firmly on the path to stability and economic prosperity.

Second, Renamo's continued attacks could lead to more hostilities between Renamo and Frelimo in the build up to the 2014 presidential elections. Although Renamo's capacity to wage full-scale war may have diminished due to its depleted base of ex-combatants and lack of logistical capability, it could engage in sporadic banditry and sabotage key infrastructure, particularly in Sofala province. On-going Renamo attacks could prompt the Frelimo government to opt for an exclusively military resolution of the crisis. This approach could become protracted and propel instability, impeding Mozambique's economic development.

Third, the negotiation process could remain stalled but outright violent confrontations may cease, in part because of the government's capacity to quell insecurity and negotiate with Renamo moderates. In the event of a failing political solution, this scenario may also give rise to a clear split in Renamo – the 'bush Renamo' – which may be defeated militarily and the 'city Renamo'. This may

consequently give rise to the consolidation of the 'city Renamo' as a moderate faction which would see the survival of Renamo as a political entity in Mozambique's future politics.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## NOTES

1. 'Country Analysis: Mozambique' *ISS Peace and Security Council Report*, Issue 49, August 2013.
2. Ibid.
3. See, for example, SADC Election Observer Mission Report, *Preliminary Statement*, 30 October 2009 and European Union Election Observation Mission: *Final report on the Presidential, Legislative and Provincial Assembly Elections – 2009*.
4. The membership of the Council includes any former heads of state, the chairperson and any former chairpersons of the Mozambican parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the ombudsman, the chairperson of the Constitutional Council (the highest body in matters of constitutional and electoral law), the runner-up in the latest presidential elections (Dhlakama), and a number of prominent figures appointed by the President and by parliament.
5. See R Shikani, *Mozambique, post-war socio-economic and political challenges*, ISS Situation Report, 24 April 2012.
6. Since 2010, Mozambique has discovered huge natural gas reserves, estimated at more than 100-trillion cubic feet, in the northern province of Cabo Delgado.
7. See R Shikani, *Mozambique, post-war socio-economic and political challenges*, ISS Situation Report, 24 April 2012.
8. Ibid.
9. 'Country Analysis: Mozambique' *ISS Peace and Security Council Report*, Issue 51, November 2013.
10. Ibid.

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