



**HAL**  
open science

**Mozambique is suffering a military expression of a political problem. An interview with historian Michel Cahen for the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation Southern Africa**

Michel Cahen, Fredson Guilengue

► **To cite this version:**

Michel Cahen, Fredson Guilengue. Mozambique is suffering a military expression of a political problem. An interview with historian Michel Cahen for the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation Southern Africa. 2016. halshs-02469829

**HAL Id: halshs-02469829**

**<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-02469829v1>**

Submitted on 10 Feb 2020

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

## MOZAMBIQUE IS SUFFERING A MILITARY EXPRESSION OF A POLITICAL PROBLEM

### AN INTERVIEW WITH HISTORIAN MICHEL CAHEN FOR THE ROSA LUXEMBURG FOUNDATION SOUTHERN AFRICA

FREDSON GUILENGUE

Mozambique is currently facing one of the most challenging tests of its capacity to resolve the country's political, economic and social challenges.

Politically, a ceasefire agreement signed between the Government of *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO) and the main opposition party, the *Resistência Nacional de Moçambique* (RENAMO) on 24 August 2014 was short-lived. It only served to clear the way for the country's general elections on 15 October 2014, at which time the highly contested results by RENAMO brought about another round of military conflict.

Economically, the national currency, Metical, has been consistently devaluing against, for example, the South African Rand, the American Dollar and the Euro, when potential gains from newly discovered resources (e.g. offshore gas) have failed to produce any tangible improvement to people's lives. This, in conjunction with the discovery of hidden debt of 1, 4 billion USD, led partners like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) and the British to suspend further financial aid to the country. It is therefore expected that these political and economic developments

will lead to political upheaval if the Government does not address questions fast and adequately.<sup>1</sup>

To better understand Mozambique's current political developments from a political-historical perspective, **Fredson Guilengue**, Programme Manager at the **Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Southern Africa (RLS)** interviewed historian **Michel Cahen (MC)**. Michel Cahen is an authority on Portuguese colonisation in Africa and a political analyst of Portuguese speaking African Countries (PALOPs). He is the Director of Research at the Centre *National de la Recherche Scientifique* (CNRS) at "*Les Afriques dans le monde*" Research Centre at the Institute for Political Studies in Bordeaux, France. As an accredited historian of Mozambican and Angolan contemporary history,

---

<sup>1</sup> The International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), the United Kingdom and a group of 14 other direct supporters of the Mozambican budget, have recently suspended financial aid to the country due to a highly controversial commercial loan from the Credit Suisse Bank and the Russian VTB recently uncovered by the international press and acknowledged by the Government of Mozambique. The debt is estimated to be in excess of 1, 4 billion dollars and forms part of extensive loans by the Government of Mozambique between 2009 and 2014 which were neither disclosed to parliament nor to its international aid partners. According to the Government, it withheld the information fearing that its opponent in a civil war, RENAMO, would have access to sensitive information. However, it is now known that, while part of these funds were used to acquire military equipment, a very substantial amount simply disappeared.

Cahen has written extensively on Mozambique's political developments.

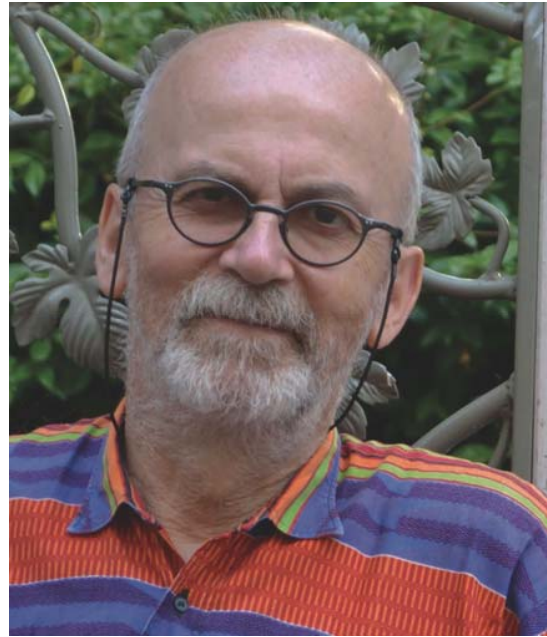
**RLS:** MOZAMBIQUE'S ELECTORAL PROCESSES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HIGHLY CONTESTED DUE TO ALLEGATIONS OF ELECTORAL FRAUD BY THE RULING PARTY *FRENTE DE LIBERTAÇÃO DE MOÇAMBIQUE (FRELIMO)* AS WELL AS OTHER FACTORS, INCLUDING A GENERAL PERCEPTION THAT POLITICAL POWER SHOULD ALTERNATE BETWEEN PARTIES TO ACHIEVE A MATURE DEMOCRACY. TO WHAT EXTENT DO FRELIMO'S VICTORIES THREATEN *DE FACTO* DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT IN MOZAMBIQUE?

**MC:** This is a complex question as it must be viewed in different historical periods. Despite the fact that the anticolonial liberation war was carried out in probably no more than fifteen percent of the country's territory (an aspect that in terms of a guerrilla-like war is already very significant), there should be no doubt that at independence in 1975, if the country had not opted for a single-party state system, FRELIMO would still have had an eighty percent chance of winning. FRELIMO had the necessary legitimacy of the gun; it had defeated the Portuguese and it was a liberation movement for independence.

However, the single-party system severely divided the Mozambican population. With the fusion of party and state there was no space for any independent structure to correct mistakes. Only the highest structures within FRELIMO were allowed to criticise the government. An example of this was the famous Samora Machel's presidential "offensive" in 1983.<sup>2</sup> This was the highest structure putting pressure on the medium structures of the state hierarchy. It was also followed by the paradigm of authoritarian modernisation without

---

<sup>2</sup> In the 80's FRELIMO adopted a strategy of self-criticism to reinforce its authority and leadership. Thus Samora Machel, both president of the party and the country (1975-1986), led the so-called "Presidential Campaigns". These campaigns, also meant to introduce reforms and change, included: the 1976 Production Offensive; the 1978 Campaign to build the party organisation and the 1980 Presidential Offensive against corruption; etc. (see: Newitt 1995). Marlyn Newitt, *A History of Mozambique* (London: Hurst & Company, 1995), 545.



Michel Cahen

any social gains for the sector of the population defended by FRELIMO. This paradigm expressed the idea that the peasantry had to be forcefully modernised by living in rural cities, the so-called "communal villages". The consequence of building these villages was an agronomic, cultural and political catastrophe for the country and deeply divided the Mozambican population. The civil war in Mozambique was not a peasant revolution, but the peasants used the structures of the guerrilla, introduced by outsiders, to protect themselves against the state foisting authoritarian modernisation upon them.

There is an intense political culture instilled by FRELIMO in which electoral fraud emerges as a local responsibility. A local party member does not require any orientation from the central committee to organise electoral fraud. The member engages in this type of activity because the premise is that RENAMO should never be allowed to win. A doctorate student of mine from Mozambique who conducted a study in the south of the country explained how a relative of his, who was an

electoral officer at a voting station, destroyed ballots to prevent the opposition from winning. So for me the real question to ask would be to what extent did fraud affect electoral results in Mozambique? It is also very difficult to report fraud because FRELIMO possesses more qualified staff than the other parties and controls the entire state apparatus. Although the *Movimento Democrático de Moçambique* (MDM) also has qualified cadres, it is still a small party.<sup>3</sup> RENAMO is a powerful party but suffers a severe lack of personnel. Thus, at many voting stations RENAMO or MDM observers were either not properly trained, had been freshly recruited just prior to the process, or could even have been appointed by FRELIMO.

Meanwhile, it is the concept of the party-nation that poses the most serious threat to democratic advancement in Mozambique. This ideal also comprises the rule that the “winner takes all”.<sup>4</sup> As a result of this system, we find in provinces like Zambézia and Nampula, where the population has always voted for the opposition, all positions of power are occupied by FRELIMO members, i.e. the governor, all district administrators, all managers of public services, all private bank managers and all the local leaders recognised by the government are FRELIMO supporters. This situation causes despair and anger, not only with members of the opposition, but also among the local population. In this instance, the “winner takes all” principle

---

<sup>3</sup> The Movimento Democrático de Moçambique (MDM) was formed in March 2009 as a splinter movement comprising ex-RENAMO members and supporters under the leadership of Daviz Mbepo Simango, the mayor of Beira, Mozambique’s second largest city. Today it is the third most important opposition party in Mozambique.

<sup>4</sup> According to Michel Cahen, the electoral system in which the “winner takes all” doesn’t only govern the election per se, it also defines how power is allocated after the election. As a result, in Mozambique, the elected winner has been the one who has been in charge of governing the entire country, i.e. the winning party ends up controlling all government departments such as public administration, army, judiciary etc. Michel Cahen, e-mail message to author, May 18, 2016.

nullifies the vote. It is different in urban areas declared as municipalities because municipal elections take place. There are only fifty-eight municipalities in Mozambique, so there are no elections in the rest of the territory, no decentralisation - only de-concentration.

Again it is the “winner takes all” principle that is firmly rooted in FRELIMO’s cultural politic that most threatens democratic development in Mozambique. Because a person’s vote doesn’t appear to change anything, we see a situation where so many people abstain from the voting process. This happened some years after the massive fraud of 1999 when RENAMO-dominated territories stopped voting and was evidenced by electoral results in which FRELIMO’s electoral percentage continued increasing to sixty-two percent in 2004, while the actual number of votes decreased. Simultaneously, RENAMO’s electorate slowly disappeared. People once again started voting after the 2013 military crises when Dhlakama rebranded himself as a powerful leader. The electorate decided to vote again because they thought they were voting for change, but once again nothing changed at regional and local levels even when the opposition won. It is obvious that the party capturing the majority of votes at national level should form the government, but at local level there should be space for opposition members and local leaders. This currently doesn’t exist. There is no political representation and this model is a serious threat to democracy. By this I am not implying that RENAMO is a beacon of democracy. It is yet another authoritarian party with a poor democratic concept.

RLS: MANY PEOPLE ASSOCIATE THE CURRENT POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN MOZAMBIQUE WITH THE DISCOVERY OF MINERAL RESOURCES. THIS ASSOCIATION IS PARTIALLY BASED ON THE ECONOMIC THEORY OF “RESOURCE CURSE”. HOWEVER, THERE IS NOT NECESSARILY A DIRECT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ABUNDANCE OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND A

POLITICAL CRISIS. ARE THERE FACTORS THAT COULD INFLUENCE THIS RELATIONSHIP?

**MC:** I think such analyses have to differentiate between national and local circumstances. At local level, the people from Cabo Delgado, at the extreme-north of Mozambique, where gas and petrol have been found, are already noticing a number of investments from which no social benefits are forthcoming. From a national perspective, I believe that the poverty level of Mozambicans today is no worse than twenty years ago. However, after twenty years the poor are noticing that there is a small minority that is grabbing everything and enriching itself. So while the poverty level of the majority remains static, they are observing a rising bourgeoisie. This dissatisfaction has not yet been politically manifested.

The 2008/2010 riots in Maputo, when the cost of the price of petrol and cost of living increased, were only social uprisings to ask the “boss” for a favour. I still remember a young man who was burning a tyre during the riots saying, “We are crying for our father”. This meant that they were asking Guebuza who was then the president to treat them well. It was still the subject demanding something from his master. It was akin to asking for a favour and not for a right within the republic. These riots had no political impact.

However, it is important to remember that during the 2013 municipal elections a year prior to the general elections in 2014, MDM obtained 45% of the results in Maputo and Matola municipalities, and it is highly probable that it might have won the elections. Surprisingly, there was a two-hour power cut at the precise moment when the votes were being counted.

For an opposition party to obtain 45% at the heart of FRELIMO’s social base was an enormous achievement. I was also very impressed with the

excellent “score” obtained by RENAMO in the 2014 general elections in which it obtained 20% in Maputo. This percentage cannot only be attributed to the migrants from northern Mozambique who live in Maputo. This means that there is a section of the poor who voted for RENAMO to express dissatisfaction with FRELIMO. This is politically important. An imminent increase in the price of transport, together with the devaluation of the metical in relation to the rand and the dollar, will certainly trigger riots which may have some political overtones, something completely different from the unrest of 2008/2010.

I would say that today there are different facets to the relationship between mineral abundance and political turmoil. People are well-informed about new mineral resources and there is no longer widespread civil war. Furthermore, people are noticing the country’s bourgeoisie becoming ever richer. Everyone knows that Guebuza is behind EMATUM and probably also behind PROÍNDICUS and so on.<sup>5</sup>

**RLS:** PRESIDENT NYUSI BEGAN HIS MANDATE DEMONSTRATING AN APPARENT SENSIBILITY TO THE ISSUES RAISED BY RENAMO. RECENTLY, HOWEVER, HE SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN A HARDER STANCE IN RELATION TO RENAMO’S PROJECT OF AUTONOMOUS PROVINCES. THIS GIVES THE IMPRESSION THAT FRELIMO IS REFUSING TO STRUCTURALLY CHANGE THE STATE. FOR EXAMPLE, FRELIMO HAS TAKEN THE INITIATIVE OF DESIGNING AND APPROVING THE “STATUS OF THE OPPOSITION LEADER” GIVING IT SOME DIRECT BENEFITS. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT HAS ALSO REFUSED TO CHANGE THE STATE STRUCTURE TO ACCOMMODATE RENAMO IN THE PROCESS OF GOVERNANCE IN MOZAMBIQUE. IS THIS ATTITUDE NEW OR HAS IT ALWAYS BEEN PART OF THE PARTY’S STRATEGY OF STATE BUILDING?

**MC:** I think we have all the necessary elements to be able to answer this question. This attitude is

<sup>5</sup> Empresa Moçambicana de Pesca de Atum (EMATUM) is a new state-owned tuna fishing company that, in 2013, received \$ 850 million allegedly earmarked for the tuna fishing industry. PROINDICUS SA is a share company that obtained \$ 622 million allegedly for military equipment for the protection of Mozambique’s “exclusive economic zones”.

inherently part of FRELIMO's political culture. As I said, FRELIMO sees itself as a party-nation so it considers it inconceivable to lose power as it is the nation. FRELIMO has to maintain power everywhere and by any means. Because RENAMO demanded recognition as the winner of only six of the eleven provinces, I am of the opinion that a constitutional amendment would allow the provincial assemblies to elect governors. These governors would then oversee the district and the local structures. However, FRELIMO refused to make any constitutional amendment. In fact, even without a constitutional amendment, President Nyusi himself could have simply appointed some RENAMO elected governors. But he preferred not to do so.

At the beginning Nyusi was attempting to appear more accessible and open-minded than Guebuza. Thereby directly opposing Guebuza. It is also important to stress that Guebuza was still the president of FRELIMO and, according to its statutes, every militant is bound to obey the president of the party. This would imply that Nyusi, the country's president, was beholden to Guebuza, the party's president, meaning that the functioning of the republic depended on the statutes of a private entity being the party.

Meanwhile, Nyusi's successful removal of Guebuza as FRELIMO's president was a narrow victory as it effectively fused the state and the party. With Guebuza's ousting as party president, FRELIMO effectively confirmed that the President of the Republic must also be the party's President. This was very unfortunate as it is exactly this system that creates "Guebuzas". Now that Guebuza's influence within the party has weakened, Nyusi has started applying a military solution to the country's political problems. One should also not ignore that Nyusi was Guebuza's Minister of Defence. It was Nyusi who led the war against RENAMO in 2013/2014. We can always ask questions such as:

Is it possible that Nyusi wants to negotiate peace with RENAMO but is limited by lack of full control over the military? Or is he just playing a double role? Nonetheless, Nyusi must accept ultimate responsibility because the three attempts to kill Dhlakama, the attempt to kill RENAMO's General Secretary, the assassination of RENAMO's Delegate to the State National Security Council were all orchestrated by the security forces under Nyusi's control. If you read the declarations of the latest meeting of FRELIMO's Central Committee, it is clear that there will be no negotiation without the complete disarmament of RENAMO.

Today, neither FRELIMO nor RENAMO want to negotiate. Remember that Dhlakama promised to assume control of the six provinces in March, but we are now in April and nothing has transpired. I believe he accepts that he doesn't have the necessary military might to capture large towns such as Beira and Quelimane, but he is going to invest in a guerrilla war. He possesses the means to do so. In Southern Mozambique the clashes are not yet as many as in the northern and central parts of the country. This is probably because RENAMO's soldiers have received direct orders from Dhlakama not to expand the attacks. I think Dhlakama will escalate the conflict gradually to strengthen his influence over the government. Even the Catholic Church, with its apparent personal contacts with him, has been unable to achieve anything. Nobody wants to negotiate.<sup>6</sup> FRELIMO doesn't want to negotiate because it believes that it can annihilate RENAMO, as was the case with UNITA in Angola, which I believe was a huge mistake. RENAMO doesn't want to negotiate because it needs to weight the power balance in its favour.

---

<sup>6</sup> This interview was conducted on 26 April 2016. However, on 17 May 2016 RENAMO's leader Afonso Dhlakama announced that he had accepted an offer to engage in conflict negotiations with government.

**RLS: RENAMO'S DISARMAMENT SEEMS TO BE REGARDED BY MANY FORCES WITHIN MOZAMBIQUE AS THE DETERMINANT OF EFFECTIVE PEACE. THIS ARGUMENT SUGGESTS THAT THE POLITICAL UPRISING IN MOZAMBIQUE IS LINKED TO THE POSSESSION OF CONVENTIONAL ARMS BY RENAMO. 1) WHAT POSSIBLE SCENARIO CAN WE EXPECT FOR MOZAMBIQUE IF THE OBJECTIVE OF DISARMING RENAMO IS NOT ACHIEVED? 2) DOES RENAMO'S DISARMAMENT REPRESENT THE ENTIRE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF VIOLENT POLITICAL REBELLIONS IN MOZAMBIQUE?**

**MC:** It's true that RENAMO possesses arms but I don't believe they have heavy artillery. They don't have tanks; they have 60 and 88 mm mortars, RPG-7's and Kalashnikovs. Most of the arms were captured from FRELIMO military bases. It is also rumoured that in 2014 a train load of modern military equipment coming from Zimbabwe was intercepted by RENAMO. I think RENAMO has no problem either buying or capturing military equipment for its troops. But this doesn't mean that RENAMO has sufficient military equipment to supply all the young men who have recently joined its forces.

Irrespective of whether RENAMO has the military force or not, it doesn't represent an obstacle to peace in Mozambique because the country has a political not a military problem. This is a merely a military expression of a political problem. If the country is able to resolve the challenges arising from the "winner takes all" system; if it's possible even to imagine that the country's president can be from FRELIMO and the provincial governors from other parties and vice-versa; if it is accepted that national unity is not necessarily the same as national homogeneity; if RENAMO's social base is allocated its share, particularly in respect of the newly identified resources, and the social situation of the majority of Mozambicans improves, then the RENAMO problem is easily resolved. RENAMO's forces wish to be socially reintegrated either into the army or police forces. The country needs political reform to end the homogenised vision of the Mozambican nation. It's important to

understand that Mozambique is nothing more than "a colonial space" created by the coloniser; that it is not a nation and that there are twenty-five different ethnic groups of which twenty-three remain outside the existing geographic borders. The only possibility of achieving national unity is to build a republic that can provide economic and social advancement for the whole nation. Progress will first bring a political and later a cultural identity to the nation. FRELIMO's current behaviour is fostering anti-state sentiment as people attempt to protect themselves from the state instead of integrating themselves into it.

In response to your second question, it would have been advantageous if progressive Mozambican NGO's had formed a civil, pacifistic political party to organise demonstrations, etc., however, in the absence of this type of party or form of protest, and hypothesising the end of RENAMO, I don't think there will be other military rebellions in Mozambique. But this considers RENAMO already dead, which I doubt will happen!

**RLS: IS IT POSSIBLE TO LINK THE PARTIZATION<sup>7</sup> OF THE STATE IN MOZAMBIQUE TO THE LACK OF TRUST IN THE (TECHNICAL) STRUCTURES RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESSES?**

**MC:** I guess you must be referring to the problem between the National Electoral Commission (CNE) and the Technical Secretariat for Electoral Management (STAE).<sup>8</sup> There is a very serious

---

<sup>7</sup> The term "partization" of the state used here is to refer to the full control or domination by political or political parties of the state apparatus. "De-partization" is to free the state apparatus from control or domination by political or political parties.

<sup>8</sup> The National Electoral Commission (CNE) is by definition an independent body subordinated only to the country's constitution. The CNE is responsible for supervising voter registration, the conduct of elections and holding of referenda. The Technical Secretariat for Electoral Management (STAE) is a state body. It is headed by a General Director appointed by the country's President after a public nomination process. The General Director is assisted by two deputies during the election period who are nominated by the political parties that are represented in Parliament (currently: FRELIMO, RENAMO

problem in this regard which has never been addressed, not even when the last electoral act was amended at RENAMO's insistence. While the CNE is a public institution, the STAE which literally performs all the major tasks is under the control of the Ministry of Public Administration. Thus all its high level personnel are FRELIMO members. These people will always side with FRELIMO and produces, what I would call, "structural fraud". Structural fraud begins at voter registration, a process that is not uniformly structured across the country. Everyone is aware that the electoral personnel are FRELIMO members and that one can have a better life as a FRELIMO supporter. This is a form of daily neopatrimonialism where permanent pressure is applied to force people to side with power. Poverty per se doesn't cause revolt as it only pushes people to look for protection. So people seek relatives to assist them get what they are actually looking for.

It's an absolute necessity to "de-particise the state". During Guebuza's two mandates he "re-particized" the state, while during Chissano's mandates (after the single party system from 1994 to 2004), the state was more important than the party. With Guebuza the party returned to being more important than the state. The party now again fully governs the state. Hence there is no conceptual problem to expect public servants to participate in FRELIMO's meetings during working hours. Public servants at all levels are invited to participate in these meetings and are expected to attend. No other political party is allowed to do the same. Actually, there was agreement between two teams of negotiators on the "departization of the state", one of RENAMO's demands, but a day later

---

and MDM). The other staff members of STAE are appointed through a public bid based on professional and technical background. The functions of STAE include registration of voters and supervision and conduct of all electoral processes.

it was rejected by FRELIMO's parliamentary majority. The "partization" of the Mozambican state apparatus by FRELIMO is a very deeply held conviction. As the party has always governed Mozambique in this way, people tend to believe that FRELIMO is the father of the state. The consequence is that the partization of the state apparatus has never been questioned because it is so firmly ingrained in the population's understanding of its relationship with the state.

**RLS: THE DISAGREEMENTS DURING THE SO-CALLED "POLITICAL DIALOGUE" (2013 - 2015) BETWEEN RENAMO AND THE GOVERNMENT OF MOZAMBIQUE STARTED WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT FOR "DEPARTIZATION" OF THE STATE AND DEGENERATED INTO SALVOS ABOUT MILITARY ISSUES. IS THERE ANY POSSIBILITY OF A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION FOR MOZAMBIQUE, OR IT IS DEFINITELY NECESSARY THAT ONE OF THE ACTORS SHOULD BE COMPLETELY ELIMINATED SO THAT THE OTHER CAN CLAIM HEGEMONY OVER THE COUNTRY'S POLITICS?**

MC: I think the Angolan solution in which the death of Jonas Savimbi meant peace for the country is not applicable to the Mozambican situation. Although Angola is also geographically and ethnically heterogeneous, the wealth of the political powerful subordinates literally everyone. Even with the advent of the exploitation of extensive mineral resources in Mozambique, the politically powerful will never have enough money to subjugate everyone. In fact, there is a joke in Luanda that to get rich quickly one just has to create an opposition party that can later be "bought" by the regime. It's difficult to apply this to Mozambique.

Hegemony and homogeneity are two different things. In such a heterogeneous country like Mozambique in geographic and historical terms hegemony would be less probable and undesirable. Although it would apparently bring peace, it would be what I would call an "armed peace" and not democracy. We have to resolve the crisis of political representation to allow more democracy and more popular expression.



Mozambique needs to create national unity in the sense of allowing everybody to live and experience social and economic progress.

**RLS:** IN LINE WITH THE PREVIOUS QUESTION, DO YOU BELIEVE THAT THE PHYSICAL ELIMINATION OF RENAMO'S LEADER COULD SPELL THE END OF WAR IN MOZAMBIQUE AND THE WEAKENING OF RENAMO TO A LEVEL SIMILAR TO UNITA IN ANGOLA?

**MC:** They have been and are still trying to do it. This would be bad. What most people have not yet understood is that within RENAMO Dhlakama is a moderate. There are many people within the party who yearn to once again take up arms. It is Dhlakama who has avoided this route. If Dhlakama dies who will assume power? The son of André Matsangaissa who is said to have returned from Kenya and appears to be a good soldier? Is it Ivone Soares? In any case, if Dhlakama dies a more radical wing within RENAMO might assume control. Maybe this is what the government wants - a military confrontation that FRELIMO is convinced it will win. FRELIMO believes that it will physically eliminate Dhlakama and militarily eliminate RENAMO because it still ascribes RENAMO's existence to the backing of the South African apartheid regime. Because the apartheid regime no longer exists, FRELIMO thinks RENAMO is weak. It is a huge mistake. However, FRELIMO is not thinking about the economic crisis which is driving the country into a depression.

RENAMO is very different from UNITA. UNITA was a conventional army with battalions, etc. while RENAMO is a soft guerrilla movement making it very difficult to defeat. Even the death of Dhlakama may not resolve the problem as the succession debate has already begun within the party. There is currently a full crisis of political representation in Mozambique. The only good thing that could happen in Mozambique would be a social revolution in the cities. The cities are FRELIMO's strongholds and if the populace demand peace it could potentially change the situation.

**RLS:** MOZAMBIQUE IS UNDER A SERIOUS RISK OF BANKRUPTCY DUE TO THE SO-CALLED "TUNA BONDS" AND OTHERS RECENTLY REVEALED TO BE 1, 4 BILLION DOLLARS. TO WHAT EXTENT DOES NYUSI HAVE THE ABILITY TO RESOLVE THIS CRISIS OR DOES THIS PROBLEM LIE MORE AT THE LEVEL OF THE PARTY ITSELF?

**MC:** I'm a historian and not an economist but I don't believe Nyusi can effectively meet this challenge. To do so he would need to force foreign companies to pay taxes. They enter the country under very favourable agreements, to the extent that workers in Mozambique pay more taxes than what these capitalist companies do. Yes, it's a classical situation worldwide, but it's more damaging to a country like Mozambique. On the other hand, it's important to stress that it is the FRELIMO bourgeoisie that benefits the most from these bonds that have created the economic crisis. Pressured by the IMF, Nyusi definitely needs to take action, but this will not completely resolve the economic crisis. At the latest meeting of FRELIMO's Central Committee one more anticorruption plan was agreed upon to convince the public that corruption is treated seriously when, in fact, nothing is being done. For example, in the cases of EMATUM and PROÍNDICUS, the first course of action should have been to arrest former president Armando Guebuza and former Finance Minister Manuel Chang. Both are behind the current crisis with both authorising and financially benefitting from the bonds.

**RLS:** THE US STATE DEPARTMENT REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS (2015) EXPOSED COUNTLESS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN MOZAMBIQUE INCLUDING ACTS OF REPRESSION OF VOICES IN DISAGREEMENT WITH THE FRELIMO GOVERNMENT. IN FACT, THE SAME REPORT POINTS TO THE ASSASSINATION OF PROFESSOR CISTAC AS BEING POLITICALLY MOTIVATED. THIS YEAR (2016) ASSASSINATIONS AND ATTEMPTS OF SELECTIVE ASSASSINATION OF OPPOSING VOICES ARE TAKING PLACE (CANAL DE MOÇAMBIQUE).<sup>9</sup> TO WHAT EXTENT CAN REPRESSION AND ASSASSINATION OF POLITICAL OPPOSITION VOICES IN MOZAMBIQUE BE ASSOCIATED WITH A

<sup>9</sup> Equipa de Investigação do Canal de Moçambique, "A lista de mortes encomendadas pelo governo: esquadrão da morte," *Canal de Moçambique*, April 13, 2016, 2-3

PROBABLE HISTORICAL LEGACY OF POLITICAL STRUGGLES FOR INDEPENDENCE?

**MC:** I think the current situation where security services are trying to physically eliminate RENAMO cadres is comparable to the military dictatorships in Latin America in the 60's and 70's. It's not a historical legacy. As an historian I have to apply the concepts very well and would not yet classify the Mozambican regime as a fascist regime. But this behaviour is similar that of any extreme-right military dictatorship in the 60's and 70's. To indiscriminately kill everyone considered subversives. Because Mozambique is still predominantly a rural country, this attitude will not weaken RENAMO but push it back into the bush. The outcome will be more civil war. It is important not to ignore that this might actually be FRELIMO's strategy, eliminate the leader in order to stop or avoid negotiations. This also happens in the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Whenever there is an attempt to negotiate, Israel expands its colonies in the West Bank, or following a selective assassination there is the obvious retaliation by the Palestinians.. This does, however, demonstrate a sinister side of the security services in Mozambique - assassination for political gain. There is the belief that if RENAMO expanded its military actions the war would be over in 15 days. The government would easily fall because, although it is extremely violent, internally it remains very corrupt.

I cannot entirely deny that this is an historical attitude considering FRELIMO viewing itself as the nation and, in this context, the opposition is illegitimate so must be eliminated. Whoever is against FRELIMO is also against the nation. In this sense you become an enemy and have to be eliminated. There is an historical continuity but it's important to stress that because it is happening now and not five years ago, indicates that the security services are employing certain behavioural traits similar to those historically used by South American or South African extreme-right regimes.

ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG  
JOHANNESBURG  
237 Jan Smuts Avenue | Parktown North 2193  
P O Box 3156 | Parklands 2121  
Telephone: +27 (0) 11 447 5222/5224 | E-mail: [info@rosalux.co.za](mailto:info@rosalux.co.za) | Website: [www.rosalux.co.za](http://www.rosalux.co.za)

**ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG**

*The views and opinions expressed by the author do not necessarily represent those of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation*