

Emerging pluralist politics in Mozambique: the Frelimo-Renamo party system

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Taking everybody on board: multiparty politics as an instrument for peace

The 1992 General Peace Agreement, signed in Rome by president Joaquim Chissano and guerrilla leader Afonso Dhlakama, marked the beginning of a pacted and fundamentally successful process of democratic change in Mozambique. The country's first pluralist elections, held in 1994, established a formally competitive system which opened the political arena to Renamo's guerrillas. Democratic reform was instrumental to the pacification of the country, and with peace and stability restored all over the territory came dividends in the form of resumed economic activities and impressive rates of growth. Albeit Mozambique remains among the poorest countries in the world, its achievements over the last decade are emphasised by the striking contrast with the failed political transition of its twin country, Angola. The political trajectories of these former Portuguese colonies – where Marx-Leninist regimes were introduced at independence, in 1975, prompting former Southern Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa to sponsor civil conflicts – began to diverge in the early 1990s. While Mozambicans swiftly moved towards peace and pluralist politics, Angola's negotiated settlement failed when guerrilla leader Jonas Savimbi withdrew from the electoral process in 1992. As his Unita rebels resumed fighting, the country was plunged into ten years of renewed devastation before a second opportunity for peace emerged, in early 2002, following Savimbi's death in combat. The failure of political reforms prevented pacification in Angola, and, alongside thousands of lives, another decade was lost with no signs of development.

The 1994 and 1999 elections in Mozambique confirmed Frelimo as the country's ruling party. Joaquim Chissano, the un-elected president since 1986, was twice endorsed by the electorate with an absolute majority and, in each of the two parliamentary elections, Frelimo obtained a plurality of the vote which was turned into a majority in the House. But a key outcome of the first election, later born out by the 1999 results, was Renamo's excellent showing. In spite of an appalling record of violence inflicted upon Mozambicans, the guerrillas-turned-into-party immediately positioned themselves as an unchallenged and challenging second force under the new constitutional framework.

The adoption of supposedly democratic politics in several African countries, since the first half of the 1990s,

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raises the need to distinguish between those few countries that are progressively developing *liberal* democratic practices and many others that are failing to do so. Furthermore, it is also fair and convenient to discriminate between countries where democratic forms are merely meant to cover unmodified authoritarian habits – that is, *pseudodemocracies* – from *electoral* democracies that, despite their fundamentally competitive elections and the partial constitutionalisation of politics, fall short of fully democratic and liberal practices¹. Mozambique, whose political system is still characterized by an ambiguous relationship between ruling party and state apparatus, a heavy centralisation of power, increasingly rampant corruption, and the feeble independence of the legislative and of the media and judicial systems, belongs to the latter group of states – i.e. states that made significant changes by adopting and partly implementing democratic reforms, but still have a long way to go before they might be labelled liberal democracies.

In a transition from civil war to peaceful politics, the party system can be the channel through which formerly violent contestants for power are allowed a role in a new, nonviolent political game. The present paper focuses on Mozambique's emerging two-party system as an essential feature affecting the country's prospects for democratic deepening and consolidation. Political parties are a unique instrument for the peaceful transfer of democratic political power. The regularisation, stabilisation and legitimisation of democratic politics hinge, to a significant extent, upon the presence of a stable and well-functioning party system. Political parties articulate government programmes, promote political stances, keep the executive under check. They help defining the meaning of political competition by providing political identities that are recognizable over subsequent electoral periods. They contribute to linking a country's territory with its capital city by communicating upwards demands and needs, as well as by legitimising downwards central decisions and policy directives.

But the condition for political parties to actually help the establishment of democratic politics is their development as durable, socially-rooted, country-wide effective and legitimate institutions. Thus, a well-functioning democratic polity requires the party system to institutionalise. In his studies of Latin American democratisation processes, Mainwaring proposes to move beyond the two classic criteria for party system analysis (i.e. number of parties and ideological polarisation²) and to adopt 'institutionalisation' as a property (and a process) crucially differentiating party systems. He defines as *institutionalised* a party system where "there is stability in who the main parties are and in how they behave. Change, while not completely precluded, is limited"³. Therefore, party system institutionalisation depends on four elements, namely: "*stability in interparty competition*, the existence of parties that have somewhat *stable roots in society*, acceptance of parties and elections as the *legitimate* institutions that determine who governs, and *party organisations* with reasonably stable rules and structures"⁴. Of course, extreme levels of institutionalisation may produce negative effects, notably a paralysis of political competition and a lack of accountability or political change. Yet, comparative evidence supports the idea that an institutionalised party system is an

¹ Diamond (1999:7ff.).

² See, for example, Sartori (1976:288).

³ Mainwaring (1998:68).

⁴ Mainwaring and Scully (1995:1), emphasis added. For a reflection on the notions of party and party system institutionalisation, including the possible tensions between the two, see Randall and Svåsand (2001).

important factor for democratic consolidation, as it tends to promote political legitimacy, electoral and horizontal accountability, and effective governance⁵. An institutionalised party system reduces the space for populist appeals and candidates, keeps the personalisation of political power under check, helps restraining neo-patrimonial practices and potentially limits the marginalisation of parliament. The latter phenomena, by contrast, normally thrive in *inchoate party systems*, the empirical opposite of institutionalised party systems. Here, electoral volatility and uncertainty, in conjunction with the weak social linkages and the poor authority and organisation of political parties, are often the terrain for the persistence of low-quality and non-consolidating democracies and for the development or retention of semi-authoritarian delegative practices. Thus, “the institutionalisation of a party system is important if for no other reason than what its opposite – an inchoate party system – implies for how democracies function”⁶.

In what follows, the Mozambican party system is analysed in terms of its social and historical rootedness, of its electoral stability, of the organisation of its component parts, and of its overall legitimacy. An additional section further elaborates on the dynamics of inter-party relations. Finally, some tentative conclusions are drawn with regard to the effects of the current party system on the broader democratisation process.

The historical origins and socio-political bases of Frelimo and Renamo

Democratic political competition in Mozambique is heavily shaped by past patterns of conflict. Both main political parties emerged out of armed experiences. Established in Dar-es-Salaam in 1962, the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Frelimo) was forged by the anti-colonial war fought against the Portuguese between 1964 and 1974. Backed by Zambia and Algeria, the liberation front mostly operated in the north of the country, launching its operations from rear bases in the Tanzanian territory. The northernmost province of Cabo Delgado naturally became the main area for the recruitment of anti-colonial fighters (notably among the Makonde people) and remains a stronghold of the party. Yet, because Frelimo’s top leadership has invariably come from the south – the movement was “essentially a coalition of cadres from the extreme south and a guerrilla mass in the extreme north”⁷ – southern dominance inevitably came to be resented, even before the new regime was established⁸.

Three years after taking power, at its 3rd Congress in 1977, Frelimo adopted important structural and ideological measures by transforming the liberation movement into a Marx-Leninist party. Long-lasting implications derived from this move. The Leninist notion of a vanguard single party, with restricted membership and party primacy over the state, implied a decision to do away with political oppositions and

⁵ See, for instance, Morlino (1995) on Southern European democracies (Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece), Kohli (1990, 1994) on the Indian experience, Rueschemeyer – Stephens – Stephens (1992:168) and Mainwaring and Scully (1995) on Latin American cases. For a differing view, based on study of Eastern European post-communist states, see Tóka (1997).

⁶ Mainwaring and Scully (1995:21). Cf. Mainwaring (1998:79). For the notion of ‘delegative democracy’, see O’Donnell (1994).

⁷ Cahen (1998:10).

⁸ Eduardo Mondlane (the first leader of Frelimo, killed by parcel bomb in 1969), Samora Machel (successor to Mondlane and first Mozambican president) and Joaquim Chissano were all born in Gaza province. Frelimo’s new secretary general and 2004 presidential candidate – Armando Guebuza, a Maronga from Maputo – is also a southerner.

thus the latter's repression. Centrally-planned and collectivist socio-economic and agricultural policies also had key political consequences. The systematic privilege accorded to the urban and industrial sectors – directly or indirectly subsidized by the state – and the combination of neglect and forced 'modernisation' for rural communities heavily contributed to widespread social disillusionment and bitterness. Many of the measures undertaken to achieve a revolutionary transformation of the Mozambican society – such as the forced resettlements envisaged by collective villagisation programmes or the ideological attacks on traditional institutions – deepened a sense of distance and antagonism between Frelimo and those broad sections of the population that were officially or practically identified as obstacles to development. Geographically, this antagonism became most evident in the provinces of the central and centre-north regions – Sofala, Manica, Zambezia, Tete and Nampula – which progressively turned into a fertile ground for anti-Frelimo sentiments. In a similar environment, a conflict sparked by foreign powers met less than fierce resistance among local populations and gradually acquired some domestic support. In the large areas of central Mozambique, Renamo's guerrillas were able to operate most successfully and to establish links with local communities. They alternated raids and devastation on some parts of the country with relatively stable control over other areas, and progressively built upon existing opposition to the dominant political economy. The brutalities and the atrocities suffered by many during the civil conflict – largely, if not exclusively, committed at the hands of the rebels – have for some time drawn attention away from the underlying and growing resentment of parts of the Mozambican society towards the Frelimo regime. The largely coercive recruitment of Renamo members has tended to hide a degree of tacit support that the movement enjoyed, if not for its vicious actions, at least for its effective opposition to the ruling group in Maputo. As a result of Frelimo's rural policies, by the early-1980s:

“the people became divided in search of an identity on which to build their own survival. Traditionalism, a strong reference in the recent memory of the community, flourished anew as the natural refuge... In this vacuum Renamo appeared as an armed opposition ... to some extent interpreting this movement of a popular psychological and cultural retreat to values and models of the past”⁹.

Dhlakama's movement became an outspoken defender of traditional rules and leadership, of religious beliefs and of (especially non-southerner) rural communities – in other words, a protector of all those who had been penalised or marginalized under Frelimo's rule: “the creation of a state hostile to African society ... gave rise to the hope and in some cases to the reality of withdrawing from the modern state thanks to the protection of the guerrillas”¹⁰. Thus, while it has long been acknowledged that the insurgency was initiated by Southern Rhodesia's Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO), Renamo rapidly turned into a ‘Mozambican phenomenon’¹¹.

After the 1980 Lancaster House agreement ended white rule in Southern Rhodesia, favouring a robust domestic offensive by the Mozambican army, Renamo came back stronger than before when South Africa

⁹ Cabaço (1996:89).

¹⁰ Cahen (1998:10-11).

¹¹ Vines (1996:1). The works of Vines (1996) and Geffray (1990) are a key part of a 'revisionist' school that has re-focused the analysis of the civil war by emphasising the latter's domestic roots. See Hanlon (1991:5) for a substantial rejection of such views.

decided that it would not let the destabilising insurgency fade. With the Nkomati pact, according to which Mozambique and South Africa would stop supporting rebels operating beyond borders, the guerrillas became determined to put down roots inside Mozambique and achieve self-sufficiency. Between 1984-1986, at the peak of the civil war, Renamo extended its activities to regions other than its core areas of Manica and Sofala provinces, and was soon operating in the whole country with an estimated 20,000 soldiers¹². In 1992, however, the rebels' dependence on local populations added to the impact of the severe drought that hit the country, as the latter forced thousands of peasants to leave rural areas and left the insurgents without their main source of food and labour¹³.

The dynamics of the civil war combined with the regime's attempts at transforming society and promoted the formation of two rival socio-political coalitions that were ripe for expression when a pluralist election was called. Contrary to what happened in other African political transitions – such as those of Ghana, Zambia and Mali, for example, where prominent parties emerged during the reform process¹⁴ – Mozambique's major political parties pre-existed the country's political opening. As a matter of fact, while Frelimo and Renamo only recently began to compete as parties in a pluralist milieu, their organisations have both been in existence for 25 years or more¹⁵.

By 1992-94, however, when Frelimo and Renamo decided to abandon their weapons and to embark on a new game based on electoral competition, their starting conditions were immensely different. Frelimo was still profoundly influenced by the experience of the independence struggle, both in its ideology and rhetoric as in its inner life (party members who fought the Portuguese, for example, are still accorded unquestioned leadership and privileges). As a single party, the *Frente* was meant to closely direct state activities and drive the country's development effort – indeed, its structures were to function as 'scaffolds' for the legitimisation of 'an external, alien state'¹⁶. By fully surviving the transition to multiparty politics, the party confirmed its capacity for adaptation. Having governed for twenty years, its leadership and cadres were tested and experienced in national government, policy- and law-making, administration of state structures, political organisation and mobilisation, and diplomatic relations. This well-oiled former single party organisation faced the competition of newly-created opposition parties, as occurred in several of the multiparty regimes emerged in Africa during the 1990s. Renamo's guerrillas, in particular, were only hurriedly re-organised from a clandestine military movement into a national political party in the run up to the election. Historically,

¹² Vines (1996:17) and Weinstein (2002:148).

¹³ Vines (1996:1).

¹⁴ Cf. Sandbrook (1996:75).

¹⁵ Even when subtracting the 18 seats of the União Eleitoral coalition parties (which formed common lists with Renamo and belong to the same Renamo-Ue parliamentary group), Frelimo and Renamo still control 92.8% of the seats in the 1999-2004 Assembleia. Only in four out of thirty African multiparty polities examined did parties founded by 1970 – the cut-off date chosen by Kuenzi and Lambright (2001:454) as an indicator of parties' time-tested social roots – hold more than 90% of lower-chamber seats (and only an additional country held more than 75%).

¹⁶ Oscar Monteiro, interview (Maputo, 21 June 2002). "The People's Republic of Mozambique is oriented by the political line defined by Frelimo, which is the driving force of both the state and society" (art. 3, *Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique*, 1975, quoted in Cahen 1985:38).

the ranks of the rebels had mostly expanded through the coercive recruitment of young guerrillas. The new party now faced a very peculiar challenge:

“In other [African] countries ... the holding of elections forced parties which were mostly urban, elite-based and without much of a grassroots presence or constituency to go out and mobilize ‘the rural masses’ ... For Renamo, the problem is a different one ... Because of its character as a guerrilla army, Renamo has roots in large portions of the national territory. It has representatives at local levels in much of the country... Thus, it is not an intellectual, urban-based party trying to put down roots in the countryside, but a military organisation with weakly developed administrative and political wings having to downplay its military character and strengthen its political and administrative side, largely by recruiting in the cities”¹⁷

When multiparty politics was introduced in Mozambique, the political structures of the former rebels were still fragile, the internal procedures of the new party hardly effective, its presence on the ground was rather unorganised, its policies were in all evidence poorly articulated, and its personnel was totally inexperienced in modern politics and administration.

Two-party electoral competition

The adoption of political reforms in Mozambique began when Frelimo’s Central Committee agreed on a new constitution in 1990. Two years later, the General Peace Agreement (GPA) provided the key step that made the introduction of multiparty politics an actual possibility. The GPA was an agreement between the top leaderships of two sides – Frelimo and Renamo – which, from the start, marginalized every other voice, notably those of the unarmed political oppositions. Thus, the new political settlement was the result of an elitist deal, and, in fact, the country was moving towards its first multiparty election despite a majority of Mozambicans, when consulted by the government, expressed themselves against the abandonment of the single party regime¹⁸. The extent of actual popular support for the signatories of the accord was yet to be proven. This was notably the case for Dhlakama’s rebel movement: in spite of the considerable social discontent generated by many of Frelimo’s policies, prior to the election one could legitimately doubt Renamo’s capacity to gain support in a country where it waged a brutal civil war for 15 years¹⁹. On the eve of the 1994 election, it was not uncommon for analysts to point out that “Renamo’s prospects are ... bleak given its infamous reputation for brutality during the civil war”²⁰. Yet, the former rebels surprised most observers by winning an average 36% of the vote in the presidential and parliamentary elections, and by further improving their showing five years later.

¹⁷ Manning (1998:188).

¹⁸ Manning (1997:91) and Hall and Young (1997:210). Cf. Harrison (1996) on the elitist character of the transition.

¹⁹ An interesting recent case of failure of a powerful guerrilla movement to transform into a political party is that of Sierra Leone, where the former rebels of the Revolutionary United Front – orphans of their jailed leader Foday Sankoh – only received 1.7 % of the vote in the post-conflict legislative election and failed to win any seat (*UN Integrated Regional Information Network*, 20 May 2002). Liberian rebel leader Charles Taylor, by contrast, won an overwhelming majority (75.3%) in a 1997 presidential election reportedly characterised by the voters’ fear that, if he were to lose the contest, he would resume the civil war.

²⁰ Simpson (1993:336).

Mozambique's two elections, spanning a five-year period only, do not constitute a solid ground for more-than-tentative inferences regarding the future development of the country's party system. The information available is undoubtedly limited. However, the relative stability displayed by party competition in the first two rounds of electoral contests is apparent: a clear, if only emerging, pattern of two-partism that seems likely to be confirmed by further elections. In spite of a proportional system that is relatively favourable to the emergence of third parties – compared, for example, to a plurality system – hardly any political organisation other than the two main contenders gained representation in the *Assembleia da República* during the 1990s²¹.

Pedersen's index of electoral volatility is a tool that allows us to quantify the stability of inter-party competition in Mozambique and to compare it with other experiences²². The index measures the net percentage of votes that, from one election to the next one, shift from one party to another party. In other words, the lower the volatility, the more stable is the number of votes that parties receive over time and, as a consequence, the more stable the structure of the party system as a whole. Between 1994 and 1999, legislative volatility in Mozambique was a relatively modest 8.9%, less than one third of an African *average* as high as 28.4% (Table 1). Over the same period, electoral volatility in the country's presidential contests – at 14% – was higher than its legislative volatility, but it still measured less than half the African average (29.6%). The preponderance and the stability of Frelimo-Renamo competition in Mozambique are also evident across types of elections, i.e. when measuring the discrepancy between the votes obtained by a party in a given parliamentary election and those that the same party obtains in a corresponding presidential election. Parliamentary-presidential volatility in Mozambique measured 14.3% in 1994 and 12.7% in 1999, averaging 13.5% as against an African mean of 24.9%. These figures imply that turning an erratic game of

²¹ See below. The electoral threshold adopted in Mozambique, whereby only parties reaching 5% of the national vote take part to the distribution of parliamentary seats, is less of an obstacle to third parties than a plurality or a majority system would be.

²² Pedersen's measure of the electoral volatility between two legislative (or presidential) elections is calculated as:

$$\frac{\sum |(\text{party X's \% at election I}) - (\text{party X's \% at election II})|}{2}$$

Volatility between a legislative *and* a presidential election ('legislative-presidential volatility') is calculated as:

$$\frac{\sum |(\text{party X's \% at presidential election}) - (\text{party X's \% at parliamentary election})|}{2}$$

Quite oddly, Kuenzi and Lambright measure legislative volatility as net changes in parties' percentages of *seats* (2001:451), rather than *votes*. Such an index would not record any volatility between a hypothetical election 1 – won by party A with 55% of votes and seats, and lost by party B with 45% of votes and seats – and an election 2 in which party A wins again 55% of seats, but only gets 30% of votes, party B picks up 45% of seats with 25% of votes, and party C obtains a 20% vote share but no seat. Even more puzzling is Kuenzi and Lambright's choice to mix pears and apples by defining presidential-parliamentary volatility as the difference "between *votes* captured by a party in a presidential election and ... *seats* won by that same party in the corresponding legislative election" (Kuenzi and Lambright 2001:444). Although the authors find that district magnitude is not related to electoral volatility (2001:451), their use of assembly seats, rather than votes, implies that a party which obtains exactly the same percentage of votes in a parliamentary and in a presidential election may still see its electoral support assessed as highly 'volatile' in those cases, for example, where a plurality system gives it a share of seats much larger than its share of the vote. Since my calculations for electoral volatility (legislative, presidential and parliamentary-presidential) in Mozambique are all based on votes, the comparison with Kuenzi and Lambright's data can only provide an impressionistic account.

bullets into a seemingly regularised count of ballots did not change who the main contestants for power are: at the beginning of the new century as in the late 1970s, political rule in Mozambique is still the result of a Frelimo-versus-Renamo confrontation.

	Mozambique (%)	African average (%)
Parliamentary volatility	8.9	28.4
Presidential volatility	14	29.6
Parliamentary-presidential volatility (average)	13.5	24.9

Table 1. *Legislative, presidential and parliamentary-presidential electoral volatility for Mozambique (my own calculations) and for thirty African countries that do not include the latter (Kuenzi and Lambright 2001:449,452).*

Electoral constituencies		Frelimo		Renamo (-UE)		União Democrática
		1994	1999	1994	1999	(1994 only)
South	Maputo City	17	14	1	2	-
	Maputo Province	12	12	1	1	-
	Gaza	15	16	0	0	1
	Inhambane	13	13	3	4	2
Centre	Sofala	3	4	18	17	-
	Manica	4	5	9	10	-
	Tete	5	8	9	10	1
	Zambezia	18	15	29	34	2
North	Nampula	20	24	32	26	2
	Cabo Delgado	15	16	6	6	1
	Niassa	7	6	4	7	-
Total		129	133	112	117	9

Table 2. *Number of parliamentary seats won by Frelimo, Renamo and União Democrática by electoral constituency, 1994 and 1999 elections. Figures in red indicate which party won the majority of seats in a given constituency.*

Electoral competition in Mozambique also reflects the conflictual legacy of the regional divides that the country developed during its anti-colonial struggle and the subsequent civil war. The regional polarisation of the Mozambican society is exposed by the results of the first two multiparty elections. Table 2 shows the number of seats obtained by the two main parties in each electoral constituency (i.e. the country's ten

provinces, plus Maputo city) for both the 1994 and the 1999 election²³. In these two successive electoral rounds, the geographical distribution of the seats won by the two major parties varied only marginally. With the exception of Niassa, the sole province where majority support shifted from one party to the other, election results confirmed the strong and stable regional roots of both Frelimo and Renamo. In most provinces, the dominance of one of the two main parties is so overwhelming that the environment is one of political homogeneity, with a huge majority of the people living in the same area (i.e. a province or, even more, a district) voting in the same way in favour of one party or the other, so that “the average Mozambican voter lives among and knows only people who support the same party and candidate”, a situation, as Weinstein points out, which is “hardly a recipe for a vibrant democratic civic culture”²⁴.

Building sound party organisations?

At the time Mozambique gained independence, in 1974, Frelimo enjoyed broad and genuine legitimacy among wide sections of the population for its unchallenged role in leading the anti-colonial struggle. A substantial erosion of this initial support, as pointed out, progressively resulted from a combination of political and social repression, of the civil war, and of misguided policies. In spite of the decline in the consensus that the party enjoys among Mozambicans and of the no longer unthinkable prospect that it may soon taste life in the opposition, Frelimo remains the country’s dominant organisation under the new political dispensation: one of a number of African parties that managed not only to survive the transition from one-party rule to pluralist competition, but also to remain in power.

The party maintains an effective organisation that was built over two decades of monopolistic rule and that is now proving its efficacy in a multiparty context. In fact, Frelimo’s organisational set up has remained largely unchanged, both at national and local level. An alleged 30,000 *células* remain the party’s basic units, as in the tradition of communist parties, immediately followed by *círculo* and *zona* branches. It is at the latter level that party ‘offices’ (often simple huts built with traditional materials) are allegedly present all over the country. At higher local levels – namely, *distrito* and *provincia* – Frelimo structures benefit from the resources that the organisation inherited from its past privileged status as a party-state, notably in terms of buildings. The uninterrupted control of the state apparatus mitigated the changes that the party underwent. Under one-party rule, for example, state officials at different levels also held party positions (a provincial governor would automatically be Frelimo’s provincial secretary, a district administrator would be the party’s district first secretary, and so on). A formal separation of state and party structures was introduced in 1990-

²³ The proportional representation electoral system, with multi-member constituencies, means that the share of seats obtained in a given province by a given party is a proxy for the latter’s share of the provincial vote. In 1994, a third party, União Democrática, obtained 9 seats evenly distributed between the north (3), the centre (3) and the south (3). In 1999, Renamo allied with the 10-party União Eleitoral coalition, which includes PUN (Party of National Unity), FAP (Popular Alliance Force), PPPM (Mozambique’s Popular Party), ALIMO (Free Alliance of Mozambique), PUM (Mozambique’s Unity Party) and PRD (Democratic Renewal Party), PVM (Mozambican Green Party), MONAMO (Mozambique’s National Movement), PCN (Party of National Convention), and PALMO (Mozambique’s Liberal Party).

²⁴ Weinstein (2002:151). Such local- or regional-level political homogeneity is shared by several other African societies (Barkan 1995).

1991, and this has somehow reduced the direct relevance of party branches and the power and privileges of local party leaders²⁵. But the majority of state personnel still belongs to Frelimo and thus, while state and party structures are now parallel rather than overlapping, the separation is largely an artificial one: to become real, it will have to wait until a different party takes power²⁶.

While party internal arrangements have by and large remained the same, they now have to accommodate a hugely increased party membership. Between 1977 and 1989, Frelimo replicated the Marx-Leninist model of a vanguard party, according to which it was only people of proved militancy and loyalty who could be formal members of the party. Anybody who did not take active part in the liberation struggle, for instance, had to wait at least until 1979 to get a membership card. The peasant-worker alliance at the backbone of the anti-colonial movement was soon broken: while the peasantry was formally acknowledged as a key partner, it was to be economically and politically subordinated to the workers. Frelimo, a party of “vanguard members of the working class ... *came to depend on a numerically weak but relatively privileged urban proletariat*, a burgeoning state bureaucracy, and an external network centred on Moscow”²⁷. Some categories of people – such as religious believers or polygamists – were entirely excluded from becoming members. Selective requirements were meant to ensure high levels of commitment on the part of party leaders as well as of the ranks and files. Thus, in the early 1980s, the limited membership of the party counted around 100,000 affiliates, and, by 1991, the figure had gone up but only to about 250,000²⁸. But when constitutional reform began to be discussed in the country, Frelimo also moved towards internal adjustments. It started to target groups that had been previously considered as ‘enemies’ – such as traditional leaders and religious communities, and even business people – and began to portray itself as an open and ‘vast front congregating Mozambicans of *all social classes and strata*’²⁹. Membership rose, reaching the impressive figure of 1 million 400 thousands in the space of a decade³⁰.

²⁵ Cf. Manning (1997:93-94, 96).

²⁶ A discussion with professor Luis De Brito helped me clarify these issues.

²⁷ Simpson (1993: 321-323).

²⁸ The 1982 figure is Cahen’s (1985:42), while the 1991 is from Manuel Tomé, Secretary General of Frelimo (1995-2002), interview (Maputo, 2 July 2002).

²⁹ *Estatutos do Partido* (1997, art. 2.2, emphasis added). At the 2002 Congress, the majority of the delegates was meant to come from the peasants, Antonio Simbine, Maputo, 26 June 2002.

³⁰ Manuel Tomé, Secretary General of Frelimo (1995-2002), interview (Maputo, 2 July 2002). The huge increase in the number of members also created new problems. In principle, party structures are meant to channel and mobilise the efforts of members towards the implementation of the party programme:

“For example, a party objective is to increase agricultural production. This is a very real, practical thing. And party members are expected to work towards this achievement. It’s been like this since 1991, but it became clearer in 1997. We say ‘This is the programme, the government is going to implement it and party members are meant to give the example and support it’. For example, we have campaigns to mobilise people to prevent cholera. Or, in the towns, to denounce corruption in state or private institutions” (Manuel Tomé).

But new members are often less committed than the selected ones of the past. They are less active within party structures (for example, less regular in attending meetings) and, especially at eyes of older affiliates, they appear to adopt more opportunistic behaviours. In general, it has become more difficult to motivate a growing and less militant membership into participating. In rural areas that were off-limits to party activities during the civil war, local structures were revitalised (notably in the run up to elections or party congresses), but the huge size of Mozambique’s countryside implies significant logistical problems in the organisation of meetings beyond the local community. On the other hand, in urban areas, in spite of swifter communications, people are normally busier and hardly find time for party activities. The party is now trying to address these problems with the introduction of more ‘flexible’ structures, including the possibility for members to organise *ad hoc* meetings, rather than regularly attend cell meetings.

The expanded membership has not significantly altered the sketchy collection of fees, which are currently raised from among 8-12% of all members only. Fee-raising thus adds little to the 3,433,800,000 *meticaís* per month (equivalent to about US\$ 1 million 680 thousand per year) that the Frelimo party currently receives from state funds (funds are allocated to political parties in proportion to the number of seats each of them holds in the *Assembleia*). The ruling party also benefits from the (mis-)use of state resources and from its links with the business community. Frelimo also set up some private enterprises, in recent years, although allegedly they are yet to produce any meaningful financial income³¹. Overall, it remains very difficult to quantify these kinds of party resources.

While the cell is supposed to be the basic unit of the party, inner processes have always worked in a top-down fashion. The core of the party are the national secretariat (for daily activities and administration) and, especially, a 15-member *Comissão Política* (formerly known as Political Bureau). The latter meets fortnightly and has traditionally been the key decision-making body of the party, since the much larger *Comité Central* only meets once a year. Party congresses, which so often marked turning points in the history of the party, are only held more or less every five years³².

The authority of former combatants of the anti-colonial struggle in the *Comissão* and in the *Comité Central* has remained essentially unchallenged, in spite of the emergence of the new technocrats in government and of an influential parliamentary wing. ‘Freedom fighters’, who enjoy special privileges, are seen as guarantors of the superior ethics of the national leadership in the face of the new and allegedly more corruptible politicians brought to the fore by multiparty politics. The much publicised ‘*renovação na continuidade*’ quota system, which allows the party to integrate younger generations or outsiders, also ensures a built-in conservative majority in all the party organs to which it applies³³.

The way Frelimo’s new secretary general and prospective candidate for the 2004 presidential election was selected, in mid-2002, testifies to the strengths and limitations of the party’s organisation. On the one hand, it was not Chissano alone who appointed his successor, proving that any given individual in the party, as powerful as he may be, has to take into account the latter’s institutionalised procedures³⁴. At the same time, however, the selection process was fundamentally oligarchic: a nomination was produced by the *Comissão*, it was then formally endorsed by the *Comité Central* and later approved by Congress. Armando Guebuza, one of Frelimo’s historical leaders and the chief of the party’s parliamentary *bancada*, was thus selected in a

³¹ Manuel Tomé, Secretary General of Frelimo (1995-2002), interview (Maputo, 2 July 2002). Party earnings include, for example, rents from hired buildings and shares from ownership of some hotels. A *Sociedade de Participações Financeiras* (SPF) was also set up by the party in the mid-1990s to fund party activities through private businesses (*Savana*, 14 June 2002, p.2).

³² The very composition of each Congress is in the hands of the *Comissão*: except for four representatives to which every province is entitled, it is the latter that determines the proportion of men and women, workers and peasants, intellectuals, traditional leaders or youth, who are to attend the party general meeting.

³³ According to the ‘renovation within continuity’ principle, a percentage of the members of each party organ (e.g. the *Comissão* or the parliamentary group) must be replaced at every internal election, thus guaranteeing that incumbents cannot entirely close the way to new aspirants. In 2002, for example, “for the 15 members of the Political Commission, 5 had to be new members. So the Central Committee had to vote to re-elect 10 among the 15 sitting members, and then it selected 5 from a list of about 15 new candidates” (Manuel Tomé, Secretary General of Frelimo 1995-2002, interview, Maputo, 2 July 2002). The other side of the coin – i.e. the ‘remaining’ percentage – works as an assurance that old members will still take most positions (in the example, 66 % of the seats in the *Comissão*) even in a situation where, in the absence of quotas, pressures for change might have produced larger turnovers.

³⁴ Chissano announced in May 2001 that he would not seek re-election to the state presidency. Such an announce was similar to the one made by Jerry Rawlings prior to the 2000 Ghanaian election, but Rawlings contextually hand-picked his successor, something which did not happen in Maputo.

largely consensual and disciplined, but explicitly top-down and undemocratic, manner. The party leadership hardly had any trouble in seeing its choice approved, showing that it is in full control of the party hierarchy and that the legacy of Marx-Leninist ‘democratic centralism’ still exerts its powerful influence³⁵. More broadly, the political culture of Frelimo remains that of a single party. As a prominent party figure points out, while the need for an alternative to one-party rule was perceived since the mid-1980s, there was never a real discussion on what was to be the alternative model or institutional solution. The democratic package was taken as it was “presented to us by the outside world... Civic education was confined to electoral education, but nobody was taught to discuss with the other, we were only used to discuss among ourselves. And thus the culture of the deference for the chief remained, and pressures for democratic change inside the parties are not really there yet”³⁶.

Renamo was originally a military organisation, and a relatively disciplined one, as it demonstrated by actually delivering peace after the peace agreement was signed in 1992. The former guerrillas, as mentioned, also succeeded in gaining legitimacy among broad sections of the population, in mounting a serious electoral challenge to the ruling party, and in maintaining their role as the principal opposition over almost a decade of multiparty politics. As it is currently working, however, the main opposition party manifests major weaknesses in its lack of a well-functioning organisation and, in part as a consequence, in its difficulties in operating within the new democratic institutions. The undisputed leadership of Afonso Dhlakama during the bush days played an important role in the subsequent development of the movement: “the history of the rebellion is the history of a group completely centralised around his leader... [with a] hyper-concentration of power... [that] could not avoid creating problems during Renamo’s process of ‘civilianisation’”³⁷. Dhlakama was not only “a man alone”³⁸, but one who wished to remain so and, even under pluralist politics, he retained his unchallenged and personalistic control over the party by systematically undermining the development of an effective and democratic party organisation.

The transformation of Renamo into a political party was supported by a UN Trust Fund which, in the run up to the 1994 election, handed over US\$ 17 million to the former rebel movement. The resources made available by foreign donors, however, were to be a temporary measure only: they were not meant to support a political side as such, but the country’s peace and democratisation process. As the transition was completed and it became clear that Renamo would not go back to the bush, the newborn party was left to walk on its own legs. The boycott of the 1998 local elections was an attempt to call in fresh money. As a matter of fact, the party receives substantial funding from the state. Of the US\$ 1.4 million per year it receives, however,

³⁵ Cahen (1985:41) describes Frelimo’s democratic centralism as “a principle of action, not of internal organisation”, whereby internal debates can be very open, but, once a party organ adopts an official line, its members are expected to observe a strict discipline in defending such a position in public or in relation to lower party organs. Following the democratic centralism logic, for example, the agriculture minister and a prominent representative of Frelimo’s ‘younger’ generation, Helder Muteia, “came close to losing his Central Committee seat [in the election by Congress] ... probably lost votes because he stood against Guebuza when, earlier in the month, the outgoing Central Committee voted on its recommended candidate for general secretary” (*AIM Report*, n. 234, 18 June 2002).

³⁶ Frelimo national official (anonymous), Maputo, June 2002.

³⁷ Cahen (1998:25).

³⁸ Cahen (1998:28).

almost half is apparently left unaccounted for. It is alleged that only party leader Afonso Dhlakama knows how this or other financial resources the party pulls together from private donations are spent. Neither are party membership fees collected in any consistent way, notably because the party never had a tradition of a fee-paying membership. Most notably, money hardly trickles down to the districts. Establishing party local structures and keeping them alive with only a weak stream of funding coming in is an almost impossible task, and a chronic problem for African parties that are out of power. In areas where the party has many MPs, the latter helped keeping party activities going, in others – notably in the south – the party’s presence has remained much more erratic. Renamo’s branches on the ground are often little more than a flag on a member’s house. Nevertheless, the party has long benefited from networks of support and, in particular, from the sympathetic role of the many traditional leaders who have adhered to it³⁹. This has allowed the party to expand its support by keeping in touch with the population at a time when, in spite of its better functioning organisation and physical structures, Frelimo appears to many as losing touch with the people.

In spite of the major efforts embarked upon by the leadership to open the newly created party to qualified personnel – people who could staff its own cadre positions and represent Renamo within state institutions – the functioning of the organisation has remained almost totally in the hands of its president and closed to either external or internal scrutiny⁴⁰. Dhlakama himself embodies the core of the party, the unifying centre of a network of different groups who hardly communicate to each other. Groups such as the ‘resistance’ fighters who were in the bush (including the likes of Vicente Ululu, José De Castro or, until recently, Raul Domingos); those ‘from the cities’, who had either been clandestinely active until 1992 or joined the party at that time; the former expatriates, also known as the ‘Lisbon group’, who supported the guerrilla from abroad; and the demobilised soldiers as well as those who joined the new Mozambican army – the FADM – who still see Renamo as their political referent.

Internal rules have little relevance to the working of the party. While party congresses should be organised every two years, for example, none was held between 1994 (when a small general meeting took place in Maringue) and 2001. In October 2001, a Congress re-elected Dhlakama as party president against two hopeless contestants who were meant to show a façade of internal democracy. A new National Council was also elected, with its membership expanded from 10-12 to 60. And a new statute was approved⁴¹ that reportedly formalises the existence of the Political Commission – a small body that had traditionally included the senior members of the party – after a decade or so of activity. But the re-structuring of the party was

³⁹ Cf. Harrison (1999:171). During the war, an alliance between traditional chiefs and Renamo developed in central Mozambique, largely as a result of Frelimo’s marginalisation of customary authorities and of the forced re-settlements of villagisation policies: “the implicit contract between Renamo and chiefs, who invited Renamo to set up bases on their land, was that Renamo would block government interference with their way of life and enable them to remain on their land. In return, the chiefs would serve as administrators for Renamo, taking the Renamo title of ‘*mambos*’ and mobilising the population to provide food and collaborators to serve as police ‘*majubas*’” (Pereira 1999:8, cf.p.61). Renamo’s statute later established a *Conselho Nacional das Familias e Chefes tradicionais* as a consultative organ directly linked to the president (see Renamo Statutes, 1991 and 1994).

⁴⁰ The party statute sanctioned some aspects of Dhlakama’s otherwise informal internal power: until the 2001 reform, for example, a president-plus-two-members quorum was enough for the deliberations of the National Council (formally the main party organ in-between congresses) (Renamo Statute 1994, art.12.3).

⁴¹ As of mid-2002, the new statute had not been circulated yet and high level party officials still referred to a 1991 version, despite the latter had already been replaced: a slightly different 1994 statute (published by the Ministry of Justice in the *Boletim da República*, 28 December 1994, pp.907 ff.) was allegedly drafted by Dhlakama and a few associates only, and the larger party hardly knew about its existence.

again marred by confusion and over-concentration of power and, once again, the personal whims of the party leader overruled formal regulations⁴².

The authority of the party president only seemed to be countered by an alternative source of internal power when a Renamo parliamentary wing was formed, following the 1994 election of the first multiparty parliament. Dhlakama had decided that he would only run for the state presidency, not for a parliamentary seat, and thus he remained out of the assembly. But the latter soon turned out to be the place where the opposition could give voice to its demands and, to some extent, keep the government under scrutiny. In the absence of the party leader, Raul Domingos, the head of Renamo's *bancada*, emerged as an influential and visible figure between 1994 and 2000. The (limited) autonomy of the party's legislative wing, however, was undermined when, on the basis of some dubious accusations about secret deals and private interests that Domingos was pursuing with the government, Dhlakama decided to expel him from the party in late 2000. It is widely believed that Domingos was perceived by Dhlakama as a threat in view of the party Congress and of an internal election for the party leadership. Less than two years on, the marginalisation of prominent figures developed into a pattern, reaching a point where total confusion seemed to dominate party affairs in mid-2002. A prominent MP was suspended for allegedly mismanaging Dhlakama's missed trip to an inter-party conference in the US. Another one resigned for the party's parliamentary group⁴³. The secretary general of the party, who had been advocating the re-admission of Domingos, was dismissed only months after he took office. The head of the National Council was also quickly replaced by somebody handpicked by the party president and endorsed by the council itself. As Dhlakama took over as interim secretary general (cumulating the latter position with that of party leader, and thus further concentrating power in his hands), the whole Political Commission was sacked on the ground of 'unpatriotic' and 'undemocratic' behaviour, and a new one elected after a purge of a few moderates⁴⁴. Whether or not this string of dismissals is actually an attempt to sideline Sena members from the party leadership (Dhlakama is a Ndaú), as some have been suggesting, it is a most patent manifestation of the weakness of the party's internal arrangements and of the persistence of its 'legendary disorganisation'⁴⁵.

Problems of party system legitimacy

Evidence on whether political parties in Mozambique are perceived and supported as rightful and suitable organisations furthering the country's democratic politics is both relatively scarce and mixed. The very end of the civil war – that is, the acceptance of the new political set up on the part of the former rebels – can be taken as an indication of the relative legitimacy of the new party system, which is broadly acknowledged as

⁴² According to the new statute, the Political Commission was meant to be appointed by the president from among members of the National Council. Dhlakama, however, decided to stuff it with his close associates, of whom all but one did not belong to the NC. When somebody pointed out that this contravened the new rules, the president merely had the latter changed to state that members of the PC *could not*, at the same time, serve in the NC. Once again the personal whims of the party leader overruled formal regulations.

⁴³ Almeida Tambara, MP, resigned from the party in August 2002 (*AIM*, n.238, 22 August 2002).

⁴⁴ *BBC World Service*, 31 July 2002 and *AIM*, 28 July 2002.

⁴⁵ Cahen (1998:30).

the main channel for political participation and the main ground where politics is to be played out. The fact that no domestic rebel nor social movement has emerged, since the peace agreement was signed, may partly be due to the country's scarcity of resources for political activities and to the weakness of its civic associational life. But it is also a symptom that Mozambique's main political constituencies are being represented by the party system as a whole, and notably by the two largest parties. Renamo leaders have occasionally organised vehement protests (notably the boycott of the 1998 municipal elections and the public demonstrations against the 1999 election results) or threatened a 'return to the bush' as a response to alleged malpractices on the part of the ruling group. Yet, Renamo have never been close to actually re-starting the war and, in fact, it has contributed to keeping all sections of society within the new pluralist framework, thus avoiding violent challenges to the latter. In spite of its vicious past, the main opposition party enjoys a broader legitimacy among ordinary Mozambicans than was expected during the war. As Cahen points out, during the 1994 'elections of silence', the main campaign issue was not war but peace. People were mostly concerned with re-starting their lives in a pacified country, and, "with few exceptions, the society does not blame Renamo for the war, or at least no more than it blames Frelimo"⁴⁶.

The former rebel movement may also benefit from a sort of 'passive' legitimacy. While Frelimo has been traditionally regarded as one of the least corrupted among African parties⁴⁷, economic and political reforms coincided with the increasing spread of corruption in the country's governing institutions and ruling group. Mozambique's leading independent journalist, Carlos Cardoso, was assassinated in late 2000 for investigating financial scandals that seemed to reach very close to the country's top leadership. In a similar context, a party like Renamo, which has always been far from the sites of economic and governmental power, may profit from its image as a 'clean' alternative.

According to regional surveys carried out in Maputo, Sofala and Nampula provinces, political parties are perceived to be more involved in corruption than institutions such as parliament and provincial or district administrations, albeit less so than the police, the government, tribunals or entrepreneurs. While parties are believed to be more interested in ending corruption than all of the abovementioned institutions and actors (except for the executive), almost half of those interviewed (47%) declared they have no confidence whatsoever in political parties, as against less than one in five (18.7%) saying that they do trust them⁴⁸. These findings are however problematic. A different survey, for example, found that as many as 44.9% of Mozambicans express some measure of trust towards political parties, while only 20.3% state that, in varying degrees, they do not⁴⁹. This trust, combined with the fact that parties are relatively identifiable and accessible at the local level, possibly explains why ordinary Mozambicans – 58.3% of whom support a political party, as against 37.3% who say they do not – are more likely to try and sort out their problems by talking to

⁴⁶ Cahen (1998:2).

⁴⁷ Cahen (1985:43), Hall and Young (1997:230), Hanlon (2002:6).

⁴⁸ *Ética* (2001: 71-72,86).

⁴⁹ Centro de Estudos de População, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (2002:13). While the question was worded in virtually the same way, the difference in the responses may be explained by the fact that *Ética* was putting the question in the context of an inquiry on corruption.

political party representatives than, for instance, by approaching members of the district, provincial or national administration or MPs⁵⁰.

While the party system as the locus of pluralist representation enjoys some consensus, the mutual legitimacy of the two main contenders seems to be weaker. Each of them accepts, in principle, that an opposite party may gain power through the ballot box – that is, they subscribe to the rules of electoral democracy and to the notion of tolerance for a plurality of parties – but when it comes, specifically, to ‘Frelimo’ or ‘Renamo’, they trade hateful accusations and portray each other as bearers of inexcusable guilt. Frelimo is attacked by Renamo for its monopolisation of political power, for its centralising and undemocratic attitudes, and for the alleged manipulation of election results. In the Assembleia, a Renamo parliamentarian having anything more than basic contacts with majority MPs undermines his own reputation inside the party. The leadership group of the governing party, on the other hand, has long claimed a sort of ‘natural right’ to rule Mozambique. Renamo’s fitness to govern the country is systematically questioned to delegitimise the opposition and present Frelimo, both domestically and internationally, as the only realistic option the country has.

The dynamics of inter-party relations

Opening the political sphere to non-Frelimo political actors did not modify, as pointed out, who the main contenders for power in Mozambique are: the country has a two-party system clearly centred on the competition between Frelimo and Renamo. Since the new constitution was adopted in 1990, a number of minor parties has sprung up, but they made little inroads into an electorate shaped and dominated by the Frelimo-Renamo cleavage, a deeply-rooted source of political identities generated by the country’s past conflicts. A UN Trust Fund for Assistance to Registered Parties was set up in mid 1993 with a US\$ 3 million budget, and probably contributed to the proliferation of personalistic micro-parties. But the financial support it initially provided to the unarmed oppositions was not enough, for most of them, to overcome the electoral threshold. Of the 18 minor parties taking part to the 1994 election, only the União Democrática alliance – which grouped together the Palmo, Panade and Panamo parties – obtained 5% of the vote, necessary to gain representation in the national assembly. Similarly, in 1999, only the ten small parties of the União Eleitoral managed to enter parliament, from the backdoor, by forming joint lists with Renamo⁵¹. In both cases, the threshold had a significant, albeit not a dramatic impact: 13% of the vote was lost to parties that did not pass the hurdle, that is, only around 87% of the electorate was represented in parliament. It is not clear whether the electoral failure of minor parties implied the exclusion of any important constituencies – as opposed to mere personal factions – from political representation. The most relevant voices that are currently left out of the Assembleia seem to be those of the workers’ party (the Partido Trabalhista, the third largest party in 1999 with 2.7%), of Yaquib Sibindy’s Partido Independente de Moçambique (Pimo, a disguised Islamist party that is quite vocal and influential among the non-parliamentary oppositions), and, perhaps, of Wehia Ripua’s

⁵⁰ Centro de Estudos de População, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (2002:21,36).

⁵¹ See note 21 above.

Partido Democrático de Moçambique (Pademo). Unless or until some major political event will generate the momentum for a third actor to challenge the current duopoly, small parties will possibly find it even harder to enter parliament in the near future: state funding, which only parties with parliamentary representation have access to, may work as a further barrier to the success of any such challenger⁵².

Therefore, the fragmentation of Mozambique's party system has so far remained very limited. The Laakso-Taagepera index of party system fragmentation ($ENP^p = 1/\sum p_i^2$) measures the 'effective' number of parliamentary parties by weighing the relevance of each party according to its size, i.e. its share of assembly seats (p_i). In the case of Mozambique's first two legislatures, the ENP^p was, respectively, 1.67 and 1.99⁵³. Party fragmentation has long been associated with the instability not only of parliamentary governments but also of political regimes – notably in presidential systems⁵⁴ – and Mozambique's low score may thus have a positive upshot. In fact, the above values compare positively to those of 36 stable democracies, whose 3.16 average party fragmentation score falls between the two extremes of Botswana (1.35) and Papua New Guinea (5.98). The mean effective number of parties of the classic two-party systems of New Zealand, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and the United States range between 1.96 and 2.40⁵⁵.

Mozambique's low fragmentation scores reflect a situation where, in practice, Frelimo's majority in the House has been clear-cut but not overwhelming. Over the past eight years, the two main parties have in fact confronted each other with parliamentary *bancadas* of comparable sizes (see Table 2, above, for each side's number of MPs). When voting in the assembly, both party groups have displayed a relatively high degree of internal cohesion and discipline. This is partly the result of the polarisation and distance that separates the two sides – i.e. while a significant proportion of laws are passed by unanimity or consensus, the chances that individual members will switch party are relatively low – and, especially, of a constitutional provision that prohibits any MP from joining the parliamentary group of a party other than the one he or she has been elected with⁵⁶.

Participation in parliament, as Manning points out, represented a crucial new challenge that influenced the distinctive development of each of the two main parties, their integration in the new democratic system, and thus the latter's consolidation. In particular, the emergence of the parliamentary arena affected internal power relations between the party parliamentary group and the external hierarchy of the party. In the case of

⁵² Cf. Mair (1997:105ff.) on the cartel, oligopolistic effect of state funding for political parties in industrial democracies.

⁵³ The Laakso-Taagepera index implies that, when two, three or more parties have exactly the same strength, each of them will be fully counted, giving an index value of 2.0, 3.0, 4.0 and so on. When one or more of the parties are evidently weaker, the ENP is lower than the actual number of parties. The higher value of ENP^p for the 1999 parliament reflects a slightly reduced gap between Frelimo and Renamo-UE in terms of shares of seats compared to 1994, in spite of the fact that União Democrática was also represented in the first parliament. (Since Renamo-UE presented unified lists at the 1999 election and later formed a single parliamentary group, they are here treated as one party). Mozambique's effective number of 'electoral parties' (ENP^e , based on the share of votes rather than on the share of seats obtained by each party) ranges between 2.6–3.03 and is thus only slightly higher than its ENP^p .

⁵⁴ See, for instance, Mainwaring (1993).

⁵⁵ Lijphart (1999:74,76-77).

⁵⁶ On the voting discipline of the two main *bancadas* in the 1994-1999 parliament, and on the percentage of laws passed by unanimity or consensus, see Macuane (2000:104,107ff.). Prior to the 1999 election, three MPs elected in 1994 for Renamo in Tete province (Francisco Raposo Binda, Celestino Bento, and Virgílio Chapata) defected and applied to join Frelimo (*AIM* n.168, 9 November 1999). Other cases of defections to Frelimo, outside parliament, include the former head of Renamo's information department, Virgílio Namalue (*AIM* n. 164, 6 September 1999) and Rafael Companhia, a former Renamo delegate in Manica, who reportedly defected together with 25 others (*AIM* n.153, 9 March 1999).

Frelimo, since most party leaders are also MPs, parliament offered a welcome new arena for the party hierarchy to reshape the party identity and rationale as an ‘interest articulator’ and, tentatively, as a checker of the-party-in-government, which is dominated by the more technocratic and economically liberal tendency in the party. The parliamentary majority, in fact, challenged government policy on issues such as local electoral law and municipalities, defence bills, privatisation of the cashew industry and of the banking sector. For Renamo, on the other hand, parliamentary participation further exposed and exacerbated organisational and human resources lacunae, with technically poor parliamentary performances, dependence of the *bancada* on external decision-making (as Dhlakama does not seat in the assembly), frequent recourse to boycotts or extra-parliamentary strategies, and haphazard policy positions (notably on constitutional reform). In particular, as already mentioned, the creation of a parliamentary wing largely consisting of recently recruited and comparatively-skilled party members initially clashed with Dhlakama’s effort to maintain a personalistic and extra-parliamentary leadership style⁵⁷.

Parliaments are also an important locus of dialogue and socialisation between opposite political forces. But political conflict in Mozambique is deep-seated, and few contacts take place in an assembly where cross-party networks seem to be entirely absent. Except for the plenary meetings of the House, MPs only sit together in parliamentary committees. Especially within Renamo, there is a sustained perception that people should not talk to members of the majority – as they are ‘Frelimo people’ – and those who do it tend to be looked at suspiciously by their colleagues. The fact that Dhlakama is not in parliament is not helping the development of relations between the two parties. Personal negotiations between Chissano and Dhlakama were key to the success of the transition and to the stabilisation of the country’s pluralist politics in its first years. Indeed, besides formal institutions and processes, a second ‘track’ for a top leadership-level management of political conflict developed, which was based on informal and personalised negotiations⁵⁸. Renamo’s complaints concerning electoral processes or outcomes in 1994, 1998 (local elections) and 1999, as well as the occasional boycotts of parliamentary activities, were regularly followed by and overcome through informal bargaining between Dhlakama and Chissano – often with a crucial appeal to the international community – aimed at keeping Renamo into the game. Extra-parliamentary agreements, which followed the consensus-building logic of the 1992 GPA, have been the way in which the leader of Renamo tried to exert a veto on major political developments in Mozambique. Manning notes, however, that while

“routine side negotiations help lower the stakes of formal politics and reassure actors that politics need not be zero sum. At the same time, however, ... if formal institutions are routinely circumvented, they cannot gain strength and acceptance. ... these parallel processes ... narrow the scope of representation and participation ... reduce transparency, and weaken incentives for organizational development within both parties. ... Moreover, a pattern is established in which the ‘losers’ of formal processes are encouraged to disrupt, boycott or publicly disparage those processes in order to initiate informal bargaining ... this is likely to undermine public confidence in formal democratic institutions”⁵⁹.

⁵⁷ Manning (2002a).

⁵⁸ Manning (2002b).

⁵⁹ Manning (2002b).

The space for such informal and personalised negotiations, however, seems to be waning. Thus, for instance, the dialogue that the two leaders began in early 2001 over the election results collapsed when the president refused Dhlakama's preconditions and the latter withdrew from the talks. Chissano has progressively moved away from the model of inter-leadership consensus, rejecting the idea that the government needs Dhlakama's consensus on issues for which the latter insists on being part to decision-making.

Mozambique's new democratic politics: peaceful and stable, but weak and untested

The end of the civil war in Mozambique paved the way to the partial constitutionalisation of the country's politics, notably through the introduction of electoral competition and its tentative routinisation. In this new context, the party system is a major instrument for political expression and for the channelment and peaceful management of conflicts. The very participation of the main political actors in the multiparty dispensation contributes to the assertion of constitutional rule and to the gradual adoption of democratic attitudes and behaviours, that is, to the progressive legitimisation and institutionalisation of competitive politics⁶⁰.

The paper has shown how both Frelimo and Renamo – as well as the competition between the two of them – have deep-seated historical origins and well-established regional roots. These reflect in the current stability of electoral competition (which is shaped by the cleavage generated by the civil war) and in the low fragmentation of the party system (which does not allow an easy entry to any third challenger). The resulting party system enables the new democratic framework to actually accommodate and integrate the country's most relevant political actors, and thus to gain a significant degree of legitimacy. The sustained presence of the main contenders throughout national elections, and the virtual lack of impact for 'flash' or single-election parties, also increase the potential for the electorate to hold the executive and legislators accountable, since, where "voters are presented with a new set of parties before every election, there is no way the party labels can inform them about the parties' past activities"⁶¹.

Yet, a number of aspects concerning the Mozambican party system are negatively affecting the deepening of democratic politics. For a start, the legitimacy of the party system is weakened by the persistence of the polarisation generated by the civil conflict, as the tough antagonism that divides the two parties only leaves marginal room for mutual recognition. Further, the ethno-regional entrenchment of the two main parties bestow a communal connotation on the electoral competition. The latter is undermined by a dangerous division of the country into Renamo-dominated *versus* Frelimo-dominated areas, a phenomenon similarly found in many other countries on the continent. Most importantly, Mozambique's two-party system remains unbalanced. This is also a feature common to other African multiparty politics, where dominance by a non-authoritarian party appears to be prevalent⁶². In Maputo, power is still heavily concentrated in the hands of Frelimo, a party that has governed the country uninterrupted for over twenty-five years, that has repeatedly

⁶⁰ Cf. Diamond (1999, 65ff.), and Linz and Stepan (1996, ch.1).

⁶¹ Randall – Svåsand (2002b:38).

⁶² Cf. Randall and Svåsand (2002b:35).

and successfully (if undemocratically) addressed the question of internal succession, that retains a disciplined organisation and is fundamentally institutionalised. As robust as its electoral support is, Renamo's opposition consists of a strongly personalistic and weakly organised party, struggling to operate within state institutions and to accommodate internal differences. In this sense, the party system went through what is not only a limited, but an uneven process of institutionalisation⁶³. The relative organisational vigour of the ruling party – crucially favoured by its control over state resources – far outdoes that of the main opposition. The latter is rather more established in the 'public mind'⁶⁴ than in terms of functioning party internal arrangements. Renamo's disorganised opposition finds it difficult (and even 'unnatural') to try and articulate policy programmes or to scrutinise government activities in any systematic manner. The political socialisation and training of party cadres are penalised by a leadership for which skilful people are seen as potential challengers that have to be marginalized. This inevitably damages the capacity of the party to operate effectively within the democratic institutions of the state. The latter, as pointed out, are undermined by Dhlakama's attempts to circumvent them and bargain directly with Chissano. None of this bodes well for the country's democratic consolidation prospects.

Overall progress towards a pluralist political culture and a fully democratic politics in Mozambique has been limited. A most serious problem the country has to face are its extremely high rates of corruption. As a manifestation of illegal and unconstitutional practices, corruption is the very opposite of the rule of law and, in general, "countries with high indexes of corruption suffer low levels of trust on the part of their citizens towards the institutions of the state and the political system"⁶⁵. The perception that a regime is deeply corrupted, for example, may reflect in popular support for violent or non-democratic solutions, that is, in the presence of the 'subjective conditions for the emergence of collective violence'⁶⁶. Such a disposition is reportedly very high in Mozambique, at least so far as the claim that "cutting off the hands" or "adopting death penalty" would significantly reduce corruption can be taken to indicate an individual's tendency towards violent solutions (a link that, at best, appears to be indirect). At the same time, however, there does not seem to be any ample support for non-democratic options. A large majority of those interviewed appears unconvinced that a one-party nor a military system – let alone the abolition of parliament and parties – would significantly alter current levels of sleaze⁶⁷. The existing multiparty system ('free elections and many parties') seems to be plainly preferred to alternatives such as one-partism, traditional authority structures or the old colonial order. A more specific comparison with the country's single party experience shows that people appreciate the much greater freedom to express their opinions, to exert their right to vote without pressures, and to belong to any organisation they like⁶⁸. A different investigation, however, reveals that Mozambicans remain sceptical about any real improvements in their capacity to actually influence government and, vice versa, in the government's capacity to treat everybody equally and to raise living

⁶³ Cf. Randall and Svåsand (2001:8).

⁶⁴ Cf. Randall and Svåsand (2001:10).

⁶⁵ *Ética* (2001:22). In its 2000 Corruption Perceptions Index, Transparency International ranked Mozambique among the 10 most corrupted countries (81st out of a total of 90 countries). See www.transparency.org.

⁶⁶ *Ética* (2001:94).

⁶⁷ *Ética* (2001:96).

⁶⁸ Centro de Estudos de População, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (2002:78-79,95).

standards. It is indeed on the issue of living standards that one-party rule compares positively to the current system⁶⁹. Some kind of nostalgia also seems to surface in the scarce political tolerance that the population shows, surely the legacy of a monolithic political culture. Dissent and open debate are still seen by most as deserving exclusion: popular acceptance of the right of people who ‘talk negatively about the government’ to manifest, to stand for public offices, to talk on the radio and write on newspapers, or even to vote, is very low⁷⁰. Moreover, while a majority of Mozambicans rejects the idea that, at times, a non-democratic form of government may be better than democratic government, most of them think that the latter should act like a father guiding his children (76.1%), rather than being dependent on or at the service of its people (21.8%)⁷¹. At the end of the day, they even subscribe to a notion of ‘real democracy’ as a system where “people have equal access to food, housing and education” (44.5%), rather than one in which “the majority of the people decide and rights and freedoms are protected” (33.6%).

Since Mozambique’s transition to electoral politics was completed, two major political controversies have emerged. Both controversies concern the very legitimacy of electoral contests. In 1998, Renamo staged a boycott of the country’s first municipal elections after Frelimo refused to extend municipality status to areas other than thirty-three urban centres whose selection was perceived to favour the ruling party. The following year, Renamo went back to ballot-box competition for the presidential and legislative elections, but it then grudged about the elections’ outcome (the results, as of late-2002, had not been officially confirmed). In demanding a recount or a fresh contest, the leader of the opposition even threatened to set up Renamo administrations in regions where the party won a majority⁷². While the opposition party later seemed to recognize the Supreme Court’s ruling which rebuffed its petition, and thus to accept the elections’ results, it subsequently came back on the issue time and again. In late 2000, Renamo organised public protests against the election results, and violence exploded in the northern town of Montepuez when the police intervened against demonstrators. Forty people died and another eighty of those arrested dramatically lost their lives in an overcrowded jail. At the 2001 party congress, Dhlakama again denounced the alleged electoral rigging of the national elections⁷³.

What do elections tell us, then, about the legitimacy of the new regime? While relatively isolated, the above episodes point, at a minimum, to a problematic acceptance of election outcomes; indeed, a problem which is shared by several other African countries. Although the 1994 and 1999 elections were internationally recognised as actual expressions of the will of the voters⁷⁴, in both cases there were complaints about the results being fixed or negotiated by the two main parties, if not unilaterally manipulated by Frelimo. At best, the legitimacy of electoral procedures needs further verification. The so-called double-turnover test, whereby a ruling party leaves power to an election-winning opposition and the latter, in turn, does the same at a subsequent election⁷⁵, may provide additional corroboration. A double-turnover, however is not to be

⁶⁹ Centro de Estudos de População, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (2002:78-79,95).

⁷⁰ Centro de Estudos de População, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (2002:27).

⁷¹ Centro de Estudos de População, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (2002:94ff.).

⁷² *AIM*, n.175, 8 February 2000.

⁷³ *Savana* (Maputo), 26 October 2001, p.2.

⁷⁴ For instance, Human Rights Watch says the 1999 elections were “free and mostly fair” (HRW Mozambique 2001).

⁷⁵ Huntington (1991).

expected any time soon. As a matter of fact, in 2004, Frelimo will ‘celebrate’ its thirty years of uninterrupted power. Renamo, on the other hand, is still waiting for the opportunity to legally exercise political authority and administer the country at national as much as at local level. As Weinstein notes, Mozambique’s winner-take-all and strongly centralised presidentialism puts a huge premium on a victory at the centre. The elected president appoints the ten provincial governors, who cascade-like appoint district chiefs. This means that the ruling party controls the administration of every locality except those (33 cities and districts out of 411 localities) that are allowed to elect their municipal authorities. If Renamo wins an election, “the prospect of ‘payback time’ is frightening” and potentially destabilising⁷⁶. After the relatively successful elections of the 1990s, which opened up a previously closed and uncompetitive political system, a crucial test of Mozambique’s young democracy will be an actual turnover in power.

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⁷⁶ Weinstein (2002:153). A further way of balancing presidential power would be an opposite majority in the assembly, but this may result in additional destabilising pulls (cf. Linz 1990, Linz and Valenzuela 1994).

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