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THROUGH THE MOZAMBICAN CIVIL  
WAR:**

**AN ANALYTICAL NARRATIVE ON  
STATE-MAKING**

**Jason Sumich and João Honwana**  
Crisis States Research Centre

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## **Strong Party, Weak State? Frelimo and State Survival Through the Mozambican Civil War**

### **An analytical narrative on state-making**

Jason Sumich and João Honwana

#### **Abstract**

*Mozambique has been described as a model of 'state resilience' as the ruling Frelimo party has managed to maintain power through years of economic collapse and civil conflict. However, such a description can be misleading and I argue that in most senses, apart from the symbolic, the state largely collapsed through much of the country during the civil war (1977-1992). By tracing the social formation of the elite who eventually went on to dominate the Frelimo party leadership I demonstrate how they were able to maintain internal unity and survive the trials of the post-independence period. However, the social basis of the unity that has maintained the Frelimo party is also very exclusionary, and in many ways unique to themselves. Thus, instead of a model of state resilience I argue that it is the Frelimo party that has survived, but that the re-establishment of the hegemony of the party-state could deepen the divisions and inequalities that helped fuel civil war.*

#### **Introduction**

Mozambique offers an interesting case study of political crisis and resilience. Shortly after independence, following an eleven year liberation struggle, the country was thrust into a devastating civil war. It was one of the more brutal in contemporary African history, lasting close to fifteen years. Despite a successful peace process in 1992 and strong economic growth, the state remains fragile, much of the population lives in poverty, and many of the divisions of the civil war have not been adequately resolved by the introduction of democracy. Nevertheless, despite severe challenges to the government's authority, the ruling Frelimo party has shown a remarkable degree of internal unity and has managed to withstand the move away from socialism towards democracy surprisingly well.<sup>1</sup> Not only have they maintained power continuously since independence in 1975, but grew to such dominance after the last election in 2004 that the current political order is an elected single-party state (De Brito 2007).

This paper explains how a post-independence political order was constructed in Mozambique, which allowed the Frelimo party to monopolise state power and create legitimacy among key constituencies, while at the same time creating a system that excluded and alienated large sections of the population leaving it vulnerable to crisis. As will be discussed, due to a variety of historical and social factors, including the geo-politics of neighbouring states and the party's relationships with elements of the international community, the Frelimo party has been relatively

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<sup>1</sup> Frelimo is the Portuguese acronym for Mozambican Liberation Front.

effective in creating a cohesive and unified ruling party. A paradox thus emerges: a ruling party can react in a unified manner (at least externally), but is also in the midst of a political situation marked by fragility and, despite the successful peace process, one where there is the strong possibility that struggles for political and economic inclusion could lead to further conflict.

In a classic work, Barrington Moore (1966) has indicated the various roles of the landed elite in the creation of either a dictatorship or a democracy. Furthermore, he also identifies the ways in which the peasantry are incorporated (or repressed) into evolving economic and political structures as a key factor in not only the form the state will take, but the creation of states (ibid). Moore realised that for many post-colonial states, the form of colonialism they experience and their relationship to this external power is crucial to state-building after independence. However, Moore tends to stress the internal factors of state formation: the nature of the political system and the leadership; the class alliances that make up and challenge the ruling coalitions; and the social relations between the dominant and subordinate groups. While these internal factors are crucial to understanding the form of political order that is evolving in Mozambique, without taking external forces into account they do not constitute a sufficient explanation in themselves. It is difficult to understand the formation of the Frelimo party and many of the policies they undertook without understanding Mozambique's colonial heritage. Moreover, due to the colonial system and the exodus of the Portuguese population after independence, Mozambique lacked a landed elite, a powerful commercial bourgeoisie, or many of the other factors that Moore finds fundamental for state-building, thereby leaving the party as the dominant social force.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, in many ways, when Frelimo first assumed power they became both the state and the nation.

During the socialist period the blending between the roles of the party, state and nation was official policy. The state was declared subordinate to the party, membership was often overlapping, and in a case of dispute one's position in the party hierarchy often trumped that of state office. The military and the security services were seen to be the armed wing of Frelimo and their duty was to defend the revolution, as the nation was thought to be an extension of the revolutionary process that was embodied by the party. This was not necessarily detrimental to the party and when Frelimo came to power they had a large degree of popular support in favour of ending colonial rule, which was widely detested. However, this base of support proved to be much narrower than the party had originally realised. The liberation struggle had been confined to the north of the country and involved only certain sections of the peasantry. As much of the leadership came from the south, they could also count on southern support, especially as many of their plans resonated with conditions in this area (as this was the social strata from which the leadership came). While Frelimo took power through a "peasant" based revolution, in classic fashion they soon tried to "squeeze" the peasantry for the resources to industrialise (Paris 2004: 146).<sup>3</sup> This approach worked better in some areas than others, due to wide regional variation, but it eventually bred peasant discontent in important regions of the country. As noted by Moore (1966), the peasantry in the last century often fought to install political systems where they became the new order's primary victims. Despite the narrowness of Frelimo's core social base and the party's administrative weakness, it is possible that they could have repressed discontent

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<sup>2</sup> In Moore's (1966) terms, Mozambique's social structure and its peasant liberation war would likely evolve into a leftwing dictatorship, which it initially did.

<sup>3</sup> Peasantry is a loose term that could arguably ill define the population in question, however in this paper I will still use it, despite its imprecision..

and implemented their aim of using state power to mould the nation in their own image. However, external political conditions would not provide the opportunity to attempt this. In a sad geopolitical irony, one of Africa's more radical regimes had the ill fortune to share borders with two of Africa's most reactionary and aggressive white minority regimes: Rhodesia and South Africa. Soon after Mozambique's independence both committed their vastly superior power to making sure that Frelimo did not succeed in its aims (Hanlon 1986; Minter 1996).

Thus, Frelimo's political configuration, as originally conceived, floundered in the face of ill received attempts at social engineering, badly conceived economic projects with disastrous results, and their lack of ability to effectively repress the populace. This situation was greatly exacerbated by externally funded aggression that nonetheless managed to take root among at least some of the more alienated segments of the population (Geffrey 1991). Due to these factors, Frelimo soon found itself under siege. By the mid 1980s the party had effectively lost control of around 80% of Mozambique's territory. Scholars, such as Ignatieff and Zartman, have defined failed states as those that lose the Weberian monopoly of violence and where "the structure, authority (legitimate power), law, and political order have fallen apart" (cited by Di John 2007: 4). Based on this definition the Mozambican state had largely collapsed in important areas of the country. If the aim – as suggested by scholars of southern Africa, of Rhodesia and later South Africa – was not to overthrow Frelimo and install their rebel opponents Renamo, but instead to destabilise the nation, make it impossible for Mozambique to continue provide effective aid to the internal rebels of white minority regimes and discredit Marxism as a political option, it, at least in the case of South Africa, succeeded.

However, as noted by the Crisis States Research Centre, instead of drawing firm definitional lines around a failed state, and a state in danger of failing, it is best to view them on a continuum. Therefore violence and breakdown are not necessarily end results, but part of a wider process of state-consolidation (Di John 2007: 10). In a similar vein, it could be said that if Frelimo lost the war, they won the peace, or at least they did in a fashion. Even during the worst days of the war they managed to secure key elements of the state apparatus throughout the conflict. They controlled the official presidency, they had a seat at the United Nations, they negotiated international treaties and controlled the ministries, even if their remit was largely symbolic (if that) throughout much of the country. This allowed the Frelimo government to access international support and aid, and also to survive the war. Furthermore, by transforming the political system from one-party socialism to multiparty capitalism before the peace accords and without dialogue with the rebels, Frelimo had the opportunity to design the system and create ways to structurally disadvantage Renamo (Morier-Genoud 2007). By the time the rebel leadership entered peace negotiations it appeared that Frelimo had already made major concessions. Renamo's lack of political experience and the fact that further support for the war was increasingly difficult to obtain eventually pressured their leaders to sign the accords. The result was a 'winner takes all' political system, where Frelimo's organisation, political experience, and financial resources gave the party a significant advantage over its opponent. In addition, the centralisation of power allows Frelimo to overcome its weakness in regions where Renamo is strong. This appears to result in a steady recreation of the Frelimo party-state in the post-war period. Thus, in a manner similar to the socialist period regardless of the official split it is still very difficult to determine where the state ends and the party begins. Yet, the foreign aid that has allowed them to survive also imposes a set of external restraints on the nation's political formation, even if these restraints are far more benign than South African aggression.

Mozambique's dependence on foreign aid and the changing political and economic climate internationally – such as the emphasis on democracy, the imposition of structural adjustment packages and the 'neo-liberal' turn – have imposed serious constraints on the forms of state reconstruction possible after the war. This is not to argue that reconstruction is simply a case of neo-colonialism with an ill defined international community taking the place of the Portuguese, even if some in Mozambique may see it this way (Pitcher 2002). While aspects of the internationally mandated reforms are deeply unpalatable to some members of the Frelimo leadership, there is more continuity both in terms of ideology and actual practice than adherents of neo-liberalism or revolutionary nationalism care to admit. Furthermore these reforms have allowed some members of the elite to acquire significant material benefits (Sumich forthcoming). It could be argued that due to the fact that democratisation and neo-liberalism were externally imposed, the reforms have tended to be shallow and undertaken to legitimise the government with the international community, rather than the internal population (Sumich 2005). Ironically, while authoritarian governments expend serious effort to keep their finger on the pulse of the population, externally imposed democracy often allows them to treat large segments of their population far more casually.

Previous scholars have also pointed out the shallowness and unintended consequences of democratisation in the developing world (Chabal and Daloz 1999; Khan 2005). This line of analysis is in fact a thriving industry amongst social scientists. One of the major analytical trends to emerge from this work is the neo-patrimonial school. According to Khan (2005) democracy in the 'developed' world operates through institutionalised lobbying, while the developing world is characterised by a patrimonial logic that creates personalised and corrupt political systems. In a more localised vein, Chabal and Daloz (1999) have traced the recurring crises that affect much of Africa's post-colonial history to a form of neo-patrimonialism rooted in 'African' Culture. While they correctly point to the ways in which some African leaders have subverted externally imposed reforms and used them to their benefit, their model is based on a problematic cultural essentialism and over-generalises about diverse political currents flowing through the continent. One of Chabal and Daloz's central claims is that class-based relationships do not exist in Africa in any meaningful sense and it is ties of patronage and clientelism that connect the rulers and the ruled, thus creating a 'vertical' society that links the poorest to the elite (p. 42). This does not seem to be the case in Mozambique and it further appears that the ruling Frelimo elite, many members of which are drawn from the highest class possible in the racialised colonial system, are again forming a ruling class. This form of ruling class appears to be based on the control of, or access to, the state. Much like the earlier writings of Cohen (1982) and Leys (1982), class in this situation is based on one's ability to access political networks, which in turn lead to wealth and status creating a 'national bourgeoisie'. It is state power, or at least the access to it, which is one of the primary guarantors of the ability to amass economic wealth. This does not mean that patronage relationships and clientelism do not exist. The level of inclusion these relationships allow is not limited: instead of an elite that is constantly competing among themselves to gain resources for more clients, Mozambique is witnessing the creation of a ruling class based on mutual solidarity and cohesion. If power and wealth are, or are perceived as being, dominated by a narrow elite with limited benefits flowing to the wider population, the fragile state Frelimo has constructed since the end of the civil war may once again be put under considerable strain.

In spite of the possible limitations of the forms of analysis mentioned above, they have been deeply influential in discussions of state crisis and failure. Their seemingly monolithic nature can be seen in the elegant but deterministic equations of Collier's 'greed and grievance' theory. Many of the explanations of Mozambique's civil war have followed a similar line. For Weinstein and Francisco (2005) the civil war in Mozambique grew from external aggression from Rhodesia and South Africa and was propelled by a disgruntled set of elites who were denied patronage from Frelimo. Following Hirschman's (1970) model of divisibility and indivisibility, the war could be seen in some senses as a particularly brutal form of boundary activation. While some of the Renamo rebel's grievances had their source in the perceived exclusion of certain ethnic and religious groups, neither ethnicity nor religion was the overriding factor. Instead it was concerned more with external relations and the division of power and was thus divisible, and has been institutionalised as such by the adoption of multiparty democracy in 1992. Where there is much truth to this analysis, its neat contours have a tendency to ignore the often messy reality. It is quite probable that Renamo was fighting to be included in elite power and patronage networks. However Frelimo's dominance was such that they were also fighting to be included as a voice in the nation, especially as the war went on. It can be misleading to assume that the motivations of various political actors have remained constant over time, instead of evolving alongside a fluid situation.

The remainder of this paper will discuss how Frelimo was able to form such a unified party, but has had such difficulty creating an internally rooted state. It shall be divided into four parts. The first will discuss the formation of the Frelimo party, the second will discuss the civil war, the third will examine the political transformation and reconstruction, and the fourth will make concluding comments.

### **The Formation of Frelimo and the Origins of Civil War**

To understand the social formation of the Frelimo elite, it is first necessary to examine the type of colonialism introduced by Portugal and the role of this nascent elite within the colonial system. Although Portugal claimed a 500-year presence in Mozambique, this was primarily limited to small coastal enclaves, trading posts and later, foreign owned concessionaries.<sup>4</sup> This strategy helped to entrench wide regional variations in the ways in which various parts of Mozambique were incorporated economically and socially into the political system, a legacy that is still felt today. Colonial policy began to change with the ascension to power of Dr António de Oliveira Salazar in Portugal in 1932. Salazar created a quasi-fascist authoritarian dictatorship in Portugal known as *O Estado Novo* (The New State) and set about binding the colonies (later referred to as overseas provinces) tightly to the metropole (Newitt 1981).

One of the planks of the new state's policy was to increase white migration to the colonies. Africans were systematically starved of resources to build amenities for whites and ensure a relatively high standard of living for Portuguese migrants, but despite their continuing efforts many whites only had sufficient skills to take on menial positions (Hedges 1999; Penvenne 1995). In contrast to their higher status in most British colonies, white settlers in Mozambique took on menial positions. By the 1950s "Black cobblers, street vendors, bakers, housemaids, bus-conductors, bar tenders and prostitutes all found their jobs threatened by poor whites..."

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<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed description see Malyn Newitt 1995.

(Birmingham 1992: 21). Urban African workers were under constant strain as they had to compete for positions with immigrant whites.

An emerging African elite was also alienated by the new state. Many members of this colonial elite came from a legal category called *assimilados* (the assimilated). *Assimilados* were an indigenous petty-bourgeoisie during the colonial period and they formed a tiny minority of the wider African population. One of the more common estimates puts the number of *Assimilados* at around 5,000, out of a population of around 8,200,000 before liberation (Mondlane 1969; Sheldon 2002).

To become an *assimilado* one had to fulfil certain legal criteria. They had to swear loyalty to the colonial state, speak only Portuguese at home, adopt 'European' habits, abandon 'heathen' beliefs and have a Portuguese official vouch for their character. If one fulfilled these criteria one was theoretically granted full legal equality with the Portuguese. While this was not the case in practice, *assimilados* were granted a wide range of privileges, such as freedom from forced labour, easier access to urban residence, education and employment, a modicum of civil rights and jurisdiction under civil law, as opposed to 'customary' law for non-*assimilados* (*indígneas*, or indigenous as they were known). Southern *Assimilados* tended to come from specific sections of the population: the families of those who had access to education and those who had been incorporated into the modern sections of the economy; commercial farmers; and many in the south, migrant labour force. By entering this legal category they could gain preferential employment in the highest bastions of the colonial economy that a Black person could realistically aspire towards, such as nurses, teachers, low-level civil servants and the railways. Yet it soon became apparent that under colonialism, true social mobility would always be blocked (Penvenne 1982).

Much of the eventual leadership of Frelimo was drawn from the *assimilado* stratum of the capital and its immediate hinterlands. As they became progressively more alienated, they made common cause with other disaffected urbanites, such as some Indians, Mulattos and Whites.<sup>5</sup> Newitt (1995) describes the effects of this with wry understatement: "It is difficult not to conclude that the New State made a fundamental error in allowing a small *assimilado* class to emerge and then systematically subjecting it to personal humiliation and depressed status" (p. 477). Many members of this group were aspiring to a certain vision of modernity that was continually denied to them by the Portuguese. During the eleven year liberation struggle this southern elite made common cause with northern aspiring *assimilados*. They shared an ideal, one that grew from their social background, which helped to form a remarkable cohesion and unity amongst the emerging revolutionary elite. However this also meant that they had a very specific vision for the future of Mozambique that was intimately intertwined with their experiences in the colonial period, experiences that in many crucial aspects were specific to themselves.

Although the alliance of southern *assimilados* and rural aspiring elites proved durable, the early years of Frelimo (1962-1969) were filled with factionalism and purges. Many dissidents who

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<sup>5</sup> Many of the Whites that joined the Frelimo came from a group known as *segundos* (second). This meant that they were born in Mozambique and under the New State which disqualified them from holding the highest positions, which were monopolised by those born in Portugal (Mondlane 1969).

lost out in the initial power struggles tried to build support through ethnic nationalism. While this strategy was largely unsuccessful, it left a lasting effect as the party leadership became increasingly preoccupied with the idea of unity. In their view only they had the necessary vision to build a nation that was not based on narrow secretarian interests. Yet the ruling alliance they built was based on a southern elite and sections of the northern peasantry. Crucially elites from the central provinces (who were to later dominate armed opposition) lost out in power struggles and the party had little understanding of the social and economic structures that arose from its plantation based economy. This was to have a great effect on the policies undertaken after Frelimo won independence.

The challenges Frelimo faced during independence were truly daunting. Although the leadership held a militantly non-racial vision for the future of Mozambique, the vast majority of the settler population fled the country after independence. As the colonial state made little attempt to 'Africanise' the bureaucracy and as the Portuguese made up the vast majority of the country's professional and managerial class, their exodus brought the country's administrative and economic structures to a standstill. As noted by Finnegan (1992):

Frelimo was left to run an effectively bankrupt country with virtually no trained people. The illiteracy rate was over 90 percent. There were six economists, two agronomists, not a single geologist, and fewer than a thousand black high school graduates in all of Mozambique. Of 350 railroad engineers working in 1975, just one was black and he was an agent of the Portuguese secret police (p. 30).

This desperate shortage of qualified personnel occurred at the same time Frelimo's political and social policies dramatically expanded the opportunity for state intervention. While much of the party's administrative weakness can be traced to these causes, it also coincided with unprecedented social mobility, especially in urban areas. Almost anyone with even the smallest amount of education, outside of those branded as 'enemies of the people', was catapulted into the expanding bureaucracy. This created a generation of people whose positions in society are intimately connected with Frelimo and therefore provided the Party with a firm base of support.

While increasing social mobility solidified the ties between the party and many urbanites, the lack of trained personnel often contributed to administrative chaos.<sup>6</sup> Frelimo came to power with a strong belief in centralisation and state intervention, but the mass exodus of the Portuguese, who often sabotaged what they left behind, forced the party to move in an interventionist direction far more quickly than had originally been anticipated (Pitcher 2002) Frelimo was compelled to intervene in companies that had been abandoned and many were nationalised, or the government took a role in directing the companies. However the government was not necessarily hostile to all private enterprise, even if the private sector was viewed with suspicion. By 1977 the government had only intervened in 319 out of 1,675 existing companies and so-called 'national enterprises' were allowed to continue, although at Frelimo's discretion and always subject to possible state intervention (Pitcher 2002: 40). This tendency became more pronounced in 1977 when Frelimo announced its transition from a broad-based front to a Marxist-Leninist vanguard party based on the principles of scientific socialism. The move towards scientific socialism was thought to be necessary to transform the country more completely. The party

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<sup>6</sup> The complicated relationship between Frelimo and urbanites will be explained in more depth later in this section.



leadership felt if the nation was to develop it had to re-orient itself from its historical role as a provider of goods and services to South Africa and Rhodesia and become a modern industrial power. Only then would Mozambique be able to act as an equal in the brotherhood of nations and withstand those who had so brutally exploited it in the past (Sumich 2005).

The aspirations of the Frelimo leadership to build a ‘modern nation’ and the deeply unfortunate circumstances they found themselves in when they tried to launch this effort are not uncommon for the decolonisation process throughout Africa. Lockwood (2005) points to the nature of colonialism and the chaos of decolonisation as one of the major historical features leading to state weakness on the continent (cited in Di John 2007: 23). According to Lockwood (2005), the results of this historical background were that:

politics was based more on personalities than classes; second contestation often involved winner take all political competition; and third, unstable cabinet appointments (and resulting high turnover) due to the uncertain and fluid nature of clientelist factions, which in turn lead to weak bureaucratic capacity to re-allocate resources in growth-enhancing ways (cited in Di John 2007: 23).

While Frelimo’s early record at providing economic growth is sporadic at best, they differ from Lockwood’s model in several important ways. Instead of creating a personality based, unstable clientelist form of governance, the party leadership was reasonably stable and cohesive. Many of the major political figures served at various levels for the party-state through the 1970s and 1980s. Even in the current era, former ministers often retain strong links and influence within the party.

One of the primary foundations for the party’s cohesion can be found in the social background of much of the leadership and how this social background influenced the practice of revolutionary nationalism in the socialist period. Thus, if the goal of Marxist-Leninism was to dramatically recreate the nation, it nonetheless built on many pre-existing social currents from the colonial period. As noted by Fry (2000), the Marxist-Leninist period in Mozambique (1977-1983), did in fact, follow an *assimilado* logic:

In spite of the anti-colonial discourse of the center and Frelimo in general, it is impossible not to observe that the socialist project in Mozambique was if anything more “assimilationist” than the Portuguese ever dared to imagine and it is tempting to suggest that this is one of the reasons why the Mozambican elite found the socialist program so attractive. Structurally speaking there was little difference between an authoritarian capitalist state run by a small body of “illuminated” Portuguese and assimilados and an authoritarian socialist state run by an equally diminutive and equally enlightened vanguard party (p. 129).

Fry makes an important point by recognising some of the ideological continuities between *assimilação* and the post-independence socialist project. Instead of the benefits of *assimilação* being restricted to a few people as examples for their benighted brothers, the Frelimo elite decided to recreate the entire nation in their image. Yet this is not to say that socialism in Mozambique was simply a more ambitious project of *assimilação*; while it may have provided a foundation, there are some very real differences. If being an *assimilado* meant one had to fulfil

certain legal criteria to gain what was really only a partial entrance into the colonial project of modernisation, then Frelimo's goal was to turn this on its head. At the core of Frelimo's programme to build a nation during the early socialist period was the creation of the *Novo Homem* (new man). This was thought to be a long, drawn out process that had begun in the liberated zones that Frelimo had controlled during the armed struggle against the Portuguese. The new man was to be something completely different from what had occurred before. According to one of Frelimo's leading theorists, Sergio Vieira (1977, p.3) the creation of the new man provided a decisive break with the previous incarnations of man: feudal man; colonial man; and bourgeois man. The crucial elements of this analysis were the conceptualisation of feudal and colonial man. Feudal man referred to 'traditional' culture and structures of power. These structures were supposedly unequal, patriarchal, gerontocratic, based on superstition and immobile. Yet according to Vieira, these "traditional" attributes did not exist on their own, but as a subsidiary of colonialism since even the most powerful chief had to obey the lowliest colonial official (ibid: 11). The final category, colonial man, referred to *assimilados*: "It (colonial man) is a petty-bourgeoisie looking for traditional models, feudal models to recuperate and integrate into bourgeois society" (Vieira 1977: 9).

Unlike the previous *assimilados* no one was exactly sure what the 'new man' would be. He was to be based on science, 'rationality' and collective labour, but it was still a process, something in the midst of being born (Vieira 1977: 25). *Assimilados* were modelled on Portuguese national identity, but the new man would be both a universal subject and the embodiment of the emerging Mozambican personality and model of citizenship. Whereas the idea of a dramatic recreation of Mozambique may have had limited appeal to the vast majority of the population, its allure to Frelimo militants appeared to be quite real (Hall and Young 1997).

Thus, for party militants, this modernising ideology created a sense of uniqueness and provided a mission that further bound them together. They were part of Frelimo's ideological family. As the prototypes of the new man, they were to be the concrete expression, or to use the terminology of the time, the vanguard of the great modernising project. They would be a new kind of citizen and the Frelimo's modernising ideology in practice (Vieira 1977).

The creation of a social stratum that often came from similar social backgrounds and who owed their status and position to the revolution greatly increased internal cohesion amongst the top ranks of Frelimo. Furthermore, the programme of revolutionary nationalism grew from this social background and appealed to other elements of the population, who came from similar circumstances and benefited from the system that was being set up and were already at least partially immersed in the world view that Frelimo was advocating (Pitcher 2002). This demonstrates one of Frelimo's greatest strengths, in so far as the party is increasingly unified and distinct from the mass of population through ideological persuasion, creating loyalty to the wider corporate group and not just the personality of the leader. It also highlights one of their major weaknesses. Despite the rhetoric this was not a popular project, but a very distinct group who were self-consciously aware of their differences from the nation. The social networks at the heart of Frelimo were and continue to be very strong, but they have historically been very exclusive as well. Nor was this cohesion based solely on ideology. The unity of the elite was also bolstered by intermarriage that connected leading militants on both an ideological level and on the level of kinship. The Frelimo ideological family was in many cases more than just a metaphor (Sumich 2005).

In classic Stalinist fashion the new men were to lead the transformation, and the peasantry would bare the brunt of it. Economically the peasantry was seen as *tabla rosa*; they existed in a timeless state of subsistence agriculture. Therefore all available resources could be focused on industrial projects and [the workers whose survival is not directly based on connections to the land (O'Laughlin 2000). Thus between 1975 and 1983 around 97% of rural investment was channelled towards massive state farms. This coincided with the collapse of rural shops and trading posts due to the Portuguese exodus and there was soon a 'goods famine' in the countryside, where even necessary basic implements such as hoes were almost impossible to find. Many peasants soon stopped selling surpluses as there was little for them to buy, thus creating food shortages. Furthermore, Frelimo's plans ignored the complicated economic strategies that existed for much of the peasantry, combining migrant labour with agriculture, and did not recognise the social differentiation that existed in the countryside. As an unintended consequence Frelimo's strategies began to increase social differentiation amongst the peasantry as those with party connections or those who were better able to manipulate party policies secured benefits denied to others. While this allowed Frelimo to build a base with the more affluent sections of the peasantry, future rebels were able to capitalise on the discontent of the poorer peasants, creating support that would survive the war and continues to exist today.

If the peasantry were *tabla rosa* economically for the party leadership, socially they were the embodiment of the backwardness of everything that held the nation back and had to be recreated as modern citizens for a modern nation. Thus a multitude of decrees were issued: traditional leadership was abolished; *lobola* (bride wealth) was outlawed; polygamous men were denied entry into the party; ceremonies were banned; religious organisations and institutions were viewed with suspicion; practitioners of 'sorcery' could be sent to re-education camps; and efforts were made to move the peasantry from their former scattered hamlets to centralised communal villages, which would become 'cities in the bush'. Intense effort was focused on combating what was termed superstition or 'obscurantism' and to replace this with rationality and scientific socialism. These modernist ideals were widely held amongst the top levels of the Frelimo elite, and sprang from their experiences, and reinforced their sense of unity and cohesion (Sumich 2005). However, this was not always the case for the rest of the nation. The party leadership's plans eventually faltered, not simply because they were culturally insensitive (which indeed they were), but also because the party did not have the strength or sufficient cadres, or an inclusive vision to offer much of the population with a coherent replacement for the structures they tried to destroy. They were trying to incorporate the peasantry into the state, often in a somewhat coercive manner, but from a position of relative weakness. When hostile foreign powers entered this volatile situation, the Frelimo did not have the strength to retain control over large sections of the country. This began to cause increasing strain in the rural areas.<sup>7</sup>

The party was convinced of the superiority of collective production and realised that agriculture would be the basis of the economy for some time to come. Thus they tried to create massive collective farms where they could both increase and rationalise production and where they could

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<sup>7</sup> There is a danger however of telescoping the discontent peasants felt during the height of the civil war to the earlier post-independence period and claiming that large sections of the peasantry were always hostile to the Frelimo project. While many elements of the party's programme caused discontent this may not be the case (O'Laughlin 2000: 34).

extend their reach and control over the scattered peasantry (Harrison 1996). Due to the chaos of the immediate post-independent period, in some areas of the country the party had almost no contact with the population for nearly two years and Frelimo was anxious to try to assert control (Coelho 1998). The move towards communal villages was supposed to be an organic evolution from the types of production practiced in the liberated zones during the *luta armada*. Yet only a small proportion of the population had any experience with this, and in practice the nucleus of many communal villages were the widely detested *aldeamentos* ('strategic' villages) used by the Portuguese to try and wean the population away from contact with Frelimo (Coelho 1998). While Frelimo promised villagers that communal villages would allow the party to provide services such as health clinics, education and water, services rarely arrived and those that did were rarely maintained. Frelimo's policies eventually began to alienate large sections of the rural population.<sup>8</sup> Alienation was increased by the way in which policies were carried out. When ideological persuasion failed, coercion to forcibly move villagers into communal villages (Coelho 1998). The urban bias in Frelimo's programme became ever more evident. Therefore, whereas Frelimo was theoretically a vanguard party of the workers and peasants in a country where around 85% of the population lived in rural areas it began to depend on "...a numerically weak but relatively privileged urban proletariat, a burgeoning state bureaucracy, and an external network centered on Moscow" (M. Simpson cited in Newitt 2002: 206).

While a project of social engineering this vast would probably seem ambitious at the best of times, with the conditions Frelimo was facing, both internally and externally, it begins to seem truly desperate. After independence Frelimo took a principled stand and implemented UN sanctions against the white minority regime of Rhodesia, at the expense of much needed revenue. Furthermore, they gave bases and support to ZANLA (Zimbabwean African National Liberation Army), a move that soon drew retaliation: Rhodesia recruited Mozambicans into a military force, MNR (Renamo), to destabilise the Frelimo government.<sup>9</sup> Initially Renamo operated as auxiliaries to the Rhodesian military and aside for some sporadic acts of social banditry they did not try to cultivate an internal political base or form a coherent ideology. This began to change after Rhodesia fell. The international environment began to prove extremely hostile to leftwing governments in the developing world. In the US, Reagan initiated his policy of communist 'roll back' and in South Africa, P.W. Botha set his sights on Mozambique with his policy of 'total onslaught'. As South Africa took over as Renamo's external patron, the rebel's activity expanded dramatically. Renamo still struggled to secure a social base within Mozambique, and many of their soldiers were forcibly recruited. Peasant populations in some areas under their control were kept in line through massacres and spectacular acts of violence.<sup>10</sup>

In this manner Renamo can appear to be an early version of the 'New wars' thesis, where conflicts are not based on ideology but brutal competition for resources sustained through external funding and plunder (Kaldor 1999). The war becomes a goal in and of itself. Yet, the actual picture is more complicated. As the war progressed Renamo did try and create an ideology of sorts that would appeal to sections of the peasantry that were the most alienated from Frelimo and they also cultivated *regulos* who had been disenfranchised under the government. Generally

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<sup>8</sup> The effects of this alienation will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

<sup>9</sup> MNR stands for Mozambican National Resistance; the name was later changed to the Portuguese acronym of Renamo to boost the movement's nationalist credentials.

<sup>10</sup> Participation in Frelimo's army was also based on conscription, but generally of a less brutal nature.

*regulos* had been banned from holding local office or participating in elections under Frelimo, so Renamo took advantage of this existing antagonism by returning many *regulos* to power. In a vaguely ironic turn of events the neo-traditional ideology actually replicated many practices from the colonial period. Renamo recognised *regulos* they felt would support them and appointed new ones when those who had a claim to power in the area did not. They also re-created a local police force, answering to the *regulos*. As with the colonial period, *regulos* were in practice the lowest level of Renamo authority, charged with collecting taxes and keeping local order, supported by an ideology that claimed to support 'tradition'. While it is doubtful that this ideology was really a credible alternative on the national level, it allowed Renamo to root themselves in certain parts of the country.

### **The Civil War**

One of the key debates in Mozambican studies concerns whether the war was a civil war or a war of external aggression. The answer is that it was probably both. It is very true that without the direct influence of Rhodesia and later, and more importantly, South Africa the war would never have reached the level it did. Nor was peasant discontent necessarily a catalyst for war. Many other governments, Tanzania's Ujaama policy as just one example, have attempted similar programmes as that of Frelimo, which have caused widespread discontent, but did not result in civil war. Yet the vast majority of the combatants were Mozambican, and there was a well of anger for Renamo to draw on.

Renamo supporters such as Hoile (1994) and Cabrita (2000) have long argued that the civil war in Mozambique grew out of a peasant response to an alien, urban, Creole Frelimo elite that insulted and suppressed the population's traditions and destroyed their 'timeless' way of life. In a less propagandistic vein, independent scholars such as Geffray (1991) have also pointed out the deep discontent caused by Frelimo's policies of abolishing traditional authority, moving rural populations into communal villages and starving peasants of investment. For example, Geffray did extended fieldwork in the Erati district of the Nampula province. The villagisation programme in this area had concentrated relatively large numbers of people that did not have a history of co-habitation. One lineage, the Erati, managed to dominate the local Frelimo hierarchy and essentially took control of the land.

The effects of the local monopolisation of power were detrimental to new comers. Disadvantaged groups, such as the Makua, who had been herded into villages felt increasingly exploited and resentful, especially as their leadership had also been pushed from power by Frelimo's assault on traditional authority. When Renamo came to the area, they attacked the village, re-instated traditional leaders and told the inhabitants to go back to their old scattered hamlets. While the Erati, who gained the most from the villagisation programme, stayed loyal to Frelimo, the Makua initially greeted Renamo as liberators and rallied to their cause. Renamo explained that they were engaged in a 'war of the spirits' and to reclaim 'traditions' from the alien Marxism of Frelimo (Geffrey 1991). Although many later cooled towards Renamo as the taxes imposed on them became increasingly onerous, they lost access to markets and Renamo's rule became more brutal. However, in some respects Renamo was responding to the grievances of at least part of the population.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> For critiques of Geffray's analysis please see Dinerman 1994 and O'Laughlin 2000.

The reaction to Frelimo's modernising policies varied throughout the country. In some parts they were relatively successful. W. Norman (2004) recounts how, following the destruction of previous homes in a flood and a pre-existing distrust due to the role of traditional authority in recruiting forced labour under colonialism, Frelimo's plans to move villagers to communal villages and abolish traditional authority were not unpopular in the southern province of Gaza. In the northern province of Cabo Delgado, a Frelimo stronghold, the effects were contradictory. West (2001) describes how aspects of villagisation programmes were welcomed and the concentration of large groups of people created new avenues of sociability, yet they were also accompanied by numerous accusations of witchcraft as previous sanctions against sorcery proved ineffective for such a large population. Reactions to Frelimo's grand modernising ambitions often depended on finely nuanced local conditions, and the different ways in which particular areas were incorporated into the economy and the nation that were rarely taken into account by planners in Maputo. Thus unlike the classic account of a peasant rebellion, Renamo managed to build networks of support through the war, while not engaging in a war through championing a social stratum. In areas where Frelimo's hold was weak and their modernisation programmes were deeply unpopular, Renamo often came to an understanding with the local population, after murdering the local Frelimo representative and his family (Nordstrom 1997). In other areas where Renamo could not count on support they resorted to systematic massacres and public acts of brutality to subdue the population (Hall 1990; Nordstrom 1997; Wilson 1992). In reality, large sections of the population were simply caught in the middle and had to survive the best that they could as contending forces periodically marched through their areas. If the population was settled in communal villages they would be attacked by Renamo and if the population lived in scattered hamlets passing Frelimo soldiers would burn them out and herd them into communal villages. This situation is summed up in a Mozambican saying: 'When elephants fight it's the grass that gets trampled' (West 1997).

Paradoxically as Frelimo's internal position in Mozambique was under increasing threat, the party was managing its external relations with ever increasing sophistication. The decade began poorly as Frelimo had twice been rejected for The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMCON) membership, which put a cap on the level of aid they could realistically expect from the Soviet bloc. As the war gained in intensity, the party was finally forced to negotiate with South Africa to try and win some breathing space. This resulted in the 1984 Nkomati Accord, where Mozambique and South Africa signed a treaty that pledged neither would support the internal enemies of the other (Minter 1996). Frelimo followed the accord in good faith and banned all African National Congress (ANC) operations outside of token representation. South Africa, or at least elements of the South African military, did not do the same. Renamo received massive shipments of arms and supplies before the signing of the accord and regular shipments of weapons and supplies after the accord (Hall and Young 1997; Hanlon 1990; Vines 1996). Instead of lowering the pressure on Frelimo the war intensified, spreading to areas of the Maputo province and Cabo Delgado. South African sponsored peace talks between Frelimo and Renamo quickly broke down as Renamo representatives proposed utterly unacceptable demands. Yet, Frelimo's internal reforms and diplomatic openness began to win them support from the west and desperately needed aid. They could also rely on assistance from members of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC), an organisation consisting of nations who banded together to try to resist South Africa's economic dominance of the region. While, overall this was ineffectual, other 'frontline' states (those that politically opposed South Africa

while being geographically close to it) sent military aid. At the height of the war Zimbabwe had around 10,000 troops operating in Mozambique, both in repayment for Frelimo's assistance during their liberation struggle and to protect transport corridors so they could export their goods through the central Mozambican port of Beira. Tanzania also lent military assistance in the north of Mozambique (Minter 1996).

Renamo was in the opposite position. Their hold on Mozambique was getting stronger. From a few hundred men they had grown to around 20,000 by the mid 1980s. They could move through large areas of the country at will and they had de facto control over many rural areas (Hall 1990; Nilsson 1993a, 1993b; Morgan 1990). South Africa had supplied them with sophisticated radio equipment, which allowed them greater abilities in coordination and a high degree of centralisation. Their external relations on the other hand, were in shambles. Many of their external representatives were picked simply because they had residency in the country in question (Vines 1996). The lack of a coherent political programme and strong connections between the internal and external wings, in addition to widely publicised atrocities committed by Renamo, damaged their public image (Vines 1996). Renamo's external relations were based on connections with the governments of South Africa, Malawi, Kenya, a few reactionary American Senators like Jesse Helms, private extreme rightwing funding, and favourable coverage from magazines such as 'Soldier of Fortune' (Vines 1996).

By the mid-1980s the government was in serious crisis. The military budget accounted for 35% of government spending and the conflict had destroyed many of the Frelimo's impressive gains in health and education (Hanlon 1990). They had lost direct control of much of the country and the war had now spread to all ten of Mozambique's provinces. Frelimo only firmly held the major cities and the economy was in freefall. There was increasing discontent in the cities as well. In Beira, Mozambique's second city, disturbing rumours were spreading that the workers were going to proclaim a general strike and welcome Renamo if they attacked (Vines 1996). Yet despite the growing chaos the party leadership remained unified; through a shared social background, ideological affinity and intermarriage they had taken some of the characteristics of a distinct social group within themselves, especially at the highest levels. When Samora Machel died in a plane crash in 1986, the former foreign minister, Joaquim Chissano was elevated to the presidency, evidently as he was a compromise that all of the politbureau could agree upon.<sup>12</sup> Despite the worsening civil war and grave economic crises, the party remained unified under the new leadership. In desperation the Frelimo leadership came to an agreement with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank and agreed to implement pro-market reforms (Harrison 1996). While the reforms did improve the situation slightly, the economy that had been declining 8% per year from 1982 only showed a growth rate of 3.6% in 1986 (Marshall 1990). The effects of this could be seen in major cities as the previously barren shelves of shops suddenly filled with goods. Yet, as the old joke goes during socialism everyone has money but the shops are empty, under capitalism the shops are full but no one has any money. This appeared to be the case in Mozambique; the deregulation of the economy hit Frelimo's urban base hard as the currency was radically devalued, salaries were frozen, and subsidies removed. For many urbanites life became even more difficult and corruption began to flourish, as civil servants could no longer live on their salaries, and restrictions against personal accumulation

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<sup>12</sup> There is evidence that the South African military was behind Machel's plane crash, but this has not yet been conclusively proven.

amongst the Frelimo elite lessened (Harrison 1996; Marshall 1990; Pitcher 2002). These economic changes also masked significant continuities as the previous socialist leadership remained firmly in power and the party was still united around the goal of building the nation and consolidating the state. The goals remained even if tactics had changed (Ottaway 1988).

Frelimo's skilful diplomacy and Renamo's lack of capability in public relations coupled with their quite public brutality, allowed the government to create an external lifeline.<sup>13</sup> Even nations such as the US who were firmly opposed to the party's ideological project recognised Frelimo as the legitimate government and provided much needed aid. While Frelimo's writ did not extend very far outside of major cities, there was little chance Renamo could dislodge them. At the same time, Frelimo could not destroy Renamo's presence in the countryside. By the late 1980s the war had reached a brutal stalemate. Both sides' patrons were tiring of the conflict and had more pressing concerns at home. Mozambique also lacked the resources for either side to continue the war independently. For Frelimo the economy was still in deep recession with growing discontent in the urban areas. For Renamo, decreasing South African aid had been supplemented by an economy of plunder. (Dinerman 1994; Vines 1996; Wilson 1992) Renamo would systematically strip the villages they attacked and sell their loot in South Africa or Malawi. In addition they were heavily involved in smuggling ivory out of Mozambique. However, after years of war the countryside had been repeatedly ravaged. They were facing the law of diminishing returns and it was becoming more difficult for the rebels to continue to reproduce themselves. With a military stalemate, potential economic collapse, a changing international environment and a profoundly war-weary population both Renamo and Frelimo began to seriously consider negotiations.

The Italian government, the Santo Egidio Community and the Mozambican Catholic Church sponsored the Rome peace talks. Frelimo had taken the political initiative.<sup>14</sup> In 1989 the Frelimo Congress had pushed through a wide range of reforms, abandoning the socialist single-party state and creating a liberal democratic, free-market constitution, effectively pulling the ideological rug out from under Renamo's feet. Frelimo's other great diplomatic victory was to resist Renamo's and some international actors' demands for a power-sharing agreement, instead insisting on a 'winner take all' system where power was concentrated in the office of the president. If these were Frelimo's major victories, sticking points remained and negotiations were long and difficult. It was agreed that there would be a multiparty democratic system, that Frelimo would separate itself from the state and that a new army would be created that included both Renamo and Frelimo veterans, which would be politically neutral (Coelho and Vines 1998). The disarmament process demonstrated that both Frelimo and Renamo remained united and highly organised (Vines 1996). Frelimo managed to persuade the army to give up its privileged place within the party – essentially committing political suicide. While many of the high command kept their connections with the party leadership and did very well out of the privatisation process, generals no longer sat in the politbureau and the police arguably became the most powerful armed force in the nation. Renamo also displayed firm discipline; the leadership ordered their troops to lay down their arms and were almost immediately obeyed, proving they were not simply a collection

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<sup>13</sup> Not all of the atrocities committed during the civil war were perpetrated by Renamo; government soldiers were also responsible for massacres. The major difference is this did not often seem to be official policy, but the actions of poorly trained soldiers whose salaries were often months in arrears and over whom the central government often had limited control (Nordstrom 1997).

<sup>14</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the peace process please see Hall and Young 1997; and Vines 1996.



of roving warlords and undisciplined bandits (Vines 1996). Many of the rank and file troops took advantage of the United Nations' (UN) generous demobilisation package and voted with their feet. The UN had initially envisioned forming a post-war national army of around 30,000, yet they could only entice 12,000 to stay on.<sup>15</sup> Soldiers were often conscripted and had salaries that were months in arrears (Frelimo) or were not paid at all (Renamo) and had no desire to continue in the military. This disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration (DDR) programme would serve as a model for many other African conflicts, but much more detailed study is required to understand why it succeeded so well.

Mozambique's successful peace process stands out in comparison to similar conflicts, such as Angola and many of the participants, including Frelimo, Renamo and the UN have attempted to take credit. While the UN's well-resourced proactive stand in Mozambique, plus the willingness of Frelimo and Renamo to make the necessary compromises all stand in a stark contrast to the situation in Angola, one also has to examine whether the success of the peace process also stems, in part, from the nature of the war. Renamo was initially established as a quasi-mercenary force to destabilise the nation. While the enmity of Renamo's leadership towards Frelimo may have been very real, they were not necessarily endeavouring to take power, but to weaken the government. As the war progressed and Renamo began to base itself more firmly in Mozambique, the long-term goal shifted and it increasingly appeared as if Renamo was fighting to be included in the networks of power dominated by Frelimo rather than overthrowing them. Renamo's own communiqués rarely spoke of overthrowing Frelimo and instead claimed that they were "fighting for peace" (Renamo 1988). The struggle for the Renamo leadership appeared to be based on changing the political system so that they could be included, and more generously including their poor peasant base of support as well, not refashioning one from the ground up. Thus, when the 1994 elections resulted in a Frelimo victory, outside of Renamo's almost ritualistic denunciation of 'fraud', no moves were made to contest the result or return to the bush.<sup>16</sup>

For much of the population, the meaning of what it meant to be a citizen of a capitalist democracy was far from clear. Ironically democracy was introduced after a referendum where the majority of the respondents rejected the implementation of a multiparty model on the grounds that it would cause more conflict (Manning 2002). For many its practice was strange and confusing. West (2003) recounts the impressions of many residents of the Mueda plateau in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, the 'cradle' of Frelimo's revolution. On Mueda, there was a widespread interpretation of the UN's peace mission as 're-colonisation'. This was reinforced by UN troops, with a strong Portuguese contingent, that were seen publicly disarming Frelimo soldiers. For many others it was very difficult to try to disentangle Frelimo from the state. Still others voted simply because they were told to; instead of a 'democratic' awakening it was simply another duty required by the government or Renamo (Manning 2002). The majority tended to cast their vote for whichever force was strongest in their area, suggesting that elections, at least initially, were not so much the population making their political will known, but placating the

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<sup>15</sup> The post-war army was made up of 12,195 troops. Frelimo demobilised 71,281 troops and sent 8533 to the new army; Renamo demobilised 20,537 troops (not counting child soldiers, around 2000 or so) and sent 3662 to the new army (Hanlon 1996: 18)

<sup>16</sup> Frelimo won 44.33% and President Chissano won 53.3% in comparison to Renamo's surprisingly strong showing of 37.78% for the party and 33.73% for its leader, Alfonso Dhlakama.

most powerful force in the near vicinity (Manning 2002). Furthermore democracy was introduced when the possibility for actual policy differences between parties was at its lowest. Both Frelimo and Renamo campaigned on similar political (i.e. democracy) and economic platforms (i.e. free markets), therefore much of the campaign centred around interpretations of history, with Frelimo using its credentials as the liberator of the nation and Renamo speaking of villagisation and the attack on tradition (Bertelsen 2004; Harrison 1996). Much like the previous revolutionary modernism, democracy was never a ‘popular’ project in Mozambique, nor is it necessarily proving an effective way to incorporate those previously marginalised.

This is not to say there have not been significant changes in Mozambique since the end of the war: after years of decline the economy now has one of the fastest growth rates in the continent (around 8% a year) and Frelimo’s outward hostility towards ‘tradition’ is becoming a thing of the past. After six years of debate, in an effort to broaden their social base and weaken Renamo’s, the government issued a decree in 2000 creating “community leaders”, which meant that former *regulos* could hold office at the local level (Gonçalves 2004, 2006) While the authors currently have only limited information, it appears, at least in some southern districts, that the majority of local offices are still held by former party officials. Where *regulos* have been successful in regaining power many have requested the former colonial symbols of power such as uniforms and see their role as that exercised under the colonial period (Buur and Kyed 2005; Gonçalves 2004, 2006). Local understandings of the practice of power and what the legitimate role of local authorities are can just as easily subvert democratic reforms arising from decentralisation as consolidate them.

What is fascinating in the Mozambican case is not simply the dramatic changes, but the ideological continuities that have allowed the ruling elite to maintain unity as the ground continually shifts beneath their feet. In many ways the practice of power under liberal democracy has multiple similarities with previous eras. While there has been the beginning of a decentralisation programme, the party and the state are conflated at a local level in many districts (Gonçalves 2004, 2006). Local level administrators often jealously guard their positions because despite the premises of the new liberal order, their conception of politics is based on their own historical experience. One local government official reported:

To campaign for Frelimo means to secure our jobs. As we saw in 1975, the upcoming independence meant the destruction of the colonial administrative machine and state functionaries ended up without jobs. If Renamo gets into power it will not be different” (Gonçalves 2004: 45).

Despite the official separation of the party and the state, the civil service that is meant to staff these ‘neutral’ state institutions appears to show levels of partisanship not entirely dissimilar from the one-party era.

The cohesive unity that underwrote the socialist incarnation of Frelimo also appears to remain a strong force in the liberal era. This is not to say that there are no differences within the Frelimo leadership. Indeed, there is a permanent, on-going tension between the President, intent on broadening his powers and space of manoeuvre, and his peers, intent on wielding more influence over the president’s decisions. Furthermore, party insiders talk about a variety of ‘tendencies’ or even factions, associated with prominent party figures such as a ‘Chissano tendency’, a ‘Guebuza

tendency' a 'Machel tendency', spearheaded by Graça Machel, and a 'Diogo tendency' led by the Prime-Minister Luisa Diogo. It is important to note that these tendencies are not rigid and their membership is fluid. What is remarkable is that all actors in these dynamics, arguably moved by an intriguingly enduring sense of mutual loyalty, endeavour to ensure that their differences do not jeopardise the basic internal cohesion and sense of unity that has been Frelimo's hallmark in their three decades of rule.

While socialism has collapsed the Frelimo elite are now embarking on a new project of modernisation, that of liberal capitalism, which in many ways is as messianic as scientific socialism (West 1997). Once again they are the only people who can lead the nation down this path guarding against the dangers of narrow secretarianism, and the state will once again be the instrument necessary to implant and protect this vision. While Frelimo now accept a multiparty system, in actual practice it seems more to be a case of the party allowing the margins of power to be divisible so as to keep the centre inviolate.

### **Transformation and Reconstruction**

On October 15<sup>th</sup> 1992 Frelimo and Renamo finally signed a peace agreement that brought the civil war to an end. Although peace was greeted with guarded optimism, the country was devastated by the war. Up to a million people had died, both due to the conflict and associated diseases and starvation (Hanlon 1996). In addition many of the impressive gains of the revolution, such as widely available health care services and education provision had been knocked back to pre-independence levels. Rural areas had suffered most during the civil war; infrastructure in these areas generally lay in ruins. The Frelimo leadership's dream of presiding over a 'modern' industrialised and egalitarian society also appeared, by the end of the war, to have been crushed. Mozambique's structural adjustment programme resulted in the slashing of government subsidies and services for the poor, while simultaneously devaluing the currency and making thousands of workers redundant (Hanlon 1996). Although conditions for many urbanites appeared to be precarious, levels of government corruption seemed to be increasing and state officials were now, in contradiction to previous egalitarian norms, openly displaying their new wealth (Hanlon 1996). Mozambique's economy appeared to mirror its pre-independence role, serving as a transport hub for South Africa and Zimbabwe and as a producer of primary agricultural products. Mozambique was also a transport hub for a growing illegal economy. Both drugs from Asia and cars stolen in South Africa found their way to Europe through Mozambique's ports (Ellis 1999; Hanlon 1996; Hibou 1999). Frelimo still ruled Mozambique, but the country bore only the slightest resemblance to the vision they had proclaimed at independence.

Despite all the changes that had affected Mozambique in the first seventeen years of independence, there was an underlying theme to Frelimo's rule. While there had been a series of political shifts, the party leadership remained a group in which many members have shared origins as urban-based elites with weak ties to traditional power structures in the colonial period. As the political system shifted away from socialism and earlier ideals were abandoned, a continuity that remains is the role of elites as the 'engine of modernisation'. Through all the trials and chaos of the civil war period this remains central to the self-justification of elites and informs the way they view the nation they struggle to control. When Frelimo first took power after the liberation struggle the leadership tended to view Mozambique as a 'blank slate' on

which they could impose their models of a modern nation (O'Laughlin 2000). Despite all of the changes that have convulsed through society since independence this elite view of Mozambique as an empty canvas has not entirely disappeared. After the civil war the nation was to have another "new beginning", this time refashioned as a capitalist democracy (Hall and Young 1997: 219-220).

While this 'new beginning' did initiate many substantive policy changes, there were continuities beyond the simply ideological. While some scholars have stressed the neo-colonial aspects of the capitalist transition in Mozambique, correctly observing the strong external pressure in the process and the very real constraints imposed and the numerous failures of the World Bank and the IMF, the situation is more complicated (Morier-Genoud 2007; Pitcher 2002). As noted by Morier-Genoud (2007), while many members of the Frelimo elite were suspicious of elements of the transformation, it was felt that the adoption of a liberal project was the only way to end the war and retain power. By taking the initiative and reforming the economic and political structures before the peace agreement had been signed and before Renamo was able to influence the direction of the reforms, Frelimo created a significant advantage for itself (Morier-Genoud 2007). Thus, privatisation, as argued by Pitcher (1996, 2002) and Castel-Branco et al. (2001) was not a neutral, technical measure as the World Bank and the IMF seemed to naively assume, but a deeply political process where Frelimo directed events as much as possible to assure the continuing support of some elements of older constituencies and create new ones.

The stated ideal of neo-liberal transformation is to lessen state intervention in the economy as much as possible and let the market find equilibrium through competition. This is not what actually happened in Mozambique. Instead the state continues to play a major role, first by directing the privatisation process and deciding who will be granted ownership of privatised industries (Pitcher 2002), and secondly, by frequently remaining a minority share holder in privatised industries. Thus the major beneficiaries of the privatisation process have not reduced the state's hold, but in many cases increased its strength as much as possible considering the existing constraints.

The major beneficiaries of the liberalisation process have been confined to a few select social groups. They include previously existing large companies, for instance the Entrepoto group that have been active in Mozambique for more than 100 years (Pitcher 2002). As previously mentioned in this paper, Frelimo did not nationalise all industry but allowed major companies that stayed after independence to operate under state direction. Cahen (1993) observed that Frelimo tended to nationalise small capital, while treating major capital much more gently. Large multinational corporations have also been dominant in taking control of major industries, although the majority of the medium and smaller industries have gone to Mozambicans (Pitcher 2002). The Indian merchant class, although often repressed during the socialist period, have also benefited strongly. While there is still an ambiguous relationship between this group and the party, the post-war period has seen new alliances formed; a marriage of political and economic power if you will. Finally, high ranking party members and Frelimo military and security officers have been major beneficiaries (Castel-Branco et al 2001; Pitcher 2002). Instead of creating a free market and empowering a new group of indigenous capitalists, liberalisation has

empowered a state-led, or more specifically a Frelimo-led effort at creating rentier capitalism.<sup>17</sup> The major effect has been to reduce the state's provision of social services, but not to disentangle it from the economy. In addition, it also appears that this process has been crucial in creating a class structure based on control of, or access to state power, as the primary guarantor of material wealth. This does not mean there has not been economic growth; Table 1 demonstrates that economic growth has been considerable.

**Table 1: Evolution of Mozambique's Gross Domestic Product**

Year	GDP growth	Year	GDP growth
1990	+ 1 %	1998	+ 12 %
1991	+ 4.9 %	1999	+ 7.3 %
1992	+ 8.1 %	2000	+ 2.1 %
1993	+ 8.7 %	2001	+ 9.6 %
1994	+ 7.5 %	2002	+ 9.8 %
1995	+ 4.3 %	2003	+ 7.8 %
1996	+ 7.1 %	2004	+ 7.5 %
1997	+ 11.3 %	2005	+ 7.7 %

Source: Morier-Genoud 2007: 7

The Frelimo government has also kept a tight hold on inflation, bringing it down from around 70% in 1994 to 5% in 1999. The rate of inflation appears to largely hover around its 1999 figure and in 2005 it had only increased to 6.3% (Country profiles, [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)). This has made Mozambique relatively attractive for foreign investment, at least by African standards, and has spurred growth. Yet growth rates can hide as much as they reveal. Around 80% of foreign investment has been concentrated in the two major cities, Maputo and Beira. Furthermore two thirds of industrial growth has occurred in the south, specifically Maputo and its immediate hinterlands, while only 10% of industrial investment has gone to the north, leaving it primarily agricultural, highlighting the issues of marginalisation that helped to fuel the civil war. Table 2 highlights some of the regional inequalities that have persisted in Mozambique despite democratisation.

**Table 2: Evolution of the GDP by provinces, regions and the country**

Regions/provinces					
	2001	2002	2003	2004	Average
NORTH	7.3	8.3	11.5	3.4	7.6
Niassa	10.7	11.1	9.9	7.2	9.7
Cabo Delgado	9.4	8.2	12	3.9	8.4
Nampula	5.9	7.8	11.6	2.4	6.9
CENTER	10.1	6.5	9.1	5.3	7.8
Zambezia	10.8	7.3	8.8	4.7	7.9

<sup>17</sup> As Mozambican law stipulates that foreign ventures must have a Mozambican partner, many elites simply accrue revenue as 'silent partners' and then invest their resources in 'safe', but non-productive options like property (Sumich 2005).

Regions/provinces					
Tete	10.3	8.6	5.3	8.6	8.2
Manica	6.6	4.4	10.8	24	6
Sofala	11	5.8	10.4	5.8	8.2
SOUTH	18	9.2	5.6	10.9	10.9
Inhambane	4.4	11.6	8.1	22	11.5
Gaza	5	4.9	8.2	3.4	5.4
Maputo province	43	14.4	1.2	16.8	18.9
Maputo city	8.6	5.1	8.5	4.2	6.6
MOZAMBIQUE	13.1	8.2	7.9	7.5	9.2

Source: UNDP, 2006: 17

Furthermore, Mozambique is quite dependent on foreign investment and aid: internal taxes only accounted for 12% of the GDP in 2001 and are projected to grow to 19% of the GDP by 2020 (country profiles, [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)). Perhaps this is why, as with the socialist period, there is the continued fascination with foreign funded ‘mega-projects’. The primary example is Mozal, an aluminium smelter near Maputo. While it has dramatically increased the GNP, the actual social benefits for much of the population seem to be marginal and concentrated near the capital and its hinterlands. As the government gave the Australian and South African owners a tax break to set up the plant, they currently receive little revenue. The plant consumes as much electricity as all the rest of Mozambique, but this is purchased from South Africa (Castel-Branco 2002). Although it does employ Mozambican employees, Mozal is called “fifty gardeners in Maputo”, as many management positions are held by foreigners and it is perceived as only employing Mozambicans for menial labour. The opportunities that do arise from projects of this nature are geographically confined and do little to address existing regional imbalances that can lead to further tension and contestation.

Mozambique’s post-war economy resembles important aspects of the colonial period. The south has a small amount of light industry, but is deeply incorporated with neighbouring South Africa, which has an economy around forty times larger (Castel-Branco 2002). The nation primarily provides goods and services to its powerful neighbour, while internal markets are weakly developed and dependent on imports. The centre and the north are primarily agricultural and have probably descended further into poverty since the colonial period despite grandiose plans. One major difference is that instead of Mozambique officially exporting labour to South Africa, they now receive South African capital, although this results in a very narrow and regionalised economic base (Castel-Branco 2002).<sup>18</sup> The ambitious plans to use liberal capitalism to transform Mozambique have once again created a state with a tightly interlinked elite who have densely intertwined material interests, but large sections of the population remain weakly incorporated in this framework.. As the ruling elite can gain legitimacy from foreigners who fund the transformation, there is also relatively little interest or need on the part of significant sections of the elite to incorporate them.

<sup>18</sup> Although illegal labour migration is still a major economic option for southern Mozambicans and many villages in the south are left behind by young men as they try and find work in South Africa.

## Conclusion

The Mozambican case provides new insights into the process of nation-building and state consolidation under the currently internationally dominant liberal framework. Scholars of state building, such as Moore, have tended to focus on the complicated internal alliances between various social groups that create ruling coalitions, and rightly so. However, the specific historical conditions of Mozambique point to the powerful role of external factors as well. The colonial heritage left the country with a small elite who arose from a particular social background unique in many ways to themselves. This group eventually formed a tightly unified elite, but once again it was self-consciously different from the wider population and tried to implement a vision that was, in many ways, regionally and socially specific. It is possible that with time they could have had a measure of success in forming a more deeply rooted nation in relationship to this vision, but the realities of geo-politics were not to allow them the necessary opportunities. The brutal assaults of Rhodesia and South Africa, the devastation of civil war and later the more benign dictates of the international community and major donors have transformed this vision considerably, even if ideological continuities remain. The Frelimo leadership has managed to survive all of these assaults and transform international dictates to their advantage, in as much as is possible. The post-war period has seen a steady recreation of their power and hegemony and the opportunities of the new, more capitalist economy, have allowed many members to transcend their political base and amass wealth. Party members can now use political clout to gain control of economic resources and Frelimo has also become the source of class power as well. However, the benefits of the new era are primarily distributed amongst a narrow circle and large sections of the population are still unevenly incorporated into this new state-building project. In fact, as much of the new wealth comes from abroad, there may be few reasons to try and incorporate the disadvantaged more completely. As this paper has argued, since independence power has primarily been located in the Frelimo party, not in supposedly neutral state structures that could be inherited in a reasonably intact manner by another political force. Thus the very success of the party in rebuilding their hegemony and their disinclination to share power with social forces outside of their control could intensify the divisions and inequalities that helped to fuel the civil war in the first place. There is a danger that this style of politics could leave the project of state-building on a very fragile foundation and it remains to be seen what the future will hold.

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LSE, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7849 4631 Fax: +44 (0)20 7955 6844  
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