

# THE DHLAKAMA AND RENAMO BREAKAWAY FROM GOVERNMENT: ANOTHER TEST FOR THE SADC'S CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION RECORD?

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## *Abstract*

*The decision made in October 2012 by Afonso Dhlakama, the leader of the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO), accompanied by a motley group of his former rebel fighters, to pull out from the government of Mozambique and to go back to his former rebel base in Gorongosa, Central Mozambique, has sparked widespread, yet well-founded fears that Mozambique might be heading back to armed conflict involving the same players and precipitated by some of the grievances that were thought to be resolved through the post-Rome Accords dispensation a good 22 years ago.*

*For the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, this development is particularly ominous as it comes at a time when the region is faced with other continuing or broken down peace initiatives notably in Madagascar and the DRC. The elusive peace and security processes in Antananarivo and Kinshasa have resulted in either full scale military offensives as in the eastern Congo or in an unstable politico-security environment as being witnessed in Madagascar. In both these two cases, the SADC has been trying to mediate and find sustainable peaceful solutions without much reported progress.*

*This article critically analyses the SADC's capability to successfully and sustainably resolve and transform conflicts, using this unstable political and security development in Mozambique as a case in point. It interrogates the extent to which the current dispensation in Mozambique has succeeded in addressing the grievances that were, during the negotiations that culminated in the signing of the Rome Accords, recognised as having caused the brutal 16-year civil war of 1976-1992. The article posits that the October 2012 move by RENAMO, regardless of whether it is resolved through dialogue or it leads to another shooting war, presents a critical challenge to the SADC Conflict Resolution and Management Mechanisms as conceived, developed and practiced to date. Whilst peace has been prevailing in Mozambique for over 20 years, the article analyses whether or not the renegeing of RENAMO revolves around the underlying causes of the pre-1992 conflict which remained unaddressed. The article concludes with a set of recommendations on how best the SADC could tackle this recurring conflict in Mozambique while, at the same time, drawing critical lessons that will assist in generally improving and streamlining its current conflict resolution and management mechanisms and practices.*

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**Keywords:** South African Development Community (SADC); conflict transformation record; break away; RENAMO; historical root causes; civil war; peace and security concerns; unstable politico-security environment; unstable political and security development; sustainable peaceful solutions.

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**Slutelwoorde:** Suid-Afrikaanse Ontwikkelingsgemeenskap (SAOG); konflik-transformasieverslag; RENAMO; basiese historiese oorsake; burgeroorlog; kommer oor vrede en veiligheid; onstabiele politieke sekuriteitsontwikkeling; volhoubare vredesoplossings.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) continues to face political, socio-economic and military conflicts that have in one way or the other affected the subregion's development momentum. The subregion has been facing significant challenges on how to mediate and find sustainable solutions to such conflicts. In cases where mediation efforts have been made and solutions apparently found in given conflict situations, there have been scenarios where these conflicts have recurred. The reasons behind such recurrence varied, including the following:

- Lack of institutional coherence within the SADC;
- Poorly structured or inadequate cooperation mechanisms between the SADC and key international players such as the United Nations in dealing with local conflicts within the SADC region;
- Too much dependence by the region on extra-regional players in resolving intra-SADC conflicts;
- Lack of political will amongst the antagonists and their backers coupled with the existence of divergent national interests of various players in the context of any given conflict that a member country would be facing, a quick rush to find solutions without addressing the root causes of the conflict;
- The tendency of certain subregional mediators to be subjective when addressing the demands of either side in a given conflict, and
- The absence of follow-up measures and efforts within the SADC conflict resolution and management mechanisms to stay continuously engaged and keep any conflict that may seem to be resolved under constant review in order to prevent recurrence by addressing the underlying political, socio-economic and military/security social grievances of all the parties.

Having demonstrably enjoyed uninterrupted peace since 1992, under the political dispensation that was ushered in by the Rome Accords, which marked the end of a protracted civil war that had begun in 1976, the October 2012 reversion to guerrilla insurgency by the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO) leader Afonso Dhlakama, along with a battalion of more than 800 bodyguards, comprising mostly of his former rebel fighters, makes Mozambique one of the most significant recurring conflicts in the history of conflict resolution in

the SADC region. This and the other current recurring conflicts in Madagascar and the DRC represents major tests to the SADC subregion's conflict resolution and conflict transformation capacity.

This article critically analyses the SADC's capability to successfully and sustainably resolve this recurring conflict in Mozambique. It interrogates and forecasts the political, economic and military/security challenges that the subregion would face in its new attempts to resolve the present round of the Mozambique conflict in the context of any unfulfilled grievances that may be behind Afonso Dhlakama's seemingly contradictory decision to revert to guerrilla warfare while, at the same time, continuing to participate in Mozambique's statutory political system. An analysis of the political, socio-economic and military developments in Mozambique in the post conflict period in relation to the continued disgruntlement of RENAMO will be made. SADC actions or inactions in transforming this conflict, beyond merely resolving it in 1992, will also be interrogated. The current politico-military/security developments in Mozambique in the context of the RENAMO's unilateral abrogation of the Rome Accords and the likely impact of these developments to peace and stability in both Mozambique and the subregion will come under scrutiny.

The likely causal factors of such developments will also be analysed. The conflict resolution capacity of the SADC will be analysed under different scenarios that may unravel during the conflict including what the SADC can do if the conflict escalates into a full blown armed insurgency. The likely political and strategic challenges that the subregion may face in the mediation process and the search for a sustainable peaceful solution would be critically analysed. Possible recommendations to overcome these challenges are suggested before conclusions are drawn.

## **2. TRACING THE HISTORICAL DYNAMICS OF CIVIL AND POST-CIVIL WAR SUPPORT FOR RENAMO**

The current unstable political and security situation in Mozambique, precipitated by the October 2012 return of RENAMO to its former military strategic operational headquarters of Gorongosa, can best be comprehended through tracing the historical dynamics of the civil and post-civil war support as well as the political, socio-economic and administrative expectations of the former rebel group. This historical approach will possibly assist the academia and policy practitioners in the conflict resolution field to appreciate the need and urgency of a sustainable solution to this unfolding conflict, as well as the mechanisms and courses of action that are open to the SADC to impartially and sustainably deal with this resurgent situation in Mozambique.

When Mozambique attained independence in 1975, the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) led government's major aim was to try and address all the injustices of the colonial era such as human exploitation and then construct political, social and economic equality among the citizens of Mozambique.<sup>2</sup> Under the leadership of President Samora Moises Machel, the FRELIMO government also tried to establish a one party state form of democracy. This took the form of a people's state which was an alliance of peasants and workers guided by FRELIMO.<sup>3</sup> The government also sought to introduce mass production models for the benefit of the masses. However, not long after the attainment of independence from Portuguese rule, the new Mozambique government began to face challenges that included continued underdevelopment and ideological divisions as well as externally orchestrated military destabilisation of the country.

By early 1977, a full blown civil war had broken out between the FRELIMO government and RENAMO, a group of mainly nationalist and conservative Mozambicans who were organised, armed and backed by the South African and Rhodesian regimes under the guise of opposing the communist doctrine and policies of FRELIMO. This civil war became the prime challenge that was faced by the post-colonial Mozambique, with demonstrably devastating effects, including the death of more than one million people, the displacement of more than five million as well as the destruction of infrastructure throughout the country to the tune of US\$18 billion.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the above effects of the 16 years of the civil war, RENAMO made significant territorial gains in terms of the strategic areas that came under its political and military control. This was mostly made possible by the support the armed rebel group got from mostly anti-communist regimes whose interests were at stake with the FRELIMO led government which was viewed as pro-communist. RENAMO's support from the onset was through special intelligence operations run by the then Rhodesia [specifically the Rhodesian Military Intelligence (RMI) and the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) and South Africa Department of Military Intelligence (DMI) among others.<sup>5</sup> The two countries' militaries provided a supporting role to these intelligence operations. RENAMO's primary grievance in the civil war was that FRELIMO had over time reneged from its promises by abandoning the populist rural development policies that the post-independent

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2 JM Cabrita, *Mozambique: The tortuous road to democracy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000), pp. 107-108.

3 *Ibid.*

4 J Gersony, *Summary of Mozambique refugee accounts of principally conflict-related experience in Mozambique* (Washington DC: Bureau for Refugee Programs, US Department of State, 1988), pp. 40-41; A Vines, *RENAMO: Terrorism in Mozambique* (London: James Currey, 1991), pp. 4-5.

5 DA Robinson, *Curse on the land: A history of Mozambican Civil War* (PhD, University of Western Australia, 2006), p. 28.

government had enunciated at the outset. On the same note, a significant number of Mozambique's rural population became disenchanted by the FRELIMO government because of its lack of concern with their basic needs.<sup>6</sup> Whilst RENAMO notably carried out horrendous acts of atrocity in most rural parts of Mozambique, it also gradually gained and began to command sizeable political support in areas that came under its control, thus increasing its national, regional and international recognition.

Whilst expectations were high among political and security analysts that the end of the Cold War in general and developments in the subregion, in particular the end of apartheid in South Africa, would cut off any support or sustenance that RENAMO had enjoyed, the strategic ground it had gained during the civil war still gave the movement significant residual bargaining power during the negotiations for peace. The vast strategic areas of territory gained by RENAMO during the civil war could also mean a lot of expectations from the rebel group in terms of a significant political power sharing and the allocation of top influential administrative and bureaucratic posts in the new government. Even during the negotiation process, RENAMO was reportedly denying the FRELIMO government access to areas that were under its control.<sup>7</sup> Such incidents could have impacted on building up confidence in RENAMO that it could at any time (even after the civil war) deny the government (particularly security forces) access to those areas it used to have military and political control over during the civil war.

Even the presence of the United Nations Observer Mission in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) did little to address such situations which perhaps could have resulted in the enhancement of mutual trust and the building of national institutional confidence between FRELIMO and RENAMO at political, bureaucratic, security and military leadership levels.<sup>8</sup> It is, indeed, plausible to assert that the more than two decades of peace that apparently prevailed in Mozambique after the Rome Accords in 1992 did nothing to address the mistrust and lack of mutual confidence that originally separated the two sides in the civil war.

RENAMO's political and security influence and support in the areas it controlled during the civil war could also have been boosted by the fact that most of the post-conflict reconstruction activities by the international community, particularly aid agencies, could have improved the image of the former rebel group in the eyes of the Mozambique civilian masses who had suffered as a result of the civil war. NGO development activities in those areas that the former rebel group had

6 GC Smith, "The roots of the Mozambican counter-revolution", *Southern African Review of Books* 2(4), pp. 7-10.

7 Anonymous Mozambican national/former child soldier, 2012: The Dhlakama and RENAMO breakaway from government: Another test for the SADC's conflict transformation record? Interviewed by S Maeresera, Pietermaritzburg, 10 November 2012.

8 *Ibid.*

declared no go areas to government during the civil war and the areas in which they continued to have political influence and to some extent administrative authority meant that RENAMO continued to capitalise on the credit of being development focussed and thereby win support of the masses who would have associated it with national sabotage. It is in that regard that the national support of RENAMO in such areas could give the group enduring confidence in recruitment to its rebel ranks.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. RENAMO'S POST CIVIL WAR DISENCHANTMENT

Whilst the end of the civil war in Mozambique was received with relief among various actors at national, regional and international levels, RENAMO continued to have political, socio-economic and even security issues against the FRELIMO led government. Notably, of all the national elections held in the post-civil war period, RENAMO has been disputing it despite the regional and international credibility given to these elections. Thus it cannot be ruled out that one of the major reasons for RENAMO's continued disgruntlement could be traceable to the inexorable decline of the former armed rebel movement politically *viz* its poor performance on national outcomes.<sup>10</sup> After the signing of the Rome Peace Accord which led to post conflict peace actions such as the holding of these elections, it can arguably be noted that most of these post-civil war elections in Mozambique have seen RENAMO whittled down as a political force. In the author's view, the RENAMO's relatively impressive showing in the beginning could be owed to a peace wish by Mozambicans who feared a return to the gruesome atrocities perpetrated by the movement during the war rather than an embrace of its politics. Significantly, even that wish did not upset the political applecart by handing RENAMO an electoral victory which would have ousted FRELIMO from power. Instead FRELIMO even strengthened its grip suggesting that the fear factor has political limits. As Mozambique moved more and more into a peaceful future, the voters was progressively released from fear and bad memory and the same electorate was able to make rational political choices. Apart from failing to dislodge FRELIMO, RENAMO has been losing ground to the Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM) led by Daviz Simango which now controls Beira and parts of Zambezia. In one way or the other, the voter has been looking for non-armed opposition. RENAMO's withdrawal from the political process or its rejection of the Rome principles could be a way of expressing political angst, indeed a way

9 M Rupiya. Topic: the Dhlakama and RENAMO breakaway from government: Another test for the SADC's conflict transformation record? Interviewed by S Maeresera, Pretoria, 11 November 2012.

10 *Chatham House*, 20 June 2013. Is Mozambique sliding back toward conflict? [online], <<http://www.chathamhouse.org/media/comment/view/19264>>, accessed 24 January 2014.

of reasserting fear of war as compensation for declining political leverage.<sup>11</sup> Thus, Dhlakama could also have hoped for a spontaneous response from locals whom he misjudged to have been sufficiently alienated by Maputo as to embrace this potentially militarily explosive pull-out. Except perhaps, up to now, it would appear that the RENAMO leader has not taken a pause to weigh whether the peace dividend outweighs alienation from the central government. Dhlakama has not equally taken his time to weigh whether or not the locals themselves do not feel hard done by RENAMO itself after such a bloody sacrifice. It seems RENAMO's urge for another war has been far exceeded by the wish to be neglected in peace by the centre.

At economic and social levels, complaints by the former rebel group against the government have been centred on marginalisation and inequitable distribution of resources to respective RENAMO constituencies in favour of FRELIMO. RENAMO also continued to complain against the government on issues of allocation of senior bureaucratic, administrative and security appointments to mostly FRELIMO sympathisers at the expense of RENAMO cadres.<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that most of the above grievances centre on the contentious issue of post-civil war Disengagement, Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration and Resettlement (DDDRR) which, in the view of RENAMO, favoured FRELIMO combatants at the expense of its own cadres.<sup>13</sup> Whilst it may not be relevant to discuss the post-civil war DDRR in Mozambique in detail, it is important however to make a brief critical analysis of the dynamics surrounding the same in the context of the current security situation in the country as a result of the resort of RENAMO to armed guerrilla warfare and the challenges that the SADC may face in resolving the conflict.

As a result of the incomplete implementation of the DDRR programme, RENAMO's own veterans have been growing militantly dissatisfied by the

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11 Anonymous political and security analyst. Topic: the Dhlakama and RENAMO breakaway from government: Another test for the SADC's conflict transformation record? Interviewed by S Maeresera, Harare, 12 February 2012. See also *Pambuka News*, 28 November 2013, Mozambique: Why has Renamo gone back to the bush? [online], <<http://www.pambuzaka.org/en/category/features/89767/print>> , accessed 22 January 2014.

12 *NewZim*, 14 November 2012, Mozambique's ageing ex-guerrillas regather arms [online] <<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/news-9561-Mozambique+on+civil+war+footing/news.aspx>>, accessed 14 November 2012.

13 Same interview by anonymous political and security analyst, Harare, 12 February 2013. In line with this article, the author has contextualised the concept of DDRR for the specific case of Mozambique. This is so considering that the other term DDRR (Disarmament, Demobilisation, Repatriation and Resettlement) does not really apply because there were no foreign armed groups after the Mozambique war that needed to be repatriated to their respective countries of origin. Again, the author could not make reference to DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration) because of the missing aspect of resettlement of the former combatants.

post-conflict situation which privileged RENAMO elites in partnership with FRELIMO while marginalizing the combatants, some of whom have been left in a semi-demobilized state as insurance for RENAMO in its unsure dalliance with FRELIMO. Unfortunately this leverage for RENAMO turned out to be an unintended leverage against it, in favour of FRELIMO, whose intelligence has been minutely reading the unfolding dynamics between this restive leftover from conflict days and its command, now living on beachfronts of Maputo in visible opulence.<sup>14</sup> It is equally important to point out that the whole process of DDRR was incomplete. To have Dhlakama still commanding 800 armed men to some extent shows that the disarmament part of the DDRR was not quite complete. Whilst the 800 armed may be underestimated in terms of the threat to Mozambique, the author believes, when it comes to guerrilla warfare, a small determined force of just above 100 well-armed men can hold down a whole national army for years. Again, if reports to the effect that about 300 RENAMO fighters remain armed since the 1992 peace deal, despite efforts to integrate them into the army and police, are anything to go by, then it shows how the reintegration part of the DDRR has arguably remained incomplete.<sup>15</sup>

In relation to the above, it may be said that Dhlakama could have been trying against ever diminishing resources to placate this group which could no longer be reintegrated into the military mainstream to the extent that this was supposed to be a sleeping army/force. One political security analyst refers to the renegeing of the RENAMO leader as “...a melodramatic action which was meant to be both placatory (to these restive combatants) and intimidatory (to the sitting government); with Dhlakama hoping an anxious Mozambique government would pay any price for peace”.<sup>16</sup> The same analyst also reiterated the fact that periodically the government of Mozambique has been violently engaging this sleeping force of RENAMO in low intensity warfare partly to demolish the force piece meal, partly to test its cohesion and resource by way of military assets, command and firepower.<sup>17</sup> Also important to note is the fact that each engagement showed not

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14 G Nathaniel. Topic: the Dhlakama and RENAMO breakaway from government: Another test for the SADC’s conflict transformation record? Interviewed by S Maeresera, Pretoria, 17 February 2013.

15 *BBC News*, 4 April 2013. See also *Africa – News and Analysis*, 21 December 2013, Mozambique: Frelimo urges Renamo to return to dialogue [online], <<http://africajournalismtheworld.com/tag/renamo/>>, accessed 25 January 2014.

16 Anonymous political and security analyst. Topic: the Dhlakama and RENAMO breakaway from government: Another test for the SADC’s conflict transformation record? Interviewed by S Maeresera, Pretoria, 25 February 2013. See also *The Southern Times*, [Online], <[http://www.southerntimesafrica.com/news\\_article.php?id=7690&title=Dhlakama%20back%20in%20the%20bush](http://www.southerntimesafrica.com/news_article.php?id=7690&title=Dhlakama%20back%20in%20the%20bush)>, accessed 22 January 2014.

17 Anonymous political and security analyst. Topic: the Dhlakama and RENAMO breakaway from government: Another test for the SADC’s conflict transformation record? Interviewed by



just weak resources but an even weaker capacity to respond coherently to this. In the author's view it can thus be arguably pointed out that the deployment of an assault unit of government in the environs of Gorongosa, ostensibly in the name of securing the RENAMO leader, but without a vigorous protest or resistance from RENAMO's sleeping force, clearly indicated a precipitously declined military leverage on the part of RENAMO.

Generally after the civil war, RENAMO has always complained with a demonstrable measure of truth that most of the Mozambican government troops that were deemed loyal were incorporated into the police force, particularly the para-military known as the "Rapid Intervention Force".<sup>18</sup> RENAMO still cites this as a continuing concern to date. RENAMO further accuses the FRELIMO led government of arbitrarily using this Rapid Intervention Force to suppress its civilian supporters. In the view of RENAMO, the paramilitary became a "FRELIMO armed militia that has been used against its supporters in violating their legal constitutional rights, such as denying them the right to carry out mass demonstrations against the government".<sup>19</sup> At the time of the final compilation of this article, the "Rapid Intervention Force" was reportedly deployed in the RENAMO stronghold to prevent planned demonstrations by its supporters. The government, however, continued to deny such allegations, arguing that the police unit was deployed only to monitor the situation, guard against any violent demonstrations.<sup>20</sup>

Another important point to note, specific to post-civil war DDDRR in Mozambique, is that of child soldiers who constituted more than a third of RENAMO rebel fighters. In the main, RENAMO's primary concern for a smaller integrated Mozambique force could have been based on the fact that most of its child soldiers were not integrated.<sup>21</sup> Thus, whilst some of the older RENAMO fighters were integrated, these child soldiers remained in the areas that continued to be primarily under the political and, to some extent, security influence of RENAMO. Questions have been asked in relation to whether or not particular attention was given in regards to the reintegration of these child soldiers into society by various actors who were involved in the DDDRR process in Mozambique. If

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S Maeresera, Pretoria, 25 February 2013.

- 18 *News 24*, 14 November 2012. Mozambique cop dies in shoot-out with ex-rebels [online], <<http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/Mozambique-cop-dies-in-shoot-out-with-ex-rebels-20120308>>, accessed 14 November 2012.
- 19 Anonymous former RENAMO rebel. Topic: the Dhlakama and RENAMO breakaway from government: Another test for the SADC's conflict transformation record? Interviewed by S Maeresera, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 10 October 2012.
- 20 *ZimSit*, 15 November 2012. Mozambican cops not scared of rebels [online], <[http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/nov15\\_2012.html#Z5](http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/nov15_2012.html#Z5)>, accessed 15 November 2012.
- 21 Anonymous post-graduate student. Topic: the Dhlakama and RENAMO breakaway from government: Another test for the SADC's conflict transformation record? Interviewed by S Maeresera University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 10 November 2012.

most of these former child soldiers were not reintegrated into society after the war as part of the peacebuilding efforts, then it cannot be ruled out that some of these former child soldiers can arguably offer political and moral support as well as sympathy to the 800 armed Dhlakama bodyguards in their guerrilla activities. The former child soldiers' support for the insurgency being instigated by 800 former RENAMO rebels would not necessarily indicate their wish to return and participate in the guerrilla armed activities. The support may be based on their belief that nothing much was done in terms of their resettlement. Hence the RENAMO armed activities may put significant pressure on the government in terms of improving the former child soldiers' welfare.

Whilst blame can be put on the government and various non-governmental actors that took part in the DDDRR in Mozambique, it would be unfair to spare the SADC. The regional body should have played a significant part and make follow ups and monitoring progress on the Mozambique's DDDRR and the challenges faced in the process and how to tackle them after Mozambique's first post-civil war elections. Besides contentious issues related to governance, the effects of the post-civil war DDDRR seem to form the basis upon which the current RENAMO grievances against the FRELIMO led government are centred.<sup>22</sup> It is also the effects of the half-done DDDRR that pose a threat to Mozambique and upon which the RENAMO leader has his military support base. This is a critical issue that the SADC needs to address more seriously now as it seeks a lasting solution to the resurgent instability in Mozambique.

#### **4. THE RENEGING OF RENAMO AND ITS IMPACT ON MOZAMBIQUE AND THE SADC**

The political and military mileage made by RENAMO during and after the civil war has been significant in terms of the group's standing in the political landscape of not only Mozambique, but the SADC subregion and beyond. The fact that from the time of its formation the rebel group managed to establish regional and international networks and the fact that intergovernmental organisations successfully worked in areas where it has political support and influence gives it national, regional and international credibility. Important is that the former rebel group enjoys significant support amongst the populace in areas that are under its

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22 M Rupiya. Topic: the Dhlakama and RENAMO breakaway from government: Another test for the SADC's conflict transformation record? Interviewed by S Maeresera, Pretoria, 11 November 2012. See also *News 24*, 24 October 2013. Renamo a spent force of ageing fighters [online], <<http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/Renamo-a-spent-force-of-ageing-fighters-20131024>>, accessed 23 January 2014.

influence particularly around its Gorongosa Headquarters.<sup>23</sup> Whilst the current threat posed by RENAMO to Mozambique and the SADC region could be viewed with little security significance based on the view that the former rebel group's external support could have dwindled and there is nothing much as of now following such withdrawal of support from the then anti-socialist regional and international regimes during the civil war, a question that could be raised is whether or not RENAMO's current political and economic concerns will not receive regional and international sympathy and possibly support. It cannot be ruled out that the discovery of strategic resources such as gas and oil in most of the areas under RENAMO political influence have a bearing on the group's regional and international support base in both covert and overt forms. Whilst the above may be true, it would appear that the FRELIMO led government has not marked a "red line" in terms of dealing with the threat posed by RENAMO. The seemingly reluctance of the Maputo regime appear to be based on the government's "too much confidence" stemming from its belief that it has successfully repositioned itself as a friend of both regional and international big business partners.<sup>24</sup> It would appear that the significant investments in natural gas and coal, as well as extensive exploration in oil deposits led the FRELIMO government into believing that it has a new, positive profile in the eyes of the investment world and their home governments. Thus, the FRELIMO government could pin hopes on utilising its business links with the west to blunt RENAMO's political offensive. Whilst it seems possible that some countries from outside Africa may be overtly comfortable in using Simango's MDM to keep FRELIMO in moderation rather than using an ex-bandit organization for the same purpose, the fact remains that the security instability that RENAMO has caused in Mozambique from the time it reneged in October 2012 up to date mean that there is an absolute need for resolving this recurring conflict. Whilst donor interest in RENAMO has drastically fallen, RENAMO seem to have taken a new course in trying to have a cut in the country's coal and gas revenue. Thus, it is academically plausible to argue that the idea of prosecuting the war might result in Dhlakama and RENAMO controlling the rich northern half of the country which has gas reserves. This could then form the basis of RENAMO's logistical support in its guerrilla activities.

It must be realised that during the civil war, RENAMO's international support base was spread to Europe and the US with most of its supporters being

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23 *NewZim*, 14 November 2013. Mozambique's ageing ex-guerrillas regather arms [online], <<http://www.newzimbabwe.com/news-9561-Mozambique+on+civil+war+footing/news.aspx>>, accessed 14 November 2013.

24 *The Voice of America*, 25 October 2010. Analysts see little threat of renewed civil war in Mozambique [online], <<http://scoophunters.com/2013/10/25/analysts-see-little-threat-of-renewed-civil-war-in-mozambique/>>, accessed 22 January 2014 .

members of the academia.<sup>25</sup> This played a very important role in as far as the spread of international publicity and propaganda was concerned. The same can also be said about the role the academia played on the part of FRELIMO propaganda. These academics might not have the same impact and interest that they used to have in terms of international publicity of both RENAMO and to some extent FRELIMO in the current conflict environment in Mozambique. However, the SADC should not consider the current situation in Mozambique as merely an internal matter which cannot attract the interest of both regional and international players in terms of sympathy and support as well as the expectations of the same on how the subregional body would mediate in this conflict set up. Any likely reluctance by the SADC in showing little or no enthusiasm in prioritising the conflict in Mozambique in terms of subregional mediation may be capitalised to the detriment of the subregion's reputation in terms of its capacity to resolve conflict in the interest of peace and stability.<sup>26</sup> Little or no action by the SADC in terms of prioritising mediation in the Mozambique conflict may also lead to escalation of the conflict with devastating effects not only to Mozambique but to the subregion and beyond. The implications of instability in Mozambique to landlocked countries in the subregion, such as Zambia and Zimbabwe, are obvious. The transfrontier dimension and greater South African capital in its economy integrates Mozambique with the SADC's two largest economies outside Angola. Again, that should not be overstated. As stated earlier on, the discovery of strategic resources in areas which are under the influence of RENAMO could be a factor that gives RENAMO the confidence of getting sympathy and sponsorship from "behind the scene" actors as is the case with most armed groups in conflicts in Africa, particularly the Great Lakes Region. The SADC should not have short sightedness in terms of the regional and international reputation and advice that RENAMO could be getting from in as far as its grievances are concerned. The significant role played during the civil war by renowned academics and policy practitioners in terms of publishing the RENAMO cause at international forums as well as giving key advices to RENAMO leadership, particularly on how to formulate political programmes that would improve the party's national and international reputation, can still be repeated.<sup>27</sup>

Whilst local support for RENAMO during the civil war was through coercion of the masses that included forced conscription of child soldiers and forced marriages of young girls to the rebel group's rank and file, this bond with the masses could have changed or improved more normal social attachments during

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25 Robinson, pp. 38-39.

26 *Zimsit*, 15 November 2012. War in Mozambique must be averted [online], <[http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/nov15\\_2012.html#Z5](http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/nov15_2012.html#Z5)>, accessed 15 November 2012.

27 J Wheeler, "From Rovuma to Maputo: Mozambique's guerilla war", *Reason*, December 1985, pp. 31-38.

the course of the post-civil war period. Thus, despite all the atrocities that the rebel group inflicted on the populace and sabotaging of infrastructure, it cannot be ruled out that its relationship with the masses could have improved during the post-civil war years.<sup>28</sup> In the efforts to resolve the conflict in Mozambique, what should the SADC then do and what steps should the subregional body follow and what challenges are likely to be faced in these conflict resolution efforts?

## 5. WHITHER THE SADC CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION CAPABILITY?

It is most instructive that the FRELIMO-led government of Mozambique has not taken the RENAMO issue to the SADC or its Organ on Politics Defence and Security Cooperation (OPDSC). Nor has this matter been raised bilaterally with SADC countries such as South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and others who may most likely happen to have border security concerns with an unstable Mozambique. One wonders whether this is an oversight or whether it is a confident threat assessment. Of significance is that RENAMO took extra steps to explain itself and its actions to some of Mozambique's neighbouring countries, notably those mentioned above, which have direct security and economic interests as well as those that could carry out intervention through bilateral invitation.<sup>29</sup> RENAMO's intention could not have been just to allay Mozambique neighbouring countries' expected fears, but could also have been based on the need to pre-empt any precipitous actions that could escalate matters. However, the current situation does not in any way guarantee sustainable peace in Mozambique but will instead lead to another recurrence of the conflict.

The current unstable political and security environment in Mozambique, as a result of the renegeing of RENAMO, needs to be urgently resolved by the SADC in consultation with both FRELIMO and RENAMO. It is the SADC OPDSC through its relevant substructures such as the Inter-State Defence and Security Committee (ISDCS), among others, that need to come up with modalities for finding a sustainable solution to the Mozambican.<sup>30</sup> Although the current situation is based mainly on the regrouping of the more than 800 armed RENAMO elements, mostly

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28 H Abrahamsson & A Nilsson, *Mozambique: the troubled transition. From socialist construction to free market capitalism* (London: Zed Books, 1995); Newitt Malyn DD, *A history of Mozambique* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995); W Minter, *Apartheid's contrast: An inquiry into the roots of war in Angola and Mozambique* (London: Zed Books, 1994).

29 Anonymous Mozambique political and security analyst. Topic: the Dhlakama and RENAMO breakaway from government: Another test for the SADC's conflict transformation record? Interviewed by S Maeresera, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 26 February 2013.

30 *Zimsit*, 15 November 2012. War in Mozambique must be averted [online], <[http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/nov15\\_2012.html#Z5](http://www.zimbabwesituation.com/nov15_2012.html#Z5)>, accessed 15 November 2012.

Afonso Dhlakama body guards who happen to be his former rebel fighters, this cannot amount to a scenario that requires instant military action from the SADC in support of the Mozambican government. The fact that Maputo has deployed a police unit to Gorongosa and the fact that there has not been any reports of large scale military skirmishes basically as a result of RENAMO, is an indication that a political option is currently a priority for the SADC in bringing the parties together to the negotiating table. In this case the SADC can equally appoint a facilitator who would report to the summit. The facilitator may need to consider those factors that led to RENAMO's participation in the post-civil war process and all other democratic processes after the civil war.<sup>31</sup> These include national elections and the country's contribution to democratic reform. In the author's view, the facilitator has to take note of the fact that the Rome Accords stopped insurgency in Mozambique. Their value is not timeless. No peace process has timeless validity, more so against emerging challenges. A peace accord begins the peace process. It must be augmented by national peace building processes. This make the peace durable, not what began that peace process. Any peace agreement merely set the stage for multi-layered peace building accords which continue with time. Whilst there may be need for Mozambiqueans to develop their peace building resource, there is a need for the SADC subregion to appropriately assist in that regard.

The grievances of RENAMO against the FRELIMO led government, from the post-civil war phase up to the current politically tense period, must also be taken into consideration. This option, however, is likely to encounter political and strategic challenges. Is the SADC ready to mediate in Mozambique? There may be some lack of common consensus among member states in as far as the urgency and need to appoint a facilitator is concerned. Again, such facilitator may not receive the necessary political support from member countries. The facilitator may also not be acceptable to the conflicting parties, which are RENAMO and the Mozambican government. In a related development, the FRELIMO government has called for many rounds of talks in Maputo, arguing that the current conflict is an internal matter.<sup>32</sup> However, RENAMO boycotted these talks, arguing that it wanted an external facilitator. It has not mentioned whether this facilitator should be from the SADC or not. Thus it is prudent for the SADC subregion to take the initiative and convince both the FRELIMO government and RENAMO of the need for a facilitator in bringing the parties to the negotiating table in the search for sustainable peace.

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31 C Manning, *The politics of peace in Mozambique: Post-conflict democratization 1992-2000* (London: Praeger, 2002), pp. 40-42.

32 *Chatham House*, 20 October 2013. Mozambique's political setback, [online], <<http://www.chathamhouse.org/media/comment/view/194853>>, accessed 22 January 2014.

The SADC subregion needs to take cognisance of the fact that the geographical locus of the newly discovered resources and the emerging pattern of international investment, tend to fit snugly into the geopolitics of the Mozambique civil war to the extent that the possibility of secession cannot be entirely discarded from RENAMO's current thinking. All this could be based largely on a strong perception of exclusion of the rest of the country by southerners. In this regard, it would also appear that national cohesion is weakening in a country where both geography and ethnicity predispose it to irredentism or breakaway politics. This is the real threat to the country whose indices on development are very negative. Thus, it goes without saying that any attempt on the part of RENAMO to secede could plunge the SADC into a regional conflagration similar to, or of greater magnitude than the DRC War of 1998-2002. In that event, behind the scenes support to RENAMO from extra-regional actors cannot be ruled out, thus raising the spectre of a protracted conflict and thus putting the SADC into a challenging predicament.

The SADC may utilise its Regional Early Warning Mechanism to detect, analyse and disseminate to the Organ such threats as they develop so that sustainable ways of conflict prevention may be found.<sup>33</sup> If it happens that the conflict escalates and develops into a full blown civil war with RENAMO, getting the above discussed logistical support, then the subregion may be tempted to use one of the provisions of the SADC Mutual Defence Pact which calls for military action in support of a member state under attack from an insurgency receiving foreign military support.<sup>34</sup> Whilst the SADC may contemplate to deploy the SADC Standby Force based on the above, the subregion may again encounter political challenges to that effect. Even if the Mozambican government is to agree and invite the SADC to deploy the Standby Force, it cannot not be ruled out that member states may not again reach consensus basically on issues related to sovereignty and their respective competing national interests among others.

Whilst the SADC has no history of armed take-overs, but instead a history of interventions, and whilst the subregional body has a relative capacity to deal with transnational instability, the SADC does not seem too keen on any external intervention, whether or not under aegis of international organizations. There is a very strong perception that the UN is a "Trojan horse" in international conflict, although the SADC might not hesitate to use UN instruments in enhancing its own peace building efforts (Angola and the DRC). The SADC may not necessarily want to use the UN or even the AU in Mozambique.

33 H Cabanga, "SADC Regional Early Warning Center", *The Peace Trainer, SADC Magazine Regional Peacekeeping Training Center News Magazine* 2(2), April 2010, p. 6.

34 SADC Mutual Defence Pact 2003 [online], <[www.pmg.org.za/docs/2003/appendices/031114sadc.ppt](http://www.pmg.org.za/docs/2003/appendices/031114sadc.ppt)>, accessed 22 January 2014.

If all the above set scenarios unravel and the SADC fails in each of them in as far as resolving the current conflict in Mozambique, then Mozambique will be engulfed in a full blown civil war that will have negative political effects on subregional peace and stability.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The author has discussed the current unstable political and security events in Mozambique that unfolded as a result of the renegeing by RENAMO leader Alfonso Dhlakama from government and the SADC's capability of resolving this conflict. A historical analysis of the political and security dynamics of Mozambique and more specifically the civil and post-civil war internal and external military and political support of RENAMO was enlightened. This was done as a way of comprehending the rationale behind the former rebel group's waging of the 16 year old civil, political, socio-economic and security expectations that RENAMO had after the civil war. A brief discussion followed regarding the fact that whilst the unstable situation in Mozambique can be viewed as an internal political matter, it has the potential of devastating political and social consequences to the SADC region and beyond. Conflict resolution scenarios were given in as far as what the SADC can do to resolve the conflict as well as the political challenges to be encountered with specific reference to the subregional conflict resolution mechanisms. Possible suggestions were also made in relation to what the SADC could do to overcome some of these challenges that affect the subregion's conflict resolution capacity and avoid the escalation of the conflict into a possible full scale civil war that would affect the region's quest for peace, security and development in general.