The upsurge of tension between Renamo and Frelimo in Mozambique: The contest for traditional leadership support

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Abstract

Soon after independence in 1975, Mozambique was plunged into a protracted civil war involving the ruling party Frelimo and the rebel movement Renamo. Renamo controlled several areas until when a ceasefire was reached in October 1992. After the restoration of peace in the country Renamo lost all subsequent multiparty elections held in the country since 1994. Despite the initial assurance that peace had been established in the country, between 2012 and 2014 there was an unexpected upsurge of tension between these traditional rivals. This upsurge can be explored from several dimensions but the hallmark of this paper is that this tension may actually be explained within the framework of dynamics related to traditional authorities. Traditional authorities have played an influential role in Mozambique since the colonial period. Initially, traditional authorities formed the backbone of Renamo support but social-political dynamics forced them to change their affiliation to Frelimo. It is actually this shift of political affiliation from Renamo to Frelimo that arguably led to the said upsurge of political tension in Mozambique.

Key words: *Traditional   authority,   Renamo,   Frelimo, Mozambique*

1.0 Introduction

The argument of this paper is constructed around the perceived relevance of traditional authorities in capturing the votes especially in rural areas. The underlying question is: Who has the legitimacy and authority to represent and speak for the populace? In the context of Africa, the debate is directly related to the question of the role of traditional authorities especially in rural areas. In this case it is depicted as a discreet struggle between the formal state and informal traditional authorities for control of the local populace. At the heart of this interrogation is the widely held perception that traditional leaders are politically influential at local level, hence the state aims at 'capturing' them so as to have a reliable and broader political platform at local level. In other words, whosoever is at the helm of state power must control traditional authorities to sustain political power.

Mozambique is an excellent case study to examine this debate. For close to two decades it was involved in a protracted civil war that killed millions of its citizens and destroyed most of its infrastructure. The ruling Frelimo systematically undermined the traditional leadership structures that were officially abolished in the country. Frelimo's rival, Renamo, welcomed traditional leaders and re-established their authorities in areas where they gained control. Traditional leaders formed the bulk of Renamo support throughout the civil war period. When the Renamo and Frelimo hostilities ceased in 1992, Frelimo went ahead to gain support of the traditional leaders. This constantly incensed Renamo and arguably led to the upsurge of tensions in the country which climaxed in 2014 when the Renamo leader threated to re-ignite the civil war.

The paper is based on newspaper articles published in Mozambique and a wider literature survey on the topic. The paper is structured as follows: after introduction, the first part of the paper builds a conceptual base followed by a discussion on the colonial history of the country. The next sections focus on formation of Frelimo and Renamo as well as the role of traditional leaders in post-colonial Mozambique. Afterwards, the paper examines Frelimo's post-civil war process of capturing traditional leadership's loyalty and this examination is followed by a discussion on the final episode of the upsurge of tension. Before concluding, the paper highlights the ethnic factor in the Renamo-Frelimo conflict.

2.0 Conceptual issues: Debate on the role of traditional authorities

The debate on traditional authorities[1] in Africa has mainly focused on whether they are compatible with democratic systems. In this case, according to Logan (2008: ii), the debate on the role of traditional authorities in Africa can roughly be categorised into two: the 'traditionalists' and the 'modernists'. According to this categorisation, traditionalists "regard Africa's traditional chiefs and elders as the true representatives of their people, accessible, respected, and legitimate, and therefore still essential to politics on the continent". On the other hand, the modernists regard traditional authority as "chauvinistic, authoritarian and increasingly irrelevant form of rule that is antithetical to democracy". A little bit different from Logan's (2008) categorisation, Ntsebeza (2006) brings in the citizenship perspective and identifies three schools of thought that prescribe on the future of traditional authorities: 1) those who argue for a common citizenship perspective, 2) those who argue that it should mix or co-exist with the formal governance system, and 3) those who argue for integration of the traditional system and call for adoption of certain values and practices in the formal governance system. Those who argue for a *common citizenship* contend that existence of traditional authorities is another extension of the colonial tactic of divide and rule. Thus communities in the rural areas who are subjected to traditional authorities do not exercise their citizenship hence they are subjects whilst those in the urban enjoy citizenship rights. Their suggestion is complete dismantling of the traditional authority system because it is not compatible with contemporary democratic principles. In the *mixed or co-existence model* supporters argue that the traditional authorities do not normally compete with the state, and, therefore, their role should be advisory and ceremonial. In some cases their role is in maintenance of social order and community mobilisation. The conditions for fulfilment of this model are that the roles of politicians and traditional authorities should be clarified and also traditional authorities should accept that their role is subservient to political roles. Finally, *the integration model* builds on the mixed model but goes on to argue that the traditional system has certain elements which are compatible with the liberal democracy hence these elements need to be integrated. Thus "there is also a strong

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[1]Unless otherwise stated, the paper interchangeably uses the concepts of traditional authorities, chiefs (chieftaincies) and traditional leaders.

assumption in this model that the institution of traditional leadership can be transformed and democratised" (Ntsebeza, 2006:32).

Logan (2008) identifies another growing school of thought which she labels the *pragmatic-traditionalists*. Some of the scholars in this school of thought are West and Kloeck-Jenson (1999), de Sousa Santos (2006), Lund (2006) and Eggen (2011). This school of thought takes a middle ground in the modernity-traditionalist debate. First of all, the view of this school of thought is to acknowledge that traditional authorities are not currently weakening hence the institution will still exist even if democracy gains strength. Secondly, the pragmatic-traditionalists also recognize the core weaknesses of the institution but argue that there are so many elements which can be strengthened for the benefit of communities. In this case the pragmatic-traditionalists focus on "ways in which the institutions of traditional authority can be effectively blended with the needs of the state and the principles of democracy" (Logan, 2008:7).

The core interest in the traditional leadership in Africa is not just how to incorporate traditional authorities in modern systems of governance but the dynamics of power relations at play initiated by their perceived influence. In this case, the paper further extends this state versus traditional authority debate by highlighting the power dynamics between Frelimo and Renamo in which the traditional authorities play a pivotal role.

3.0 Mozambique's colonial history and the role of traditional authorities

It is the 'Effective Occupation' derived from the Berlin Conference of 1884/5 that prompted the Portuguese to start extending their political and military control of Mozambique from coastal areas into the inland (Cumbe, 2010). Enlisting the support of some local ethnic groups, in the 1890s several wars (known as Pacification Campaigns) were fought against chiefs who refused to be under the Portuguese political control. For instance Ngungunyane, the Emperor of Gaza, was defeated and deported to Portugal. In this case "both the Portuguese administrators and the *régulos* retained the ability to adjust traditions to answer different individual situations" (Cumbe, 2010:11). This campaign was undertaken between 1886 and 1912 and the end result was the creation of new territorial identities. Just like the system of indirect rule of the

British, the Portuguese also attached themselves to traditional rulers who were known as *régulos* to reach out to the rural communities. According to Cumbe (2010), about 5% of the chiefs were former African colonial administrators who were appointed by the colonial authorities to the position of *régulos* as a reward for their loyalty.

According to Cumbe (2010), the role of traditional authorities in Mozambique became clear and systematized through the Colonial Act which was published in 1930, Decree number 1857. This Decree became a law in 1933 and it led to the establishment of new social-political administrative policies and structures that guided the colonial masters during the colonial period. Through this law, Mozambique was demarcated into provinces which were headed by a Governor. The Governor reported to the Governor General who was under the Minister of Colonies. Below the Governor, other administrative offices were Provincial Governors and District Administrators. Reporting to the Colonial Administrator, the traditional authorities were mainly supposed to collect taxes, conduct annual population census, organize forced labour, and implementation of various colonial policies. During the armed struggle for independence (1962-1975), traditional authorities either supported Frelimo fighters or collaborated with the colonial masters. In the areas that Frelimo controlled, traditional authorities were recognized and given responsibilities of coordinating transportation of military equipment and collection of food for the fighters. As will be discussed later, this relationship was, however, terminated when Mozambique attained independence in 1975.

4.0 Formation of Frelimo and Renamo

The formation of Frente de Libertacao de Mozambique (Frelimo) was announced on 29 May 1962 in Accra, Ghana, and it was an amalgamation of two Mozambican exiled freedom movements: Uniao Democratica Nacional de Mozambique (Udenamo) and Mozambique African Union (MANU)– a third organisation, Uniao Nacional Democratica de Mozambique Independente (Unami) joined a month later in Dar es Salaam. Its first President was the western-educated academician Dr Eduardo Mondlane. He was later killed in a car bomb in Tanzania and he was succeeded by Samora Machel who led the organisation into independence. The party experienced numerous internal problems throughout its existence in diaspora which may also have contributed to the rise of Renamo after independence. Firstly, the

amalgamation was mainly 'forced' by the newly independent African states, such as Tanzania and Ghana, who had their own conflicting interests which was later reflected in policy direction dilemmas. Secondly, the founding members held completely opposing views on how to run their organisation as well as the liberation philosophy. This difference in philosophy was mainly influenced by the cold war. Mondlane was mainly moderate and leaned more to the west whilst most of the rank and file were radical revolutionary groups with eastern oriented ideologies. The third problem faced by Frelimo was in relation to the issue of ethnicity/tribalism.

The ethnic problem that plagued Frelimo has a historical link; "Mozambicans from the central and northern regions of the country have a bias against those from the south" (Cabrita, 2000:21). Those who are called southerners are found in the area south of Save River and are generally referred to as the Shangaan. This does not necessarily mean that the Shangaan are a homogenous ethnic group but the name refers to various ethnic groups which are followers of, or were influenced by, Soshangane, a traditional chief who settled in the area from Kwazulu-Natal in South Africa in the 17th Century. In this case, "the people living to the north of the Save River, the 'southerners' call them the Chigondo, the outsiders or the people from afar." The ethnic gap was reinforced by the Portuguese when they established schools in the South and incorporated most of the people from this area in their colonial administrative structure (Cabrita, 2000:23). Consequently, when Frelimo was established it was dogged by the same problems. Most of the highly educated members of the party were from the southern region, hence they ended up occupying the political leadership positions, while those from the north composed the rank and file of the military wing or 'foot soldiers'. This scenario was constantly highlighted by those who defected from the organisation. Many years later, when Frelimo was fighting against Renamo which was led by a northerner, it was frequently said by some people that the war was between the north against the south. In an interview conducted by Cabrita (2000:208) with a former government soldier, he said that Samora Machel (a southerner) "regarded the Renamo issue merely as an ethnic dispute between Ndaus and Senas [northerners] on the one hand, and the Shangaan [southerners] on the other over which tribe ruled the country". Many analysts, however, explain that the problem in Mozambique is not the ethnic issue but regional, which is reinforced by the socio-economic imbalance (Shenga 2008).

This paper subscribes to this perspective as later discussed in subsequent sections.

Renamo was formed in 1976 by the former Frelimo independent fighter Andre Mathadi, Matsangaice Dyuwayo who had defected to Rhodesia after heeding to a call by the anti-Frelimo radio *Voz da Africa Livre* which was initially based in Rhodesia but later relocated to Pretoria in South Africa after Rhodesia's independence[2] (Cabrita 2000). The radio was supported by the white minority led government of Rhodesia. Through the publicity created by the *Voz da Africa Livre* radio, several groups of youth and former soldiers crossed the border to join it. Later the movement established its headquarters within Mozambique itself controlling several areas until when a cease fire was reached in October 1992. The rebel leader was killed in action in October 1979 and his position was taken over by Afonso Dhlakama who has remained its leader to this day. Initially, Renamo did not have a clear political agenda but simply claimed that it was not a political party and it stated that its main aim was removing the Frelimo government and introducing democracy in the country. In this case it claimed that it only intended to replace the military machinery once in power. However, the movement later developed a more coherent policy agenda which included introduction of a capitalist biased form of development and restoration of traditional leadership in the rural areas.

5.0 Post-colonial Mozambique and the role of traditional authorities (1975-1992)

This section focuses on the 1975 to 1992 period in which Renamo and Frelimo were involved in the civil war. The discussion highlights the relationship of each of these parties towards traditional authorities in the country.

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[2]Gumende (2010) takes the Frelimo account which states that Renamo was formed by a former Mozambican soldier Colonel Oscar Cardoso with assistance of the Rhodesian intelligence chief Ken Flowers and later in collaboration with the South African military. Cabrita's (2000) account however seems more convincing that Flowers in his memoirs distorted much of the facts surrounding the formation of Renamo.

5.1 Frelimo and traditional authorities: An adversarial relationship

During its campaign for independence, Frelimo garnered the support of rural traditional leaders, but once the colonialists were removed from power, Frelimo no longer considered its partnership with the traditional leaders. Taking a Marxist approach, Frelimo felt that to enhance rural productivity, there was a need for destroying the existing villages which had deep attachment to the traditional past and resettle its people in newly created communal villages. Officially, the government argued that it was difficult to implement development programmes in the scattered rural areas unless its people were re-located in different geographical areas of the country where they could easily be accessed. The main aim of the government was to completely change the rural people's lifestyle so that they aligned themselves to the Frelimo Marxist principles. Some of the practices and lifestyles the government detested include "religious and spiritual ceremonies, adherence to cultural heritage, succession rights, ownership of land and livestock, and trading" (Cabrita, 2000:117). Specifically, these "were all viewed as incompatible with the tenets of a revolutionary society" (Cabrita, 2000:117). Ultimately, it was expected that the citizenry were going to renounce their ethnic identities and take on another identity that subscribed to the needs of the government. As former president of Mozambique, Samora Machel once said "for the nation to live, the tribe must die" (in Berman *et al,* 2004:8). Traditional leaders and their subjects who resisted this re-location were arrested and sent to the so-called re-education camps and, if they continued to resist, they were tortured or executed. Building around the concept of agriculture, these resettlement communities were envisaged to end tribalism through a common goal of agricultural development. As Samora Machel (in Alpers, 1974:49), explained some years before independence in 1971,

> If I am a Nyanja, and cultivate the land alongside a Ngoni, I sweat with him, wrest life from the soil with him ... With him I am destroying tribal efforts, and I feel united with him ... With him I am destroying tribal, religious and linguistic prejudices, all that is secondary and divides us. Unity grows with the growing plant, with the sweat and intelligence we both mingle with the soil.

Despite a determined government effort, "resistance to the resettlement program is known to have taken place wherever it was introduced" (Cabrita

2000:117). Clandestine efforts were employed by government to implement the programme, such as sending government forces disguised as armed bandits to threaten the people and government responding by sending the people to these newly created communities under the pretext of offering protection to them. In some cases, natural disasters such as floods and droughts were another excuse used to relocate the people to areas that the government identified. Each community was set up in a particular prearranged pattern. For instance, "Frelimo ruled that each communal village should have a party organ, an assembly composed of party-designated members, mass democratic organisations, and the standard security services" (Cabrita 2000:118). Each community had an ideological department that was responsible for disseminating party ideology through newspaper and radio.

The government efforts were not achieved as "rural Mozambicans became even more entrenched in their traditions, and developed an even greater sense of hostility towards Frelimo" (Cabrita 2000:119). By taking party officials from southern Mozambique to central and northern parts of the country so as to take over the roles that were previously handled by traditional authorities, the gap between central government and grassroots people further widened and also threatened to enhance the northern-southern ethnic rivalry.

5.2 Renamo and traditional authorities: An accommodating relationship

The uniqueness of Renamo is that, unlike other southern African liberation and rebel movements, it permanently operated from within the country throughout its struggle. In this case, the movement heavily relied on the good will of the local communities for its survival. Consequently, in each and every area of its influence, it reinstated traditional chiefs who assisted in the local administration and providing food to the rebels. Why it was easy for Renamo to link with local people can also be understood when we take into consideration the fact that most of the Renamo leadership was of peasant origin. The link with traditional chiefs and local people can be explained as follows:

> Before Renamo established a base, permission was as a matter of course sought from the local medium. This was normally arranged through the area's traditional chief. Samatenje, a medium

influential in the Gorongosa area, blessed Andre Matsangaice himself. Traditional chiefs spoke at length about the customs and beliefs of their areas, which were supposed to be strictly adhered to by Renamo's rank and file. John Kupenga, a Renamo guerrilla from Manica, stressed that failure to adhere to local traditions could upset the spirits who then punished the transgressors severely (Cabrita, 2000:159).

The traditionalists welcomed Renamo and they were called *mulunguisse* or those who have come to "straighten things up" (Cabrita, 2000:196). Various scholars have examined the relationship of Renamo and rural traditional authorities. O'Laughlin (2000) and Geffray (1990 in Buur and Kyed, 2005) argue that Renamo managed to succeed during the civil war due to its ability to recognise and support the programme of reinstating chiefs. Furthermore, Abrahams and Nilsson (1995 in Buur and Kyed, 2005) arguably point out that it is actually the banning of chiefs in the rural areas that could be attributed to one of the causes of the civil war. Gumende (2010) does not attribute the internal weaknesses of Frelimo per se but external forces such as the Rhodesian government and later apartheid South Africa through their policy of dis-stabilisation of the region as the main contributing factor to the emergence of Renamo. Igreja (2008) cautions that there is a continuous bitter debate on what really caused the civil war, hence as scholars we should carefully analyse each narrative as these have been highly politicised in Mozambique. However, the most plausible explanation is provided by Vaux *et al* (2006:9) who argue that although the primary instigators of the civil war were from outside Mozambique (Rhodesia and South Africa in particular), this

> War was also driven by internal factors such as reaction against FRELIMO's socialist policies, especially collectivisation, and the grievances of traditional rulers and religious groups who felt side-lined by FRELIMO. There was an underlying confrontation between city-based modernity and deep-rooted tradition.

6.0 Frelimo's post-civil war process of capturing traditional leadership loyalty: The beginning of tension

After the end of the civil war in 1992, Frelimo started implementing plans of winning support in the rural areas which were dominated by Renamo led by

their traditional authorities. Frelimo used several means in order to win back this rural support: official recognition of traditional authorities, use of traditional leaders during campaigns, manipulating the process of selecting traditional leaders, and using traditional leaders as a vehicle to reach antagonistic rural areas.

6.1 Frelimo's formal recognition of traditional leadership

Although it is assumed that the Frelimo government completely incapacitated the traditional systems of authority during the civil war, this is not really the case. According to the observation by Buur and Kyed (2005: 8) "institutions based on kinship and hereditary succession *continued to exist*, and many post-colonial local state *officials relied unofficially on day-to-day collaboration with chiefs* often" (emphasis added). Donors who were keen to ensure that there was decentralised local governance in Mozambique in the post war period noted that viable civil society structures that could potentially represent the people at grassroots level were non-existent but kinship traditional systems were available and deemed to have the potential of playing the role of representation. Buur and Kyed (2005:10) aptly observe on how the state came to recognise chiefs:

> In rural Mozambique the war had created a situation of 'decentralisation by default', where governance was in large part taken care of by non-state actors operating outside the sovereign power of the state. Significant among such non-state actors were chiefs and Renamo militias, forged in opposition to the Frelimo state. Against this background, state recognition of chiefs came to be seen as a solution to the problem of meagre state presence and contested legitimacy.

Consequently, one of the challenges that the post war Mozambique faced was how to establish a viable decentralised system of governance in rural areas. Hence the debate on the role of traditional authorities in Mozambique came to the fore in the context of how to effectively implement decentralisation policy (Cau, 2004). In the urban and semi-urban areas, the Municipal Law 2/1997 led to the 1998 democratic elections in thirty-three municipalities which are also known as *autarquias.* However, the rural areas were not covered by this piece of legislation, and as such the Decree 15/2000 was meant to cover the rural

and sub-rural areas of Mozambique (the decree did not go through parliament, but it is a ministerial approved document). Consequently in 2002 the decree was implemented which witnessed the recognition of traditional leaders and secretaries of sub-urban quarters or villages who were called 'community authorities' (Buur and Kyed 2005:5). Another important piece of regulation is the 2003 *Lei dos órgãoslocais do Estado* (the LOLE-law) which regulates all state institutions below the district level. All these regulations highlight fact that recognised community leaders play the dual role of "community representatives" as well as "assistants of the state" and it is the latter role which seems to take prominence (Buur and Kyed, 2005:6).

Official recognition of the identified traditional leaders was highly formalised through signing of the contract and acceptance of the national flag, uniform and state emblems by the traditional authorities to be displayed at their residence. The Frelimo led government constructed offices for the said traditional authorities and, in some cases, roads which reached to the house of the recognised traditional authority.

6.2 Traditional leaders as Frelimo's campaign tool

The 1994 and 1999 general elections witnessed popular support of Renamo in rural areas of Mozambique[3]. Frelimo wanted to ensure that there should be reversal and so after the first general elections, for instance, the president and other leading Frelimo- leaders spent most of their time campaigning in rural areas where they proclaimed that they were in partnership with the aspirations of chiefs. However, within the party, the debate of modernists (anti-traditional leadership) and traditionalists (pro-traditional leadership) raged. As already mentioned above, lack of state presence at local level (as observed by donors as well) and contested legitimacy led to success of the traditionalist perspective. Some of the responsibilities of community authorities or

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[3]In 1994, Renamo won 45% of the parliamentray seats while Frelimo won 55% (Lloyd 2011). In 1999 *total tallied provincial votes* showed that Renamo got 57% while Frelimo 43% but due to certain complexities of the electoral system in Mozambique, this huge increase in number of votes for Renamo did not imply larger number of seats in parliament (Lloyd 2011). In 2004, Renamo heavily reduced its number of parliamentary seats from 90 to 51 seats while FRELIMO increased its seats from 160 to 191 (Vaux *et al* 2006).

traditional leaders are worth noting, and these, as stipulated in the Decree 15/2000, are *Nation building* and *Recognition of traditional authority and culture*.

In relation to nation building, the Decree states that "the recognised authorities should display the national flag daily at his/her homestead, use and display emblems of the republic and a uniform, and secure participation in national celebration days held by local administrative personnel". Similarly, in relation to the recognition of traditional authority and culture, it "obligate[s] community authorities to uphold local customs, uses and cultural values…and to participate in investigating forms of local traditional culture such as dances, food, songs, music and ceremonies" (Buur and Kyed 2005:14).

Taking advantage of this decree and its obligations, traditional authorities were obliged to be present when Frelimo politicians were out campaigning in the rural areas. The presence of traditional leaders legitimised Frelimo during such critical periods. There is a case in point which was captured in the *Mozambique News Agency* which ably demonstrates this development:

> Guebuza's next stop was Caia, on the south bank of the Zambezi, where, for the first time in this campaign, a group of "regulos" (quasi-traditional chiefs) pledged support, and promised to do all in their power to secure victory for Frelimo. At rally after rally they can be seen, seated in the front row, wearing their military-style caps, their brightly coloured sashes and their insignia. The regulos used to be regarded as natural allies of Renamo, but judging from the statement of the Caiaregulos that might be changing, and the government's strategy of holding out the hand of friendship to these chiefs may be paying political dividends (*Mozambique News Agency,* 12th November 2004).

This shift of allegiance started to infuriate the Renamo party and contributed to the build-up of tension.

6.3 Manipulation of the process to identify traditional leaders

Prior to the implementation of the Decree, there was, among other things, a process of identification of *true* traditional authorities (defined as the one

which existed during the pre-colonial period) and their sub-chiefs (*chefe do grupo and chefe da povoação*) by their communities.

However, Buur and Kyed (2005) are quick to point out that the process of identifying the true traditional authorities was not as straightforward as it might be assumed and also created several potential future problems. In this case Buur and Kyed explain that due to many changes that have occurred in the Mozambican society from the colonial and civil war period, the identification was beset with numerous problems. The Decree did not specify how communities were to identify the traditional authorities by arguing that the customs of the said communities should dictate. Since communities are not homogeneous, community members who were more articulate and dominated the process ended up getting their way. In some cases, the colonial and post-colonial state records were also used to verify these leaders (yet it was proclaimed that true traditional leaders have their lineage traced back to the pre-colonial period). Buur and Kyed further observe that owing to these irregularities, several conflicts emerged which have not completely abated. Cumbe (2010:17) mentions that "in some areas the process of recognition and legitimization of the community leaders is mostly influenced by the two main political parties that participated in the civil war (Frelimo and Renamo)". As one member of Renamo complained in parliament:

> The debate on the Commission report was characterised by Renamo attacks on the government…thus Linette Olofsson [Renamo] complained that in Chimuara, elections had been held for 'community leaders'. 'Since when in African tradition have there been elections for chiefs to occupy their legitimate places?', she said (*Mozambique News Agency*, 24th April 2002).

According to the allegations of Renamo and other opposition groups, Frelimo used this opportunity of identification of traditional leaders to push for their candidates and where they could not, the incentives they provided to these leaders were also enough to buy their loyalty. For example, in parliamentary debate, the leader of Renamo said:

> Dhlakama accused the ruling Frelimo Party of "destroying Renamo's political base", referring to the "regulos", the

supposedly traditional chiefs, who lost much of their power at the time of independence. He accused Frelimo of "threatening" regulos, and of "replacing the true traditional chiefs with its puppets, thus breaking with customary succession rights through the family lineage" (*Mozambique News Agency*, 13th November 2001).

Another problem is that this process of rigid formalisation has also taken away one of the major advantages of traditional systems, flexibility. Issues of succession are also not well clarified in the Decree which may lead to potential problems amongst the traditional royal families. Finally, Buur and Kyed also highlight the problem of the Decree's failure (which is also true in all other nation-states) to recognise the difference between state territory and social space (administrative political boundary and traditional community boundary). The fusion of these boundaries may contribute to problems of proper exercise of traditional authority.

Whatever the case, traditional leaders became an established element of Mozambican governance structure with Frelimo at the helm. According to OSISA (2009:152), the impact of traditional authorities has been in the following areas: (1) Land management and administration as well as other natural resources; (2) Local citizen mobilization in national campaigns; (3) Facilitation of local citizen participation in national and local development programmes; (4) Encouragement of local citizens to participate in elections; and (5) Provision of traditional justice administration (or non-formal justice).

6.4 Traditional leaders as a vehicle to reach antagonistic rural areas

Buur and Kyed (2005) observe that in this case areas which had previously been war torn and had no visible presence of state institutions now 'felt' the state through the newly installed traditional authorities. Obarrio (2010:268) talks about the "invisible state" existing in the rural northern part of Mozambique "in a region where imaginaries of the state are weak and its legitimacy is feeble, in a province with a deep history of rebelliousness and hostility toward authority". In these areas, Frelimo through the state machinery was able to have its presence felt and recognised through the chiefs. He continues to explain an example in which this played out:

On the day when the Administrator was going to make actual contact with this "invisible" entity and visit its territory, he invited me to be part of his delegation, composed of several of his aides in the local government, some administrators or smaller rural subdistricts, and the *regulo* (chief) Sukuta. Sukuta, the main "customary" authority situated above eight lesser chiefs scattered throughout the area, had recently attained official recognition from the state (Obarrio 2010:269).

7.0 Final episode of the upsurge of tension: Threats of war

Taking into consideration that Renamo is now weak and Frelimo has consolidated its power – to the extent that Mozambique is almost a one party state (Lloyd 2011; Sumich 2010; Vaux *et al* 2006) – it is unlikely that some of its current policies, such as those on traditional authorities, will be reversed soon. Specifically, it might even be argued *inter alia* that the increased support enjoyed in the previous elections could be the result of Frelimo's campaigns of reaching out to the rural communities through its positive policies towards traditional authorities. The current picture emerging is that the re-introduction of traditional authorities in the rural areas has arguably usurped some of Renamo's power, hence the party's recent frustrations with the ruling party. For instance, by 2012 Renamo had started threatening war as captured in the following newspaper excerpt:

Mozambique's main opposition party, Renamo, has refused to meet with a commission set up by the ruling Frelimo Party to discuss issues which supposedly justify the recent threats to return to war made by Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama…Since his sudden move from his house in the northern city of Nampula to a bush camp in the central district of Gorongosa, neither Dhlakama, nor any other Renamo leader, has issued a coherent list of demands or grievances…Dhlakama has warned that "I am training my men up and, if we need to, we will leave here and destroy Mozambique" (*Mozambique News Agency*, 20th November 2012).

After another loss to Frelimo in the 2014 general elections, the leader of Renamo, Afonso Dhlakama, claimed the results of the election were faked by

Frelimo and he even went further and threatened to set up a parallel government.

8.0 Discounting the role of ethnicity

According to Vaux *et al.* (2006), despite the fact that Mozambique has 16 major ethnic groups this has never led to tensions in the country. Specifically, they observe that:

> Ethnicity has had remarkably little influence on the conduct of previous wars. Under colonial rule, the Portuguese manipulated the multiple ethnic groups, and inter-group conflict, by implementing a conscious policy of 'divide and rule' but never created the kinds of division that were the colonial legacy elsewhere in Africa... The reasons for this phenomenon are complex…In relation to most other African countries, ethnicity in Mozambique plays a minor role in politics (Vaux *et al,* 2006:10).

In contemporary "Mozambican academic discourse, ethnic identity is closely linked to language" (Virtanen, 2005:227). According to Alpers (1974), the Portuguese propaganda during the fight for independence tended to align themselves with the Makua-Lomwe in order to discredit Frelimo which was mainly dominated by Makonde and southern ethnic groups. This, however, was not successful at that time. Vaux *et al* (2006) acknowledge the current perception widely held in the country that Southern ethnic groups have better opportunities as compared to the central and northern ethnic groups. Even in relation to political parties, Frelimo mainly draws support from the Shangana-Ronga and Makonde ethnic groups, while opposition parties draw support from the Ndau, Sena and Makua ethnic groups. However, these differences according to Vaux *et al*. (2006:10), "revolve around regional differences and relate to economic factors rather than around the social issue of ethnicity but there remains a possibility that ethnicity could be mobilised during a desperate political struggle". This observation is also supported by Lloyd (2011:7) who states that as compared to other African countries, ethnicity is very low but the north/central and southern region divide is prevalent. According to Lloyd, the tension is mainly between Frelimo and Renamo as political parties but not ethnic groups per se.

9.0 Conclusion

The debate on the role of traditional authorities in Africa can roughly be categorised into two: the 'traditionalists' and 'modernists'. In the case of Mozambique, the ruling party, Frelimo, initially had a strong modernist approach hence abolished the traditional authorities. Renamo had a traditionalist approach, and, therefore, used their link to traditional leaders to reach out to the rural areas of the country. The new dispensation in the country after the end of civil war called for a new approach to politics in the Frelimo camp. They embraced the traditionalist approach so as to enable them to reach into the rural areas. It is this usurping of power from Renamo, symbolised by the shift in allegiance of traditional leaders, that arguably led to the upsurge of conflict that reached its climax in 2014 when the leader of Renamo threatened to re-ignite the civil war in the country. In other words, the adoption of the traditionalist approach by Frelimo has played a decisive role in Renamo-Frelimo relations.

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