

MOZAMBIQUE'S 2014 GENERAL ELECTIONS AND VICTORY TO THE LOSERS

FREDSON GUILENGUE

Having just experienced its fifth general election since the establishment of a multiparty democratic system in 1992, Mozambique voted for a president and elected members to the national and provincial parliaments on 15 October 2014.

The ruling party *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (Frelimo) was once again victorious in maintaining its stronghold on power since independence in 1975. The official preliminary results hands the presidency to FRELIMO's first time candidate Filipe Jacinto Nyusi with 57,03%, followed by long-standing opposition candidate from *Resistência Nacional de Moçambique* (RENAMO), Afonso Dhlakama, with 36,68% and second time *Movimento Democrático de Moçambique* (MDM) presidential candidate, Daviz Mbepo Simango, coming in third with 6,36%. The parliamentary results indicated 57% for the ruling FRELIMO, followed by RENAMO with 34% and MDM with 19%. These results offered FRELIMO the possibility of keeping its parliamentary majority with 144 MP's, followed by RENAMO with 89 and finally MDM with 17 out of a total of 250 seats. International and local observers were divided about the freedom, fairness and transparency of the electoral process and results.

While the overall official results hailed FRELIMO the victors, closer scrutiny reflects a different picture, i.e. the return of RENAMO to its undeniable position as the second largest opposition party in Mozambique obfuscates the rapid advance of the MDM that had threatened RENAMO's position prior to the national elections. These results also reveal the declining popularity of the ruling FRELIMO.

THE CONTEXT, THE COMPETITORS AND THE COMPETITION

Despite a regular annual economic growth of more than 7% brought about by the end of sixteen years of civil war in 1992 and the macroeconomic reforms prior and post the first democratic elections in 1994, the impact of FRELIMO's efforts to tackle poverty and unemployment remain insignificant.¹ Recent official government data indicate that 11.8 out of 21.5 million Mozambicans still live below the poverty line (MPD 2010).² The United Nations (UNDP 2013)³ Human Development Index, places Mozambique at 185 out of 187 countries and amongst the four countries on the African continent with

¹ Estimates from rating agency Moody's puts the economic growth at 8% for 2014 and 2015. This growth is mainly due to the expansion of the extractive industry and the expected political stability.

See: <http://noticias.sapo.mz/info/artigo/1419185.html> retrieved the 28th of October 2015.

² Ministério da Planificação e Desenvolvimento (MPD). Pobreza e bem-estar em Moçambique: terceira avaliação nacional. Maputo, 2010.

³ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The rise of the south: human progress in a diverse world. Available at: http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/14/hdr2013_en_complete.pdf . Retrieved 31 October 2014.

the highest incidence of poverty in the world, only ahead of Niger and the Democratic Republic of Congo.⁴

With a population growth of 2.8% and an estimated 300 000 new entrants into the labour market every year, Mozambique's overall unemployment rate stands at 27%. The formal economy is largely urban in nature and accounts for only 32% of all employment.⁵ In the rural areas where 80% of the population lives, the advance of the extractive industry and large-scale land investments is bringing few but extremely well-paid employment opportunities amidst processes of resettlement and the fear of land grabs.

Armando Guebuza, the outgoing Mozambican president was constitutionally blocked from serving another term in office after completing two consecutive terms of five years each. FRELIMO elected Filipe Jacinto Nyusi as its candidate. Nyusi, a 55 year old mechanical engineer, was born in the district of Mueda, Cabo Delgado Province and joined the party in 1973 at the age of fourteen. Before being elected by FRELIMO as its presidential candidate he served as Minister of Defence from 2008 to 2014. Very little is known about his character given his brief and indiscernible career in office. Nyusi's political persona and aptitude to deal with significant challenges is completely unknown. However, he appears more approachable than his predecessor who is generally perceived as being difficult. It is rumoured that FRELIMO's intention by appointing Nyusi's was to ensure that the control of Mozambique's political and economic power was transferred to the non-southerners (*Maconde* tribe), an equal minority tribe, in tribute for the role they played during the struggle for the country's independence (1964 - 1975). He is also perceived to have been chosen to protect Guebuza's economic interests and those of his inner circle.⁶

A new and an unknown candidate was not the only challenge FRELIMO faced prior to this election. Guebuza's ten year term in office produced a substantial amount of antipathy amongst Mozambicans, especially urban residents. In terms of economic redistribution, with the advent of the extractive industry, Guebuza consolidated FRELIMO's transition into a party driven by self-interest. After taking office in 2004, he expanded his financial control in business areas such as luxury goods, public works, communication, medical equipment, real estate and energy. His four children have all become hard-driving entrepreneurs to the extent that his 35 years old daughter Valentina Guebuza was nominated by the Forbes Magazine as the seventh most powerful young woman in Africa.⁷ This is also notable with other FRELIMO state and government officials expanding and/or building new interests in the extractive industry.⁸ Guebuza's appetite for business has earned him a local nickname "*Gue – business*".

While publicly asking the ordinary Mozambicans to wait until they start benefiting from the country's mineral bonanza, the party's top officials are rapidly making their move to secure important shares of the mineral wealth⁹. The most widespread dissatisfaction surrounding Guebuza and FRELIMO's

⁴ 2014 data from the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) places Mozambique in the 22nd position out of 52 African countries. This position represents a regression of 2.2 points compared to the previous ranking and is attributed to the military and political instability that started in 2012 and culminated in the ceasefire agreement signed between the government of Mozambique and RENAMO on 24 August 2014. In the most recent Global Corruption Report published by the Transparency International in 2013, Mozambique ranked 119 out of 175, scoring only 42 in world rankings in which countries scoring less than 50 indicates a serious corruption problem (TI 2013). See: <http://www.transparency.org/country#MOZ>

⁵ www.africaneconomicoutlook.org retrieved on 24 October, 2014

⁶ Until now Mozambique's and FRELIMO's previous presidents had come from the South: Samora Machel (1975 - 1986) and Joaquim Chissano (1986 - 2004). Although Nyusi's predecessor, Armando Guebuza (2004 - 2014), was born in the Northern Province of Nampula he identifies himself more with the South where his parents come from.

⁷ <http://www.voportugues.com/content/isabel-dos-santos-e-valentina-guebuza-as-jovens-mais-poderas-de-africa/1804351.html> retrieved on 24 October 2014.

⁸ Africa Intelligence. Available at: http://www.africaintelligence.com/ION/report/mozambique_guebuza_business_network Accessed on the 2013.11.15

⁹ See Besseling, Robert. Mozambique – Political dynamics, regulatory outlook and infrastructure risks; *Centro de Integridade Pública* (CIP). Os interesses empresariais dos gestores públicos da indústria extractiva. Available at: www.cip.org.mz

political and economic governance were manifested in three consecutive riots (5th February 2008 on fuel and transport prices and on 1st and 2nd September 2010) which took place in urban municipalities.¹⁰ This general dissatisfaction found further expression in the results of the 2013 Municipal elections which (in terms of controlling strategic urban municipalities) confined FRELIMO to the capital city of Maputo and the industrial municipality of Matola.

Nevertheless, FRELIMO built an effective strategy to address these challenges prior and during the official period of the electoral campaign. The ruling party put in place a very functional electoral machine operating countrywide. While the other parties campaign rallies were severely confined to the location of their presidential candidates (i.e. Dhlakama and Simango), FRELIMO's electoral machine was more balanced. This was coupled with reliance on dubious acts which suggested constitutional violations.¹¹ These acts involved the incumbent president Guebuza publicly introducing Nyusi to the population as his successor during his state missions around the country, as well as the use of the State apparatus for FRELIMO's electoral campaign.¹²

Afonso Dhlakama, aged 61, is a long-standing opposition presidential candidate. Together with his party, RENAMO, he has been at the forefront in the fight for presidency since the first multiparty elections in 1994, losing twice to the two previous FRELIMO candidates (Chissano and Guebuza). He is known for his autocratic leadership characterised by impeding the emergence of any potential successor within his party, for his guerrilla tactical skills and for having successfully transformed RENAMO from a guerrilla movement into a political party.¹³ He is also known for his capacity to force the powerful FRELIMO into providing some concessions regarding opening the democratic space in Mozambique, the most recent move being the substantial amendments to the electoral legislation. In recognition of having signed the GPA in 1992, which put an end to the prevailing one-party state, he nicknamed himself "*the father of democracy*".

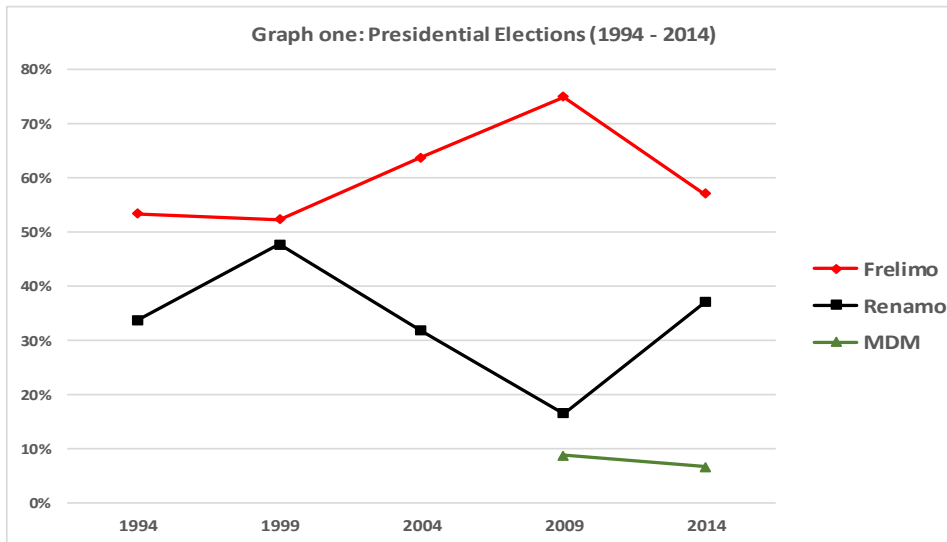
However, the previous electoral results and his subsequent political stance threatened his own and his party's political survival. Graphs one and two illustrate RENAMO's electoral performance since 1994. The 2013 municipal elections were boycotted by RENAMO. The vacuum this created gave MDM the opportunity to threaten to usurp RENAMO's position as the country's largest opposition party. RENAMO's poor electoral performance was further exacerbated by Dhlakama's retreat to the city of Nampula (from January 2010 to October 2012), later to his military headquarters Gorongosa, his subsequent calling off of the GPA and ultimately his confinement to the bush until 4 September 2014.

¹⁰ These riots were followed by the 31st October 2013 first demonstration by the Mozambicans against its own government in 38 years of independency. This demonstration was triggered by the threatening spectre of war generated by the government counterattack on RENAMO, the spread of RENAMO's guerrilla attacks to Northern Mozambique (Nampula) as well as a sense of insecurity caused by an increasing number of kidnappings.

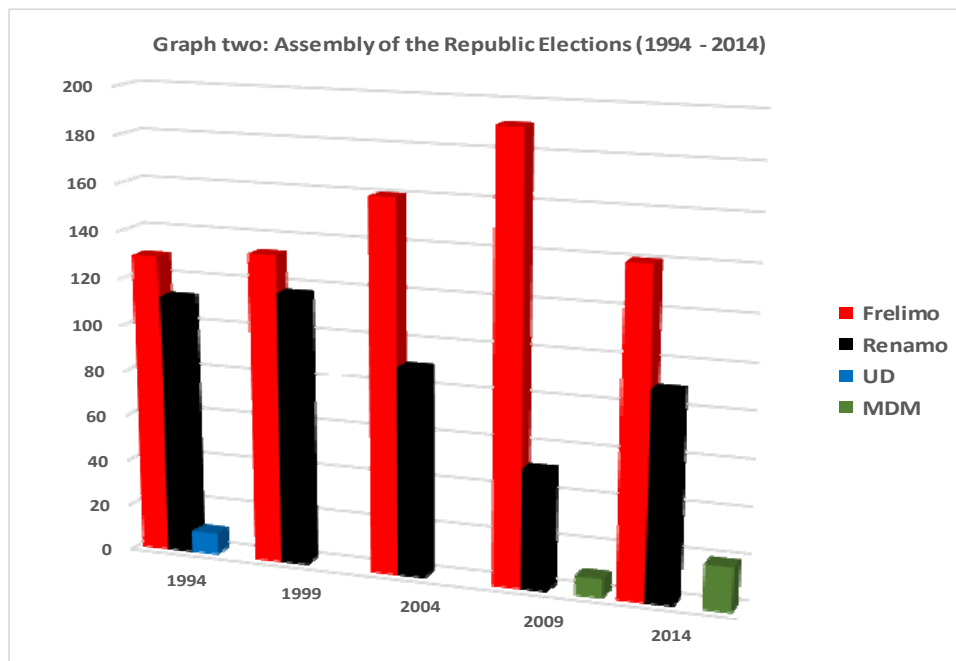
¹¹ <http://www.voaportugues.com/content/mo%C3%A7ambique-digress%C3%A3o-de-nyusi-gera-controv%C3%A9rsia/1879023.html> ; <https://www.facebook.com/CanalMoz/posts/622965107772590> ; <http://www.portaldeangola.com/2014/03/mocambique-digressao-de-nyusi-gera-controversia/> all retrieved on the 27 October 2014.

¹² <http://www.cip.org.mz/election2013/> retrieved on 27 October 2014

¹³ Vines, A. (7 November 2013). Renamo's Rise and Decline: The politics of reintegration in Mozambique. *International Peacekeeping*, pp. 375-393.



Note: Presidential candidates: FRELIMO 1994 – 1999 (Joaquim Chissano), 2004 – 2009 (Armando Guebuza), 2014 (Filipe Nyusi); RENAMO 1994,1999,1004 and 2014 (Afonso Dhlakama); MDM 2009 – 2014 (Daviz Simango). Figures from 2014 are the official preliminary results.



Note: Figures from 2014 are the official preliminary results. UD (União Democrática) was a coalition of three political parties: *Partido Liberal e Democrático* (PALMO), *Partido Nacional Democrático* (PANADE) and *Partido Nacional Moçambicano* (PANAMO).

Daviz Mbepo Simango, a 50 year old civil engineer and his party MDM went to the polls galvanized by the results of the 2013 municipal elections. He is said to be open-minded, humble and infinitely more accessible than Dhlakama. He is said to be receptive of opinions and people outside the party with the most palpable example being that senior positions in the party have been awarded to FRELIMO, RENAMO and other political party dissidents.¹⁴ Apart from preserving its control over the city of Beira since 2008, Simango and MDM expanded to the municipalities of Quelimane, Nampula and Gúruè and

¹⁴ The former and the current MDM General Secretaries are former RENAMO members, Ismael Mussa and Luís Boavida respectively. The party's head of the parliamentary group and brother of Daviz Simango is a former member of PCN (*Partido de Convenção Nacional*).

secured its presence in all 52 municipal assemblies in the country. More notably, the difference between FRELIMO and MDM votes in urban municipalities was negligible, while MDM secured the highest number of votes ever recorded by an opposition party in Mozambique. This coupled with the results of a number of pre-election polls (surveys), which expected that Simango would either achieve presidential victory or a second round run against FRELIMO's Filipe Nyusi.¹⁵ Rumours prior to the elections indicated that FRELIMO thought that Simango and MDM posed a greater threat to them than did Dhlakama and RENAMO.

THE RETURN OF THE "MARTYR"

Dhlakama and RENAMOs' present electoral performance is an irrefutable indicator that he and his party were capable of profiting from the most recent political and military instability in Mozambique. Coming from a decreasing popularity, he somehow succeeded in selling to many Mozambicans an image of the guardian of social justice, democratic principles and effective peace in Mozambique. He publicly justified his confinement in rural Gorongosa district over the past two years using well-known and generally accepted facts. Apart from the re-integration of RENAMO's residual troops into the national army and police (as part of the peace building strategy adopted in 1992 with the GPA), he professed to be fighting for significant amendments to the electoral legislation (generally assumed to favour FRELIMO and thus thwarting the people's desire for change) as well as for the *de-partization* of the State apparatus and a fair distribution of the country's wealthy. It is again generally accepted that FRELIMO controls the State apparatus and the economy. Added to this is the deciding element that Dhlakama "determines" the state of war and peace in Mozambique. Dhlakama subjected his return from the bush and participation in this election to the signing of the ceasefire agreement and the awarding of amnesty to everybody accused of violations committed in the context of the military instability (government officials and Renamo cadres alike). Consequently, he was only able to use 26 of the 45 days legally established for the electoral campaign.¹⁶ Nonetheless, Dhlakama's political rallies attracted unprecedented masses even in territories known as FRELIMO's strongholds (Cabo Delgado, Inhambane, Gaza and Maputo).¹⁷

PRAWN EATERS VERSUS LOCAL WATCHDOGS

International and local election observers strongly disagreed with each other in their own preliminary findings. While international observers declared the elections generally free, fair and transparent, local observers did not. Consequently they vehemently criticised their international counterparts. At a press conference at the headquarters of the coalition of local observer NGO's, Maria Alice Mabota, the President of the Mozambican Human Rights League remarked: "(...) we had told them not to come here to just stay in the hotels eating prawns (...)" (M. A. Mabota, personal communication, October 17, 2014).¹⁸ By "them" Mabota referred to the group of international electoral observers (mainly from the European Union and SADC, Carter Centre and the Commonwealth etc.) who concluded in their preliminary evaluation reports that the elections had been generally free, transparent and fair. "How can you name it free when some people were not allowed to vote? How can you call it transparent when there were cases of ballot box stuffing? How can you call it fair when the law was not fully observed?" (M. A. Mabota, personal communication, October 29, 2014). In fact, while sometimes referring to the same incidents like theft of ballot boxes and violence in areas normally favouring the

¹⁵ <http://debatesedevaneios.blogspot.com/2014/02/luisa-diogo-candidada-mais-popular-da.html>; http://www.asemana.publ.cv/spip.php/images/spip.php?breve4238&ak=1&debut_breves=20; <http://comunidademocambicana.blogspot.com/2014/08/cidade-de-nampula-colocaria-nyusi-e.html>; all retrieved on 25 October 2014.

¹⁶ The amnesty act was passed by the national parliament and subsequently promulgated by the president on the 14 August 2014. The official launch of the electoral campaign took place on 31 August 2014. However Dhlakama only started physically campaigning on 16 September 2014.

¹⁷ <http://tim.sapo.mz/videos/tim//I31fiLfdjqzcl4FPedLO> ; <http://www.rtp.pt/noticias/index.php?article=773418&tm=7&layout=121&visual=49> ; <https://www.facebook.com/CanalMoz/posts/725299054205861> all retrieved on 28 October 2014.

¹⁸ The coalition was composed of the following national NGO's: *Liga Moçambicana dos Direitos Humanos* (in English: Mozambican Human Rights League); *Fórum Mulher*; *Parlamento Juvenil*; Forcom and CIP.

opposition, the Carter Centre, for example, considers these events as “localized and did not affect the credibility or the process as a whole or its outcome”.¹⁹

However, from an observation standpoint, it should be expected that a distinction be clearly made between factors that “affected” the credibility of the process and those that “determined” its outcome. This distinction doesn’t always depend on the actual (territorial) dimension or on the circumscription of a certain event.²⁰ While ballot box stuffing at a specific polling station in favour of a specific candidate (or political party) may be regarded as a factor determining the overall number of votes for this candidate, the delay in opening the polling stations and biased media broadcasting (including the intimidating presence of the riot police) towards candidates regardless of their territorial dimension, should be regarded as affecting the credibility of the process while not necessarily determining its outcome.

This distinction is more relevant in Mozambique where one should not expect the legal institutions to act independently by investigating events that are not substantially well-grounded, especially if such events favour the opposition and not the ruling party. More importantly, for a fledgling democracy, such a distinction would provide valuable input and recommendations to improve the existing electoral institutional framework and reduce vote rigging. More importantly, clearly differentiating between factors which may be regarded as normal challenges in the development of a democracy and those which should be seen as necessarily blocking it, may add credibility to the process. However, here I do not argue that the factors affecting credibility should simply be ignored. Instead they should not be given the same level of treatment or analysis as those that determine electoral results.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The new elected president, Nyusi, will be confronted with the three major challenges. The first will be to demonstrate his capacity to translate economic growth into economic development. It is evident that ordinary Mozambicans are also asking for their share of the country’s wealth, especially considering the resource bonanza. This is more profound within urban areas with more and better access to information and education. Secondly, he must maintain peace and stability upon which all other development depends. Finally, he will have to prove his personal leadership qualities as president to avoid being seen as a puppet of FRELIMO’s older generation.

¹⁹ The Carter Centre News. The Carter Centre congratulates Mozambique on largely peaceful votes; encourages calm as tabulation process continues. Press release (Oct. 17, 2014).

²⁰ As most of the reports point to.