The Origins of War in Mozambique

Funada-Classen, Sayaka

Published by African Minds

Funada-Classen, Sayaka.
The Origins of War in Mozambique: A History of Unity and Division.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/25183.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/25183

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=966368
CONCLUSION
From the Liberation Struggle to Post-independence Armed Conflict

This book attempts to unravel why the liberation movement in Mozambique, which aimed to unify the people, also resulted in deepening divisions. The book undertook a multi-layered investigation of individuals, regional societies, national politics, the southern Africa region and international politics in order to try and draw some conclusions and present some understandings. The book's main aim is to explore and present the hypothesis that the liberation struggle, which took place from 1962 to 1975, concurrently cultivated two contradictory tendencies – unity and division – and therefore fomented post-independence armed conflict.

After summarising the preceding chapters, this final chapter demonstrates how the intricate interrelationship amongst various actors, created during the liberation struggle period, led to post-independence armed conflict.

Summary of previous chapters

FRELIMO's endeavour for unification and its limitations

Previous chapters examined the formation and development of anti-colonial movements in Mozambique, including at the level of international politics and local communities. Various conditions defining Mozambican society limited the number and types of people participating in liberation movements and forced them to establish their headquarters outside Mozambique. Chapters 3 and 4 explain that, although there were regional variations, early participants of the movements were urban dwellers (assimilados, mestiços, the educated), port labourers, male migrant workers in surrounding areas and those engaged in religious activity (Protestant, Catholic and Islam). Moreover, since the Mozambican economy was reliant on the surrounding countries, the liberation movements were greatly influenced by the social, political and economic conditions as well as by the migrant labour systems in those areas.

In the main rural residents who formed the majority of the population in Mozambique had little to do with the decolonisation movement, except for those who lived near the
borders in the north. The key to the success of the liberation struggle was for FRELIMO to win over these rural residents. However, it was extremely difficult to operate inside Mozambique where society was strictly controlled by the colonial authority. In addition, rural residents had not yet developed the kind of social foundation that would enable them to accept FRELIMO’s liberation struggle.

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 3, Portugal initially ran its colonies based on exploitation. The education of Africans was considered necessary only when decolonisation became a world trend in the 1950s. Even so, there was no concerted attempt to provide education in rural areas until the 1960s, and as a result very few people had benefited from educational opportunities. The Catholic Church only provided rudimentary religious education to those in its schools. Once the liberation struggle began, formal school education developed and helped to produce those employed in the lowest echelon of the colonial authority, such as interpreters, soldiers and militias. Nevertheless, only a handful of people in Mozambique had sufficient opportunities and education to lead the anti-colonial movements, including FRELIMO and earlier political organisations.

As seen in Chapters 4 and 5, it remained difficult for FRELIMO to establish close relationships with residents inside Mozambique. Yet, it was essential to engage as many locals as possible in the liberation war in order to challenge Portugal, a NATO member, and to gain independence. Thus, various methods were used to involve local people throughout the war.

Internal disparity within FRELIMO was more serious than originally anticipated. The organisation, which had been created to unify different movements that already existed, became increasingly fragmented with the intervention of the Portuguese secret police, PIDE/DGS. The context of war created additional pressures where a rift could easily develop into violence. Many splinter groups – “inimigo interno”¹ (enemy within) – emerged towards the end of the 1960s. As the liberation war progressed the revolutionary line triumphed within FRELIMO with the backup of the Tanzanian government and other foreign supporters, as well as local people longing for independence.

Chapter 4 details the increasingly intensified internal conflict and how the slow expansion of armed struggle prompted the FRELIMO leadership to adopt the notions of a “protracted war” and “revolutionary war”. Armed struggle was regarded as a revolutionary war and war was seen as a means of achieving revolution. Importantly though, for FRELIMO, the success of the liberation struggle took on a meaning beyond that of merely a victorious armed struggle and independence. It ultimately came to stand for the transformation of people in Mozambique into “Mozambicans” and the creation of a “Mozambique nation” (nação moçambicana) and of a “new Mozambican society”.

When FRELIMO’s armed struggle reached central Mozambique it presented a grave menace for the Portuguese colonial authority as well as for the white administrations in southern Africa. With the boosted confidence gained through its successes, the revolutionary line believed that the divisions among residents could be overcome in due course. They believed that anybody who stood in the way of their liberation struggle, even an African, was an enemy. As a result, the number of people considered as the
“enemy within” continued to grow. At the same time, however, internal solidarity within FRELIMO strengthened after excluding the “enemy within” and created an illusion of unity.

Restraining the movement and winning the hearts of the rural population

It was not easy for FRELIMO to create a feeling of fellowship as “Mozambicans” among the rural population and to transform them into the “homen novo” (new man), a pillar of the forthcoming “sociedade nova” (new society), while fighting a war. Ideally, FRELIMO should have formed cooperative relations with residents or civic organisations before it started its armed struggle and while the colonial authority was still off guard. However, partly due to regional factors in southern Africa and partly due to the establishment of the Estado Novo regime, this was possible only in the northern end of Mozambique near the borders of Tanganyika, where the Makonde, Nyanja and Yao people lived. As described in Chapter 5, FRELIMO’s relations with the local population in other areas were either weak or coercive. The shortage of resources and harsh wartime conditions only worsened the situation.

When FRELIMO adopted guerrilla tactics, its objective of obtaining human resources became more important than that of expanding its territory. It tried to bring, even forcefully, as many people as possible under its control and to shape them into active participants in the liberation movement through education and training.

The colonial authority, on the other hand, attempted to move the rural population to the aldeamentos and make them sever contact with FRELIMO. Yet, it was unable to stop strong-willed individuals or groups from escaping due to its weak economic situation and its insufficient control of the rural areas. In order to prevent local people from voluntarily joining FRELIMO, the Portuguese Armed Forces, the PIDE and the colonial administration employed psychological strategies such as placation through social development, propaganda using the “traditional chiefs” appointed by the colonial administrators, the creation of a tight intelligence network both in urban and rural communities and the “Africanisation” of the defence force.

During the liberation war of 1964–1974, it was most important for both FRELIMO and the colonial authority to achieve physical and mental control over the rural populations. People living on the battlefields in northern and central Mozambique were particularly affected by the battles between the two forces, where they were physically displaced and psychologically damaged. Chapter 5 outlines how rural residents tackled the situation in the Maúa Circumscription.

Liberation struggle and Maúa on the front line

From 1966, Portugal and FRELIMO scrambled for the strategically important Maúa Circumscription. The residents were caught in between the two opposing forces. The budding voluntary anti-colonial movement formed by local strongmen (administrative officials, teachers, traditional authorities and Muslim leaders) in Marrupa, did not take
root amongst the Maúa people and, by 1966, it had been completely destroyed by the colonial authority. Throughout the armed struggle, the majority of the population of the area continued to fall under the control of the colonial authority.

The movement in Marrupa therefore only had a limited impact on the adjacent Maúa Circumscription, largely because of merciless suppression by the colonial authority. There were also geographical, cultural, social, economic and political factors such as: (1) the long distance from Tanzania and the coast; (2) the slow establishment of colonial rule (remoteness for colonisers); (3) experience during the First World War; and (4) the maintenance of the traditional social structure.

Social factors contributing to the limited involvement of Maúa residents in FRELIMO were: (1) its relatively short history as a settlement; (2) a tendency to be fragmented; (3) a tendency to be dispersed over large areas; (4) a tendency to avoid political difficulty; and (5) a lack of capitalist-worker class distinction due to the delay in colonial control. At an early stage of the liberation struggle, a small number of traditional authorities and educated individuals had some contact with FRELIMO. They were personally motivated by reasons such as the anti-colonial thinking based on Islam and an expectation of possible gain after independence, rather than by the driving force of the FRELIMO leadership, which was the ideal of Mozambican nationalism, as well as a hatred of exploitative feudalism.

In order to win a protracted revolutionary war, FRELIMO had to bring about a shift in consciousness among the politically unawakened rural population. The “liberated zones” played an important role in this. Some of the youth, including some women, became attracted to the ideas, objectives and actions of FRELIMO and decided to become guerrillas. However, in the main, due to the geological and cultural conditions particular to Maúa residents, FRELIMO had to adopt more coercive methods of persuasion. Moreover, many residents in the FRELIMO-controlled areas became disappointed as they were a long distance from the safe zones and they were impoverished by a shortage of resources.

The colonial authority, on the other hand, realised the strategic significance of Maúa after having disregarded it as a “remote area” for a long period. From 1966 onward, it poured many resources into the area and opted for the tactic of gentle persuasion.

Ultimately, this concentration of resources and the progression of armed struggle brought about the collapse of traditional society in Maúa. The commencement of armed struggle enabled Portuguese soldiers from the metropole to make inroads into rural areas and the consequent permeation of a monetary economy. Discharged soldiers were encouraged to start shops and plantations near army bases and borders. The colonial administration, the army and civilians continued to pour more resources into Maúa during the liberation war than during any other period. Direct contact with Portuguese people instilled new ideas and a different way of life into the minds of local youths, and they realised the value of money. It is ironic that people in Portugal were experiencing hardships due to conscription and the cost of the war, while in contrast this remote area in Mozambique experienced rapid modernisation and a higher standard of living. This was due to the new policy of “winning the hearts and minds” of the population. Ultimately, the revolution which Salazar had feared most took place in the capital of the metropole and not in the colonies.
In Maúia, the “people of mato (forest)”, or those who escaped colonial control by joining FRELIMO, experienced severe hunger due to difficulties in logistics and production. However, at this time the colonial authority introduced various social development schemes, such as a primary health care service and the distribution of clothes and food. Without a strong personal determination and commitment to FRELIMO, even those who would have liked to join the anti-colonial movement were reluctant to leave their homes where goods were abundant, in exchange for the forest where hunger and danger awaited. The majority of people in Maúia had no opportunity to develop the determination or the commitment for this before the war began.

Although the liberated zones established the legitimacy of FRELIMO in the eyes of the world, in reality they were like small islands scattered in the Mozambican matos (forests) under colonial rule and they were not equipped to provide sustainable social welfare services. They had to operate under dreadful conditions. They were subject to the constant threat of bombing from the Portuguese forces. Supplies had to be carried in on the heads of dozens of people while being under constant threat of danger.

Nevertheless, some liberated zones managed to overcome these unfavourable conditions. For example, the base in the Cassero region, known as “o coração dos Yaos” (the heart of the Yao), was the largest in Niassa District. The residents were engaged in cooperative production, received military training and developed proactive political awareness. Transforming women into active guerrillas was especially significant.

Yet, these liberation zones were far from Maúia, situated three to four days’ walk away and required people to slip past the surveillance network of the colonial authority. Moreover, the Makhuwas of Maúia felt insignificant and marginalised in liberated zones which had been established in the Yao, Nyanja and Makonde areas. As a minority group, they felt unsympathetic and even resentful towards a call for anti-tribalismo in liberated zones. For instance, one Makhuwa (Xirima) woman left a liberated zone and surrendered to the colonial authority simply because she wanted to eat mapira (a type of grain) and was not allowed to conduct traditional ceremonies. This is an extreme case, but it demonstrates how difficult it would have been for many Makhuwas in this area to strengthen a much-needed sense of solidarity.

**Liberation struggle to independence**

**People and the situation in Maúia around independence**

When asked to describe the liberation war period, the overwhelming majority of people in Maúia answered, “ohawa” (suffering). Almost without exception, people had wanted the war to end, displaced villagers to come home and their group members to reunite. They wanted to live quietly as they pleased in a place without disturbance. They said that hunger, the break-up of groups and the aldeamento were the biggest difficulties they experienced in this period. Divisions among the group between support for FRELIMO and the colonial authority caused internal conflict and confusion and made it difficult to
maintain traditional religious practices. Being confined to the aldeamento, the residents could work at autonomous production activities. The intensification of colonial rule and the advent of armed struggle coincided to exacerbate their “ohawa”.

When a sudden coup in the metropole brought an end to armed struggle and FRELIMO arrived in the Maúá Circumscription, the residents were filled with joy. As they were unfamiliar with the ideology or policies of FRELIMO, the people equated FRELIMO and the ohuru (liberation) that they imagined it brought with what they had been longing for – liberation from aldeamento, liberation from white dominance, the freedom of movement and production, the distribution of wealth formerly limited to the whites and the arrival of a “rich life”. They did not yet know that their expectations were incompatible with the ideals of FRELIMO.

The formation of FRELIMO’s rural policy

During the liberation struggle period, FRELIMO developed a loathing towards those communities that did not voluntarily join the organisation and who chose to remain on the colonial authority side. It regarded not only the colonial authority and its collaborators, but also the “traditional” social structures in rural areas, as enemies of the liberation struggle. It said that traditional society was feudalist and was an enemy which needed to be overthrown since it was used by the colonial authority and constrained rural residents to escuridão (darkness) and kept them from the struggle of and reform by FRELIMO. After the defeat of its number-one enemy, namely colonialism, became certain at the Lusaka Accord, FRELIMO’s sole objective became “social revolution by eradicating the legacy of colonialism and feudalism.” According to the terms of transfer of power, FRELIMO took complete control of the Mozambican territory. As a result, the ideas and policies cultivated during the liberation struggle period were promoted as the national policies of the FRELIMO government.

As examined in Chapters 4 and 5, FRELIMO initially conducted its armed struggle in league with traditional chiefs. By the end of the 1960s, however, it had developed a distrust of traditional authority. With a slogan, “sociedade nova” (new society), it attempted to create a new social structure in liberated zones, based on the hierarchy of its army. Although the traditional leaders on the side of FRELIMO were expected to mobilise people under them, their power was limited and their lives were endangered if they opposed FRELIMO commanders. Having gained confidence from the successful control of liberated zones due to its military approach, the FRELIMO leadership felt encouraged to expand the same system to the whole of Mozambique after independence.

The practicality of the plan was problematic, however, considering that the majority of the territory had not been “liberated” at the time of independence. This book focuses particularly on this conundrum – treating the Maúá region as a case study. Chapters 2 and 5 demonstrate that although the Maúá society was greatly influenced by colonial rule, it could not be described as “feudal”. Moreover, the society changed tremendously during the liberation war with the disintegration of “traditional” village communities.
Maú residents interpreted the news of the peace agreement and independence as a call to bring dispersed people back home and to rebuild the community. People longed to leave the aldeamento and their bad memories behind.

The tragic disparity between the expectations of the rural Maú people and FRELIMO widened after independence. The FRELIMO government did not encourage the reconstruction of those communities that had disintegrated during the war, but instead started to implement their own new social order. FRELIMO did not want the mwenes who sided with it to return to their original habitations. Nor did the existence of a “new authority”, or régulo/chefe, established during the liberation war, make it easy for the mwenes to go home. Consequently, the legitimate mwenes of Revia, Muhuela, Muhoco and Mwapula never returned to Maú after the liberation war.

The application of FRELIMO policy in Maú

In effect the liberation war dislocated rural communities in Maú. In the eyes of a former FRELIMO commander, a non-Makhuwa who came to the region in order to “overcome tribalism”, the Maú society was a feudal society – a “traditional society that did not change even during the liberation struggle.” In order to promote a complete change of social order, the FRELIMO administrators in Maú forcefully implemented the policies formed by the central government.²

The dreams of Maú residents for the reconstruction of their communities, autonomous life and access to the wealth that had been created by colonial rule were completely shattered. The FRELIMO government believed it possible to sublimate the division among Mozambicans, which had been complicated by Portuguese colonial rule and the war, into the unidade nacional (national unity) through its social revolution. Whilst Portugal had failed to bring the whole of Mozambique under its total control, FRELIMO tried to attain the unification of 800,000 square kilometres of land, with limited resources in terms of finance, human capacity, facilities and communication. This is the land that FRELIMO could not manage to liberate totally on its own, even after ten long years of armed struggle. By the time of independence, battles as well as control by the colonial authority intensified in rural settings, and FRELIMO had not been able to make direct contact with local residents in those areas which were far from its safe-haven. The conditions facing the newly independent Mozambique were extremely harsh even for FRELIMO, which had overcome one difficulty after another to achieve its goal. Nevertheless, the leaders, members and overseas supporters of FRELIMO believed, perhaps euphorically, that the organisation could once more overcome the current difficulties. After all, did FRELIMO not survive the very long, hard war?

After the transfer of power, FRELIMO registered every single Mozambican as a citizen and demanded his or her political participation. However, for the rural residents who did not live in the liberated zones, it was a new and unwanted experience, forced upon them by authority. The physical and mental control of rural residents, which both the colonial authority and FRELIMO had struggled to achieve during the liberation war, re-emerged
as a challenge of the new state. Both the original traditional authority and those installed by the colonial administration, which had worked as an intermediary between the colonial authority and local residents, were now ignored and excluded as a “legacy of colonialism”.

Though Maúa residents had longed for freedom of movement and autonomous life after many years of oppressive rule and fierce war, this was not compatible with FRELIMO’s policy of organising and “capturing” all Mozambicans. FRELIMO introduced a policy of the *aldeia comunal* (communal village) to prevent rural residents from fleeing from state control (“physical escape”) and from engaging in clandestine resistance (“psychological escape”), both of which occurred frequently during the colonial occupation.

Maúa, as a “remote place” even in the new Mozambique, could not hope to get a sufficient allocation of resources. The *aldeia comunal* was built where the *aldeamento* had previously existed. The person in charge was a former FRELIMO commander from the south who did not speak the local language. This was a deliberate appointment based on the national policy of “anti-tribalism” in order to boost the solidarity of Mozambicans.

So, freedom after independence was short-lived. Maúa residents found themselves, once again, physically contained, this time, in the *aldeia comunal*. Moreover, those who had been put in positions of authority as *régulo* or *chefe* by the colonial administration in the absence of authentic *mwene* were denounced as “traditional authorities” and became marginalised by FRELIMO administrators, who were not familiar with the local situation. In other words, many communities in northern Maúa lost both *mwene* and their proxies. FRELIMO tried to fill the vacuum of political authority with a new order, but it only led to deepening confusion.

It could be argued that the post-independence policy of *aldeia comunal* was introduced not only to promote a socialist idea of collective production, as is commonly thought to be the case, but also, in effect, as the continuation of the physical and mental control of rural residents, which had been practiced since the armed struggle period. The FRELIMO leadership may not have been that conscious of this, but many Maúa residents perceive the liberation struggle and post-independence FRELIMO policy as one continuous historical experience.

The most notable aspect in the post-independence relationship between the FRELIMO government and Maúa residents was that the *aldeia comunal* was erected in the place of the former *aldeamento* – established by the colonial authority. The locations of *aldeamentos* were ideal for setting up *aldeia comunal* because of the already established infrastructure, easy access and the existing divisions in the community. The policy of communal villages was first implemented in Mwapula, Muela. This triggered conflict between the FRELIMO administrators and the proxies of the absent *mwene* appointed by the colonial administration, which eventually led to the marginalisation of the latter. L.N., who worked under a FRELIMO administrator as a *chefe do posto* in Maúa District and who was feared by local residents as a *tira-dentes* (teeth puller), remembers those days:

The traditional structure was firmly incorporated into colonialism. It was in a way reasonable to try to destroy it. To implement the policy of the *aldeia*
comunal successfully, however, we needed to utilise the structure, not simply deny it. For example, we threatened the families who refused to move to an aldeia comunal that they would be relocated to a village of a different mwene. Many didn’t like the idea because they didn’t want to be away from their group. After this, nobody left the aldeia comunal and they stayed with their group.\textsuperscript{4}

The outbreak of post-independence armed conflict

The establishment of an anti-FRELIMO network

While one should not dismiss the devotion and sacrifice that FRELIMO members displayed under harsh conditions, the victory of FRELIMO did not necessarily end happily for areas outside the liberated zones. Neither internal nor external environments surrounding Mozambique could be viewed optimistically. The slogan “\textit{A luta continua}” (The struggle continues), repeatedly used by the FRELIMO leadership, was more than a mere slogan. It was a true reflection of their determination and of the reality in Mozambique.

Although the worldwide perception is that FRELIMO won the liberation war, in many ways it only picked up where Portugal left off when it pulled out of the war and the colony. FRELIMO was successful in the sense that it managed to put pressure on Portugal, using the blood, sweat and tears of its members and supporters. It was also a victory for FRELIMO in the sense that because liberation movements in Africa claimed to fight a war against colonialism and fascism, not a war between races, it inspired the captains in the Portuguese Armed Forces to stage a coup.

However, FRELIMO did not in fact achieve a military victory. It did not attain independence by wresting power from the colonial rulers. Nor did it arouse sufficient passion among all fellow Mozambicans to collectively evict the colonial rulers. At the time of the coup in Lisbon, FRELIMO controlled a limited number of people in parts of the vast territory of Mozambique.

Rather, the end of the liberation war and the subsequent independence of Mozambique were brought about through political change in its metropole, Portugal. Allies within the various anti-Salazar movements constituted the main force behind the coup. One of these organisations was the Portuguese Communist Party, which had a strong relationship with FRELIMO, and which had a vested interest in transferring power to FRELIMO. The allied movements did not consider anti-FRELIMO elements in and outside of Mozambique or the divisions among Mozambicans.

Chapter 4 outlines the challenges, and often anomalies, that various bodies, particularly the Portuguese military, faced. For instance, some of the generals who commanded the colonial war understood the political motivators behind the war, and thus presented their view that a military solution would be impossible. They instead proposed an alliance with moderate African elites in the colonies who did not take an anti-colonialist position, to attempt to establish a federation of the metropole and its former colonies. General
António de Spínola argues this position in his book *Portugal and the Future*. The proposal was favourably received and was considered as a realistic, or even inevitable, plan by some people, especially in Angola and Mozambique where there were a large number of white settlers with interests and rights strongly connected to the metropole.

Mozambican white settlers felt particularly threatened when FRELIMO's military targets were expanded to include their plantations and towns. Realising that the Portuguese Army Forces could not be relied on to protect the colonial structure and white interests, they tried to ally with African mercenaries and anti-FRELIMO elites. As explained in Chapters 4 and 5, Jorge Jardim and Orlando Cristina were at the centre of this activity.

After the coup in Lisbon in April 1974, the Movimento das Forças Armadas (MFA: Armed Forces Movement), the main coup instigator, pursued the total liberation of all Portuguese colonies. The Junta de Salvação Nacional (National Salvation Junta) was reluctant to include white settlers like Jardim in the transition process, fearing that white settlers and their black allies in the army and the police might declare unilateral independence like Southern Rhodesia.

The fear was not completely unrealistic. In 1974, white hardliners “flatly opposed a transfer of power at all” and formed FICO, which is the acronym of Frente de Independente de Convergência Ocidental and also means “I stay” in Portuguese. Its “main underpinning was rejection of black majority rule.”5 The main supporters of FICO were white farm owners, entrepreneurs and shop owners. The organisation formed an alliance with similar movements in South Africa and Angola. Other whites chose to accept the inevitability of working together with FRELIMO to maintain political stability and started the Democratas de Moçambique (MUDM: Mozambican Democrats).6 The conflict between the two groups led to physical attacks by FICO members on MUDM and FRELIMO members.7 The intervention of the secret police DGS (a new PIDE) only escalated the violence, as described by Middlemas:

Members of the DGS, operating either from within army intelligence, at large in Mozambique, or from Rhodesia, used recruits from the flechas and white commandos to set up a clandestine organization dedicated to resisting a negotiated peace … efforts were made to capitalize on tribal animosities, and the fear, particularly among Macua [Makhuwa], that FRELIMO rule would be to their disadvantage.8 *(Underlined by the author)*

This clearly reflects that the DGS members tried to take advantage of the rift amongst Africans, including mercenaries, in order to ensure their own survival and to create a role for themselves which they had lost after the revolution in Portugal. The active support by the pro-Portuguese of African political organisations resumed. This time, the recipient was not FRELIMO but Comité Revolucionário de Moçambique (COREMO) and Grupo Unido de Moçambique (GUMO).

COREMO was a rival “front” of FRELIMO based in Zambia, whose first leader, Gwambe, was exposed as a Portuguese agent. Militarily it was active only briefly in 1971.9
GUMO was led by Dr. Joana Simeão (Yvette Tchilenhwe), a lawyer and a Makhuwa. It was originally a moderate settler organisation, which Marcelo Caetano had allowed to be formed in September 1973. DGS and Jardim were involved in both organisations. Jardim informed Silva Pais, head of PIDE, in his letter that, “Joana Simeão Fonseca … as you know, returned to Portugal and will shortly leave for Mozambique. She will collaborate with me.”

In August 1974 Simeão and the old COREMO leadership formed the Partido da Convenção Nacional (PCN: National Convention Party) which was based in Beira. Groups purporting to represent the interests of the Makuwua emerged, and one of them was FRECOMO, which was led by Simeão.

Various actors in the metropole and the colonies took advantage of the political vacuum following the collapse of Portugal’s formidable regime and made a grab for power. Many of these attempts had their roots in the social gap and contradictions formed during colonial rule and the liberation war. Thus, FRELIMO was required to fight a political war of power with various actors, unlike the previous war, which was a military war for liberation.

The MFA leaders were fully aware of this shift. Accordingly, during the transition period from September 1974 to June 1975, Portugal’s new government took steps to root out the legacies of the Salazar administration in Mozambique, such as the PIDE/DGS, the army, white settlers and nationalists, together with, or in some cases on behalf of, FRELIMO.

Participants in the reign of terror during the previous regime were disconcerted by the change of government as a result of the coup. Those in Portugal left for Brazil, while those in the colonies tried to destroy proof of their involvement by, for example, burning down the PIDE headquarters. They fled to Southern Rhodesia or South Africa. FRELIMO’s direct enemy, the colonial authority, disappeared from Mozambique overnight. However, its legacy remained.

As examined in Chapters 4 and 5, the anti-FRELIMO network which was formed during the liberation war consisted of many actors including: the Portuguese Armed Forces, the secret police, intelligence agents, white settlers, shop owners, the owners of concession companies, African soldiers, militia and policemen, some assimilado politicians and FRELIMO splinter groups that had been protected by the colonial authority, as well as the white governments in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia. Crucially, the network was not destroyed after the coup in Lisbon but was reorganised. The anti-FRELIMO network became the driving force behind the formation of MNR/RENAMO.

The resurgence of war

As a crucial backdrop to Mozambique’s internal state of affairs, change was afoot in surrounding countries and regions. In December 1974 Samora Machel told the OAU Liberation Committee that Mozambique would support the liberation movement in Southern Rhodesia. In March 1976, the Mozambican government imposed total sanctions, based on the UN resolutions, against Southern Rhodesia. The sanctions cost Mozambique two million US dollars a year from the loss of employment and loss in port and railroad usage fees.
Adding to the shifting landscape in the southern African region, while Mozambicans were overjoyed at the sudden liberation from colonial rule and subsequent independence, Southern Rhodesia and South Africa watched the progress with apprehension. As a result, fearing the impact of the FRELIMO government in Mozambique on its own existence, the white government of Southern Rhodesia gathered together anti-FRELIMO network members in order to topple the FRELIMO government. Their common objective was to place Mozambique under their control, with the protection and assistance of Southern Rhodesia.

The FRELIMO government had complex relationships with different regions, communities and individuals inside Mozambique. However, the legacy of years of colonial rule and the liberation war were not eradicated in the excitement of independence.

Upon independence, President Machel talked about not only a bright future but also about the “enemy”. What prompted him was not merely his military or revolutionary way of thinking because independence was not just a new beginning but was built on the past. And the past brought with it many challenges such as internal division, economic problems and the anti-FRELIMO network. The FRELIMO leader knew this better than anybody else.

Since there had been so little development in Mozambique during the many years of colonial rule, there were few resources or able personnel at the time of independence. Mozambique had not received sufficient assistance from other states within the Cold War framework either. In addition, 90 per cent of Portuguese citizens (approximately 200,000 at the time of the coup), who had been responsible for the majority of economic activities in Mozambique, left for Portugal, Southern Rhodesia or South Africa, causing economic activities to slow down radically or grind to a halt. The Mozambican economy had been developed based on a heavy reliance on South Africa and Southern Rhodesia – as seen in Chapters 1, 3 and 4. As a result, the new Mozambique had to sacrifice economic sustainability in order to realise its political objectives.

The high hopes and expectations of Mozambicans dwindled rapidly due to the deteriorating economy and the confusion caused by the lack of capacity and experience of the FRELIMO government. There was a concerted attempt to overcome this economic, political and administrative vacuum. There were some successes, for example the education and sanitation policies of the new government demonstrated remarkable achievements over a short period of time.  

However, the challenge of mobilising disparate peoples for the purposes of nation-building in a territory so vast that even the colonial authority could not fully control it was much more difficult and on a far larger scale than the experimentation in liberated zones during the liberation war. The FRELIMO government also had to contend with enemies within and outside Mozambique. Under these circumstances, it adopted a high-handed style of nation management.

In the meantime, Southern Rhodesia bombed Mozambique in retaliation for Mozambique’s border blockade. The tension between the two governments was high. The anti-FRELIMO network gathered in Southern Rhodesia during 1976–1977 in order to
form the MNR (Mozambique National Resistance), later called RENAMO (Resistência Nacional de Moçambique). Jorge Jardim and Orlando Cristina facilitated the formation of the MNR. They had created special forces of Africans (GE) during the liberation war and had strong relationships with both white and black governments in southern Africa. After Portugal’s coup, they set up a guerrilla unit of African Mozambicans in Southern Rhodesia with the assistance of its government, and deployed it to Mozambique for subversive activities.

After only a few years of enjoying the feverish atmosphere of independence, the Mozambican people were, once again, thrust into war. At first, MNR/RENAMO took one step at a time in order to expand its area of control, but then suddenly exploded throughout the country. In 1986 it reached Maúá where local communities had been divided during the armed struggle period and had a complicated relationship with FRELIMO following independence.

In 1984 Malawi yielded to the pressure from other African countries and decided not to allow RENAMO to pass through its territory. In response RENAMO moved its headquarters to Milange, a town on the borders of Zambézia Province and Malawi. It tried to expand its control in Mozambique and plundered food and arms, resulting in the explosive dissemination of violence all over the country, from Zambézia Province, to Nampula Province, to southern Niassa Province, to southern Cabo Delgado Province. In Niassa Province, RENAMO set up its headquarters in the south in order to avoid the FRELIMO army and finally reached Maúá in 1984.

Maúá, a battlefield again

RENAMO reached Muhoco, the western end of the Maúá District. During the liberation war, battles had also been fought in Muhoco. Because of the aldeia comunal policy, the residents were relocated from the aldeamento in Mount Txoncori, where the Portuguese Armed Forces had been stationed, to a place along the road.

A RENAMO member in Muhoco described its incursion into the area as follows:

We were happy when ohuru [independence] came because we thought peace and good life would follow. But once more, we were placed in the aldeia cadeia (village prison). War started again. This meant that independence hadn’t come. We began to be sceptical [about FRELIMO]. There was no intermission between one war and another.\textsuperscript{18}

One night, a RENAMO messenger visited our mwene and told him that they would not harm us if we didn’t run away. That’s why the mwene accepted them. They burnt the aldeia comunal and moved the Muhoco and other groups in the neighbourhood nearer the river [the forest area near the Muhoco Aldeamento].\textsuperscript{19}
Some people fled to Sede where the government army was stationed. Why then did “Mwene Muhoco” not leave? As outlined in the previous chapter, this “mwene” was the proxy of the legitimate Muhoco V, who joined FRELIMO’s side during the liberation struggle. He was appointed Muhoco VI with the intervention of Régulo Muwa, a superior mwene, “from the family that had a low traditional rank.” Neither of his two main backers, the colonial authority nor Régulo Muwa, were around after independence. FRELIMO’s policy of marginalising traditional authorities robbed him of any real power. Then FRELIMO introduced the party ranking system into the community. Consequently, Muhoco VI lost his role as a traditional chief and the role of a chefe under colonial rule. The Council of Elders described the situation as follows:

After we were relocated to the aldeia comunal, abaixo (down) slogans were adopted: “Abaixo Mwene,” (down with Mwene) “Abaixo Pwattaphwatta” (Down with clan heads). Everybody was unhappy because the traditional political structure was belittled. Then the Organização das Mulheres Moçambicana (OMM: Mozambique Women’s Organisation) started its activity. Women from the OMM criticised polygamy. Nobody wanted to marry a woman from the OMM. We thought this would eventually go away as colonial rule did. We said to each other, “Let’s see. They will get tired soon.” Then war returned.

Muhoco VI remained where he was and accepted negotiations with RENAMO probably because of the complex situation he was in and his dissatisfaction with the FRELIMO policy. It is interesting to look at the tactics used by RENAMO to expand its territory. The “traditional authority”, not the authentic mwene, was selected as its main counterpart for negotiations and enabled RENAMO to strategically increase the area and people under its control. How did the people in Muhoco live under RENAMO?

After burning the aldeia comunal, RENAMO gathered Muhoco and other nearby groups around the river and set up a military base with ten commanders and 100 guerrillas. This was the first RENAMO base in Maúa District. The Muhoco group started to live “with the army” once again:

RENAMO guerrillas set up a base in the centre and made local residents live around it to protect it from a surprise raid by the government army. RENAMO guerrillas patrolled to prevent residents from fleeing. The RENAMO commanders summoned the mwene and his assistant whenever they wanted. One night, an old man was executed in a cruel manner. Seeing it, the mwene contacted the residents and they ran away to Sede. Next morning, RENAMO realised that only a handful of people remained. Thus, the Muhoco was divided into two groups, one on the FRELIMO side and the other on the RENAMO side.

M.M., one of those left behind, told the author:
Nobody told me about the escape. The same happened to Mwene Quingui of the Quingui group in the next village. I was left behind while fishing. There was nobody to look after the Muhoco people, so I did.  

Once more, the Muhoco group was divided by war. As in the liberation struggle, the remaining group members chose the mwene proxy. M.M. was a paternal nephew of Muhoco VI and worked as a liaison between the mwene and RENAMO. However, his clan was Lucasse while Muhoco VI belonged to the Mirole clan. I.A., who was there as a RENAMO guerrilla, explained the flight of Muhoco VI and his followers, and the situation for the remaining residents as follows:

At first, people freely moved around and went all the time [to the FRELIMO side and to the RENAMO side]. An old man was assigned to take food to RENAMO. When he went to Sede, the government army ordered him to put poison in the food and kill them all. Somebody reported it to RENAMO. RENAMO sent for the old man. He begged forgiveness. RENAMO decided to punish him as a warning to prevent others from doing the same. They assembled the residents, showed them the old man, who was tied, and asked them, “Is it good to kill or try to kill others?” “We should kill him to make a lesson, shouldn't we?” Then, they killed the old man in front of the residents. Everybody started to cry. The commander pointed a gun and said “Rejoice. If you cry, the same fate is waiting.” People clapped their hands and pretended to rejoice, while crying inside. That night, almost all the residents fled. However, those who were thought to be on the RENAMO side were not asked to leave.

Muhoco VI and his people fled to Sede, but they did not trust the FRELIMO government completely. This is evident from the fact that they did not live in Sede but instead moved to nearby Namope.

R.A., who was born in the Muhoco group in Mount Girane and is a FRELIMO member, describes the fate of a group torn apart by war, not once but twice:

When the Portuguese gave power to FRELIMO, nephews and uncles started to kill each other. The peace and progress [that were promised] were all lies. This is what the Portuguese meant when they said while leaving, “you will suffer because of weapons.” My brother was captured by RENAMO. They cut his neck and legs because he couldn't keep up with training. The government army found his body tied to a tree. RENAMO said the government army killed him. Whether you went to the right or to the left, you would die. Both sides had deep-rooted distrust. Three sons joined FRELIMO and killed their own father. Four people who cooperated with RENAMO were killed by RENAMO in the end.
RENAMO set up three military bases in Maúá District (Figure 10). The most important was in Mwacanha in the north of the district where Portugal had built an *aldeamento*. The Muela and Mwapula groups living there describe their lives from independence to the time just before the arrival of RENAMO as follows:

After independence, the administrator and the *secretário* (local secretary) banned traditional ceremonies and religion and abolished the *régulo*. The order was effective because we knew from our experience in the colonial era that those who opposed such rules would be jailed. “Words mean fear.” Our *régulo* died in jail during the liberation war. Only the *pwiyamwene* remained. When FRELIMO formed the government, *régulos* were made redundant. We had no *régulo* but the village was still there … The *aldeamento* set up by the Portuguese was guarded by soldiers and it was difficult for FRELIMO to approach. It was well controlled. Whether in this *aldeamento* or the *aldeamento* after independence [*aldeia comunal*], we were forced to stay inside. There was no other option but to accept the order.29

During the war [liberation struggle], Mwene Mwapula was not here. The FRELIMO government threw out *mwenes* and appointed *secretários* and village chiefs instead. Nyanjas became district administrators instead of the Portuguese. We still lived in an *aldeamento* [*aldeia comunal*]. It was very hard. We didn’t like it because Africans were not used to living so close to each other. Once chickens were lost, they were never found. The Nyanja *secretário* was also a problem. He had no sympathy and would not let the residents go far to attend to the fields.30

The above testimonies reveal that the Muela and Mwapula groups did not distinguish between the *aldeamento* and the *aldeia comunal*. It also illustrates that the proxies of *mwenes* and chiefs in the low-end groups, who had been given authority by the colonial administration in the absence of legitimate *mwenes*, were marginalised when *secretários* were appointed. In Muela and Mwapula, outsiders were appointed as *secretários* and they did not handle the residents kindly. Although people were unhappy they continued to lead their daily lives without taking action, probably due to their experience during the liberation war. Then, RENAMO entered the scene.

How then did the post-independence armed conflict start in the north of Maúá District? People living in the Aldeia Comunal Mwapula, the first RENAMO target in the area, describe the events:

The government army came in vehicles and started fighting at five in the morning. This is how we learnt that the war broke out. We all fled. Then RENAMO arrived and warned, “We are opposed to the *aldeia comunal*. If you
go back to your *aldeia comunal*, we will kill you." They made us go back to fetch our belongings and then burned the *aldeia comunal*. They told us to get out of the village. We came here [the place where they were living at the time of the author’s research in 1999]. We have been here for ten years. There was always a battle on the side of the road. We were scared. We thought the war would continue until the end of the world.31

RENAMO came early in the morning. Children on the way to school ran back, shouting, “War!” They said that houses in the *aldeia comunal* were being burnt down. RENAMO went through Muhoco and came to Mwacanha. We grabbed our children and fled to Sede with no belongings. In Sede, the government army told us that it was safe to go home. We did and were captured by RENAMO.32

The war of RENAMO started. Wars always start here. They never go past here. They come here because we have *mato* and plenty of food. We heard that among them were the people who hacked the chests of people in Mecanhelas [near Malawian borders in Cuamba District]. The FRELIMO *secretário* made us listen to the story on the radio. He called them “*bandidos armados*” (armed bandits) but we didn’t know what they were. Then, finally, RENAMO entered the area. The FRELIMO army also came. We heard gunshots but thought they were cleaning weapons. When we saw injured people, we fled to Sede in a hurry. RENAMO was already there and told us to go home. When we returned, there was nothing that remained. Everything was taken to the base. A month later, there was a meeting. We were told that we could no longer escape and that FRELIMO would no longer come. RENAMO explained that it was against FRELIMO’s policies, such as on cooperatives, which wouldn’t allow one to work on his own, *lojas populares* (people’s stores), which created long queues, and the OMM, which sent women to the cities leaving their husbands in the villages. We thought it was good and stopped fleeing. But, RENAMO killed people in front of others, probably as a warning so that we wouldn’t run away. We were forced to live under the laws that RENAMO created. Life in jail did not cease. People lived crying all the time.33

Thus, the Mwapula group tried in vain to flee from RENAMO and continued to live under its rule. In nearby Muela, elders explain:

RENAMO first ordered us to move out of the village in the direction of the field [north]. This enabled us to leave the *aldeia comunal*. In the end, people were divided into the FRELIMO side [Sede] and the RENAMO side [the field]. Both sides fought over people and information. RENAMO needed
somebody to help to control the residents. It started to look for régulos, mwenes, pwiyanwenes, humus [pwattaphwattas], adjuntos (assistants), diviners and witch doctors. It also unbanned religion.\(^{34}\)

After Mwene/Régulo Muela IV “mysteriously” disappeared (actually he was executed by the PIDE) during the liberation war, the Muela group lived under his proxy who was appointed by the colonial administration. The proxy was not from Lapone, Mwene’s clan, but from Mirasse, Mwene’s clan on his paternal side. When FRELIMO’s hierarchy was introduced into the community there was no need for the proxy. RENAMO tried to make use of any authoritative figure as long as they had not been introduced by FRELIMO. Since the mwene alone could not manage the occupied area in wartime, RENAMO appointed influential people in local communities to be mambos, the equivalent of mwenes in central Mozambique where RENAMO came from.

RENAMO looked for the successor to Régulo Muela, who was the high authority throughout northern Maúa until the end of the colonial era. As the last Mwene Muela was already deceased, the present Muela V was chosen as his successor. Carlos Jaibo remembers his appointment:

I was in Mora, married to a local woman, when RENAMO came. Young people were sent to the mato and old ones to the Mwapula group. One day, my uncle told my father that I had been selected to be a mwene. I am not sure why they chose me from the five children. I divorced my wife in Mora and married a woman here.\(^{35}\)

The family of Jaibo, the present régulo, was not closely related to the one of his predecessor but was not considered “inferior” because of its closeness to the first Mwene Muela and the second Mwene Muela (Figure 32). It is likely that the Muela group did not have many other candidates since some of Carlos’ brothers had joined FRELIMO while others fled to Sede. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Muela group in Maúa reduced in size following the introduction of the colonial administration’s cotton policy in the 1950s and became even smaller once the liberation war divided the group.

In neighbouring Mwapula too, RENAMO looked for a person with traditional authority. The group had even fewer candidates than Muela because many residents, including the mwene and the pwiyanwene, supported FRELIMO during the liberation war. Eventually a person was appointed as the mambo who had previously been appointed chefe as the proxy of Mwene Mwapula during the last days of the colonial era. Proxies of mwenes who had lost their backers and become marginalised after the colonial authority left, were once more raised to authoritative positions under RENAMO.

Traditionally, there was a definite hierarchy among mwenes. In RENAMO-occupied areas, however, anybody who was considered a “traditional chief” could become a mambo. To each mambo, RENAMO allocated about twenty hostages brought back from raids to be new residents under him.\(^{36}\)
Conclusion: From the Liberation Struggle to Post-independence Armed Conflict

When a *mambo* died, his maternal nephew succeeded. This was the case with C.G. whose ancestors were slaves in Mwapula, and M.N. in Muela who came from the paternal side of the *mwene*. Neither of them would have previously had authority in their groups. They tried to strengthen their positions in the groups by pledging loyalty to RENAMO.

Small cracks that had been created in local communities through the historical process deepened into a ravine through the liberation war and the post-independence war. The external force of RENAMO had infiltrated the local communities with its overwhelming force and political manoeuvring and caused deep divisions among the residents.

**In conclusion**

People did not want another war. However, post-independence violence became inevitable due to global factors (the Cold War), regional factors (apartheid), historical factors (decolonisation) and, above all, division among the people created through many years of colonial rule and the liberation war. Just when people thought that a long-awaited independence and a new era had arrived, war returned.

RENAMO succeeded in creating favourable conditions for itself in the areas that had failed to establish an alliance with FRELIMO during the liberation war. The Maúa region in the south of Niassa District in northern Mozambique serves as a case study for this book. Similar studies should be undertaken in other areas. Hopefully this book succeeds in its objective of demonstrating the historical background of the prolonged war in Mozambique. It is hoped that this research inspires and prompts further research on the historical experience of people in various areas in Mozambique.
Notes

1 After the outbreak of the armed conflict in late 1970s, Samora Machel and his government often used the term “inimigo interno”. Machel published a book entitled Declaramos Guerra ao Inimigo Interno in 1980. The phrase “inimigo interno” has its origins in the liberation struggle.

2 Geffray attributes this to the fact that the FRELIMO leaders were Marxist urban intellectuals, and asserts that they regarded rural areas as a “blank page” (Geffray, 1991:14-16). As discussed in the introduction, other researchers have made similar arguments. This book takes the approach that, before discussing the rural policy of the FRELIMO government, it is necessary to investigate how the relationship between FRELIMO and rural residents in Mozambique developed during the liberation war, as this may have impacted on the perception of rural society by FRELIMO leaders.

5 Middlemas, 1975:325-328.
6 Newitt, 1995:539.
7 Hall and Young, 1997:44.
10 Hall and Young, 1997:41.
11 Newitt, 1995:539
13 Antunes, 1996:503-505. According to Fernando Couto who conducted research on PIDE archives, Simeão later distanced himself from Jardim due to his support of Miguel Murupa, an African leader who she considered to be incompetent (Couto, 2011:109).
17 Hanlon, 1983:139-141.
20 For details, see the genealogy of Mwene Muhoco in Figure 38.
22 I.A., Muhoco, Maúá District, 15/81997.
25 See the genealogy of Mwene Muhoco in Figure 38.
26 I.A. did not tell the author who this man was. Putting the accounts of various people together, he was probably M.M. or Mwene Quingui.
30 P.C., Mwapula, Maúá District, 7/9/1999.
33 P.C., Mwapula, Maúá District, 7/9/1999.