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# *‘It Will Be Our Time To Eat’: Former Renamo Combatants and Big-Man Dynamics in Central Mozambique\**

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*This article aims to contribute to the debate about the recent remobilisation of Resistência Nacional Moçambicano (Renamo), by presenting an analysis of its low- and mid-ranked veterans’ post-war relationships with fellow veterans and with the Renamo leadership. It argues that former Renamo combatants’ participation in post-war Renamo networks has been central for their re-integration into Mozambican politics but, at the same time, may be regarded as a source of frustration and political discontent. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Maringue, central Mozambique, the article shows that, in scholarship on armed groups, these relationships are characterised by dependency, loyalty and expectations, often referred to as ‘big-man dynamics’. The article engages critically with this concept, showing how Renamo veterans’ position vis-à-vis the Renamo leadership is largely characterised by ‘waiting’. It demonstrates that Renamo veterans regard the Renamo party and the state as ‘exclusive caretakers’, which are expected to take care of the ex-combatants. However, Renamo’s leaders have largely failed to meet their followers’ expectations, resulting in frustration, several (though rare) cases of ‘defection’ to other political parties, but more generally a status of ‘waithood’. This analysis provides a critical exploration of the post-war dynamics of former armed groups, and sheds some light on Renamo’s recent remobilisation from the perspective of the former Renamo combatants.*

## Introduction

In October 2012, 20 years after the signing of the General Peace Accords (GPA) that ended the war between the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Frelimo) government and Renamo, Afonso Dhlakama, the leader of Renamo, left Mozambique’s capital, Maputo, and ‘returned to the bush’. Dhlakama was joined by approximately 800 armed Renamo men, and re-established one of Renamo’s wartime military bases in Satandjira, in the Gorongosa mountains. Over the course of 2013 and 2014, various clashes were reported between Renamo combatants and the national police and army in Sofala province, resulting in numerous casualties. Additionally, there have been frequent attacks on civilians travelling the EN1 (Mozambique’s sole highway from north to south) that were generally attributed to Renamo combatants.<sup>1</sup> In 2013, negotiations commenced with the Mozambican government,

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1 A. Vines, ‘Renamo’s Rise and Decline: The Politics of Reintegration in Mozambique’, *International Peacekeeping*, 20, 3 (2013), pp. 386–8.

resulting in significant changes to the electoral law, and a ceasefire that was signed in September 2014, allowing Renamo to participate in the national elections held on 15 October 2014. Renamo's 'resumption to hostilities was a political masterstroke',<sup>2</sup> an analyst commented, as the party gained 37 per cent of the parliamentary and presidential votes, compared with 16 per cent in the 2009 elections.<sup>3</sup> Renamo did not accept the outcome of the elections, however, and still has its combatants mobilised, and continues, at the time of writing, to negotiate with the Mozambican government.

Renamo's return to armed resistance should not be interpreted only in terms of an aggressive electoral strategy by an increasingly irrelevant political party, however. Mozambique's recent low-intensity war (as some have labelled it),<sup>4</sup> has been situated in larger patterns of political instability, shaped by growing disparities between rich and poor, by the unequal distribution of new sources of wealth due to the recent discovery of large offshore liquid gas reserves along the country's coastline, and by the founding of a new political party, Movimento Democrático de Moçambique (MDM), which has been able to disturb the country's political bipolarisation. Additionally, Renamo's return to violence has also been related to internal party dynamics, particularly a crisis of patronage within Renamo's leadership and tensions between former Renamo generals and Dhlakama.<sup>5</sup> Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork with former Renamo combatants in Maringue, Sofala province, which was conducted over the period 2008–2010, this article aims to contribute to the analysis by focusing on a topic hitherto ignored, namely the perspectives of former rank-and-file Renamo combatants, some of whom have apparently remobilised.<sup>6</sup>

Little is known about Renamo's current fighters. It has been reported that Renamo's ranks include new, young recruits,<sup>7</sup> but that these also involve combatants who fought during the civil war, probably including members of Renamo's so-called presidential guard. This article provides background information about one possible pool of Renamo recruits, its former low- and mid-ranked combatants. It presents an analysis of their post-war relationships with fellow veterans and with the Renamo leadership at the district level, thereby providing a novel analysis of post-war Renamo. Existing studies of post-war Renamo have analysed its transformation into a political party,<sup>8</sup> Alfonso Dhlakama's failure to establish a genuine

2 S. Allison, 'Think Again: Renamo's Renaissance, and Civil War as Election Strategy', Institute for Security Studies, 2014, available at <http://www.issafrica.org/iss-today/think-again-renamos-renaissance-and-civil-war-as-election-strategy>, retrieved 17 February 2015.

3 Centro de Integridade Pública (CIP) and European Parliamentarians with Africa (AWEPA), Maputo, 'Elections Results, 28 November 2014', *Mozambique Bulletin*, 56.

4 'Sem Diálogo a Guerra Vai Fazendo Mais Vítimas em Moçambique', online newspaper *A Verdade*, 15 January 2014, available at <http://www.verdade.co.mz/destaques/democracia/43263>, retrieved 16 January 2014.

5 J. Hanlon, 'Dhlakama Says Renamo Generals Threatened to Kill Him', *Mozambique News Reports and Clippings*, 14 April 2013.

6 My data are derived from almost two years of ethnographic fieldwork in Maringue, spread over the years 2008–2010, during which I also made several research trips to the neighbouring districts of Chemba, Caia and Ingaminga, and to the cities of Beira and Maputo. Data were gathered through participant observation, the collection of life histories and semi-structured interviews with more than 70 former Renamo combatants. Additional data were gathered during interviews with veterans' family members, political leaders, traditional authorities, and healer–diviners, and by 'being there', which allowed me to get a grasp of what social and family life, people's daily struggles, and social interactions meant in Maringue. Furthermore, I could follow on a day-to-day basis how political contingencies – for example, the visits of political figures, elections, and violent incidents – took place and were interpreted. All interviews were conducted by me; most were conducted in Portuguese; others were conducted in ChiSena with a translator. All names of the research participants are pseudonyms.

7 M. Cahen, review of Stephen A. Emerson, *The Battle for Mozambique: The Frelimo–Renamo Struggle (1977–1992)*, H-Luso-Africa (2015), available at <https://networks.h-net.org/node/7926/reviews/57489/cahen-stephen-emerson-battle-mozambique-frelimo-renamo-struggle-1977>, retrieved 15 January 2015.

8 C. Manning, 'Constructing Opposition in Mozambique: Renamo as a Political Party', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24, 1 (1998), pp. 161–89; M. Cahen, "'Dhlakama É Maningue Nice": An Atypical Former Guerrilla in the Mozambican Electoral Campaign', *Transformations*, 35 (1998), pp. 1–48.

opposition party,<sup>9</sup> and Renamo politicians' contestations of memory constructions.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, studies that specifically address Renamo veterans have not addressed former combatants' relationships with the Renamo political party.<sup>11</sup>

In other African contexts, ties between former combatants and their former military leaders have been the subject of investigation, as these former military networks are involved in myriad activities, such as electoral campaigning, illicit trade, private security, mining and renewed warfare.<sup>12</sup> This body of scholarship suggests that the ties between rank-and-file former combatants and their former commanders or other big men, are not merely based in the (former) military structures, but are also shaped by patronage relations, which in many African contexts are a central part of everyday existence, including military life.<sup>13</sup> This study critically engages with this debate, as I employ the notion of 'big-man dynamics' to describe social dynamics within Renamo networks. I argue that the positions of many ex-Renamo combatants in Maringue vis-à-vis the Renamo leadership was best characterised by 'waithood.'<sup>14</sup> I describe how ties within these networks were shaped by expectations and frustrations, as Renamo's local leaders were increasingly losing their legitimacy as 'big men'. Yet I also draw out the importance of Renamo networks in the ex-combatants' sense of belonging and their particular dynamics of loyalty, thereby showing the explanatory limits of 'big-man dynamics' in relation to post-war ties between rank-and-file Renamo veterans and the Renamo leadership.

The article starts by providing a brief historical introduction to Renamo, focusing predominantly on the post-war period. This is followed by a conceptual discussion of 'big man' and 'network', and how this can be used to analyse ex-Renamo combatants' relations with the former armed group. Then these relations are analysed according to four layers, each of which represents different social dynamics within the Renamo networks that I encountered in Maringue: first, Renamo veterans' relationships with fellow veterans; second, their relationships with former commanders; third, their ties with Renamo's political and military leaders; and fourth, veterans' conceptions of state-citizen relationships. The conclusion reflects on how this analysis may shed light on Renamo's remobilisation, and in particular rank-and-file veterans' reasons for joining this recent rebellion.

9 Vines, 'Renamo's Rise and Decline', pp. 385–6.

10 V. Igreja, 'Politics of Memory, Decentralisation and Recentralisation in Mozambique', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 39, 2 (2013), pp. 313–35.

11 J. Schafer, *Soldiers at Peace: Veterans and Society After the Civil War in Mozambique* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); B. Posthumus, *Struggles in Peacetime: Working with Ex-Combatants in Mozambique: Their Work, their Frustrations and their Successes*, (Amsterdam, NIZA, 2006).

12 M. Christensen and M. Utas, 'Mercenaries of Democracy: The "Politricks" of Remobilized Combatants in the 2007 General Elections, Sierra Leone', *African Affairs*, 107, 429 (2008), pp. 515–39; D. Hoffmann, 'The Meaning of a Militia: Understanding the Civil Defence Forces of Sierra Leone', *African Affairs*, 106, 425 (2007), pp. 639–62; M. Persson, 'Demobilization or Remobilization? Lingering Rebel Structures in Post-War Liberia', in M. Utas (ed.), *African Conflicts and Informal Power: Big Men and Networks* (London, Zed Books, 2012), pp. 101–18; W. Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1998); A. Singh, *Policing and Crime Control in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008); A. Themnér, 'Former Mid-Level Commanders in Big Man Networks', in Utas (ed.), *African Conflicts*, pp. 205–23.

13 Hoffmann, 'The Meaning of a Militia', p. 660. See also W. Murphy, 'Military Patrimonialism and Child Soldier Clientelism in the Liberian and Sierra Leonean Civil Wars', *African Studies Review*, 46, 2 (2003), pp. 61–87.

14 The term 'waithood' was coined by Dhillon and Yousef and recently picked up by Honwana, to describe 'waiting for adulthood'. I use 'waithood' in a different context, but equally aim to describe a position of actual or perceived suspension that prevents people from obtaining a (more) tolerable life. N. Dhillon and T. Yousef, *Generation in Waiting: The Unfulfilled Promise of Young People in the Middle East* (Washington DC, Brookings Institution Press, 2009); A. Honwana, *The Time of Youth: Work, Social Change, and Politics in Africa* (New York, Kumarian, 2012).

## Post-War Renamo

On 4 October 1992, Renamo's leader, Alfonso Dhlakama, and Mozambique's president, Joaquim Chissano, signed the General Peace Accords (GPA) in Rome, ending 16 years of armed conflict between the rebel movement, Renamo, and the Frelimo government, and stipulating Mozambique's first multi-party elections, in which Renamo was to participate as a political party. Supported by a UN Trust Fund, which provided approximately US\$17 million, Renamo had to transform itself from a military group into a national political party.<sup>15</sup> This was a great challenge, as Renamo had a weakly developed administrative and political wing, and had fairly few well-educated members who could be nominated as candidates for parliament.<sup>16</sup> On the eve of the 1994 elections, Renamo's position was uncertain, and it was not unusual for analysts to point out that: 'Renamo's prospects are [...] bleak given its infamous reputation for brutality during the civil war'.<sup>17</sup> Yet the former rebels surprised friend and foe by winning an average of 36 per cent of the vote in the presidential and parliamentary elections.

Contrary to depictions of Renamo as a group of 'armed bandits' or as proxies of Southern Rhodesia and later South Africa, the 1994 electoral results revealed that the rebels enjoyed a significant degree of support, especially in rural areas in central and northern Mozambique.<sup>18</sup> This support was mainly based on Renamo's opposition to highly unpopular policies implemented under Frelimo's radical post-independence 'total strategy' for modernising rural Mozambique.<sup>19</sup> In areas it controlled, Renamo re-installed the chiefs, employed traditional healers, and showed respect for 'tradition' and spiritual beings.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, in places such as Maringue, which had been under Renamo occupation for many years, the population's loyalty to the rebels also reflected certain expectations of what Renamo as a political party could do for people in the district. Renamo recruited nurses, teachers and politicians, who were promised paid jobs after the war.<sup>21</sup> Other inhabitants considered their wartime payments of food taxes and participation in forced marches as 'work', for which they expected to be rewarded.

In the 1999 elections, Renamo obtained an even higher percentage of the votes.<sup>22</sup> Many of the Renamo veterans who participated in my research regarded the 1999 elections as 'stolen by Frelimo', thereby suggesting structural electoral fraud by the ruling party.<sup>23</sup> By then, Renamo was regarded as a fairly successful example of a guerrilla movement that had

15 C. Giovanni Carbone, 'Continuidade na Renovação? Ten Years of Multiparty Politics in Mozambique: Roots, Evolution and Stabilisation of the Frelimo–Renamo Party System', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 43, 3 (2005), p. 436; Vines, 'Renamo's Rise and Decline', p. 381.

16 Manning, 'Constructing Opposition in Mozambique', p. 188.

17 M. Simpson, 'Foreign and Domestic Factors in the Transformation of Frelimo', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 31, 2 (1993), p. 336.

18 Manning, 'Constructing Opposition in Mozambique', p. 188.

19 M. Hall and T. Young, *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique Since Independence* (London, Hurst and Co, 1997), p. 216; M. Cahen, 'Check on Socialism in Mozambique – What Check? What Socialism?', *Review of African Political Economy*, 20, 57 (1993), pp. 46–59; C. Geffray, *La Cause des Armes au Mozambique: Antropologie d'un Guerre Civile* (Paris, Editions Karthala, 1990).

20 See, for example, J. Alexander, 'The Local State in Post-War Mozambique: Political Practice and Ideas about Authority', *Africa*, 67, 1 (1997), pp. 1–26; Geffray, *La Cause des Armes*; Hall and Young, *Confronting Leviathan*, pp. 54–60; M. Newitt, *A History of Mozambique* (London, Hurst and Co, 1995), pp. 547–9; H. West and S. Kloeck-Jensson, 'Betwixt and Between: "Traditional Authority" and Democratic Decentralization in Post-War Mozambique', *African Affairs*, 98, 393 (1999), pp. 456–8.

21 See also C. Manning, *The Politics of Peace in Mozambique: Post-Conflict Democratization 1992–2000* (Westport, Greenwood, 2002), pp. 90–91.

22 Carbone, 'Continuidade na Renovação?', p. 421.

23 Vines, 'Renamo's Rise and Decline', p. 383.

transformed itself into a political party, because it upheld a steady percentage of the votes, it offered reasonable opposition, and (until recently) did not resort to violence.<sup>24</sup>

Yet from the 1999 elections until those of 2014, Renamo's support diminished, and the party did not manage to challenge Frelimo's dominance significantly.<sup>25</sup> Its weakening was partly due to external factors, such as increasing support for Frelimo, which was credited for Mozambique's growing economy, and Frelimo's systematic use of state resources and influence over the electoral machine, which has obstructed the development of a reasonably level playing field.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, Frelimo implemented a skewed decentralisation process, in which rural (often Renamo) strongholds were excluded from locally elected governments.<sup>27</sup> Renamo's electoral defeats in turn contributed to the rise of MDM, a new party led by a former Renamo politician, Daviz Simango, who had been the mayor of Beira, a renowned Renamo stronghold. When Simango wanted to run for a second term as mayor in 2008, Dhlakama withdrew his support.<sup>28</sup> Simango then left Renamo and participated in the elections as an independent candidate. He won the municipal elections and subsequently founded the new political movement, MDM. Simango's and MDM's successes proved that Mozambique's political bipolarisation could be challenged,<sup>29</sup> although the national elections in 2014 restored the predominance of Frelimo and Renamo.

Two internal factors also contributed to Renamo's loss of legitimacy among former combatants, and probably other supporters as well. First, Renamo's incompetence as a political party<sup>30</sup> meant that it has not been able to articulate sophisticated policies or scrutinise the working of government.<sup>31</sup> This failure to become an effective political party has been attributed to the role of its leader, Afonso Dhlakama, who has ruled Renamo for more than 33 years.<sup>32</sup> In a 2013 article, Vines described Dhlakama as a guerrilla leader, running the party as a military movement with a highly centralised and personalised leadership. Dhlakama has been unable to modernise and democratise Renamo, and has marginalised several of its most skilful politicians (such as Daviz Simango), whom he regarded as potential threats.<sup>33</sup> Vines presents Dhlakama as an example of poor elite-level re-integration, while he stresses that Renamo's rank-and-file cadres were successfully integrated.<sup>34</sup> While I tend to agree with Vines' portrayal of Renamo's leader, an understanding of Renamo as a 'one-man show' obscures the relationships of dependency between Dhlakama and his followers, including the expectations and social tensions that these relationships entail. This ties into the second internal reason why Renamo is losing legitimacy in the eyes of its supporters, namely its inability to deliver wartime promises and to distribute resources to its followers. As Carbone notes, one of the party's weaknesses is that

24 Carbone, 'Continuidade na Renovação?', p. 421.

25 C. Manning, 'Mozambique's Slide into One-Party Rule', *Journal of Democracy*, 21, 2 (2010), pp. 151–65; Vines, 'Renamo's Rise and Decline', p. 383.

26 Manning, 'Mozambique's Slide', p. 152; Vines, 'Renamo's Rise and Decline', p. 383.

27 E. Braathen and A. Orre, 'Can Patrimonial Democracy Survive? The Case of Mozambique', *Forum for Development Studies*, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (2001), pp. 218–19; L. Buur, 'The Politics of Gradualismo: Popular Participation and Decentralised Governance in Mozambique', in O. Törnquist, K. Stokke and N. Webster (eds), *Rethinking Popular Representation* (New York, Palgrave, 2009), p. 100.

28 A. Nuvunga and J. Adalima, 'Mozambique Democratic Movement (MDM): An Analysis of a New Opposition Party in Mozambique', in *Studies on Political Parties and Democracy*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Mozambique (2011), available at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/mosambik/09174.pdf>, retrieved 15 February 2015.

29 It must be mentioned that Renamo boycotted the 2013 municipal elections, which significantly boosted MDM's votes.

30 Manning, 'Mozambique's Slide', p. 153.

31 Carbone, 'Continuidade na Renovação?', p. 439.

32 Cahen, "'Dhlakama É Maningue Nice!'", p. 25; Carbone, 'Continuidade na Renovação?', p. 431.

33 Vines, 'Renamo's Rise and Decline'; but see also Carbone, 'Continuidade na Renovação?', pp. 432–3, 439, and Manning, 'Mozambique's Slide'.

34 Vines, 'Renamo's Rise and Decline', p. 390.



its funds hardly trickle down to the districts, which makes it difficult to keep local structures functioning and, as I will show in further detail below, puts relationships of dependency between the leadership and veterans increasingly under strain.<sup>35</sup>

But to understand Renamo's position and the position of its veterans in Maringue, it is first important to note that, at the end of the war, the rebels' main military base was located in this area. Many demobilised combatants who, for various reasons, could not or would not return to their areas of origin settled in Maringue.<sup>36</sup> At the time of my fieldwork, it was estimated that approximately 3,000 former Renamo combatants were living in the district, the continuing presence of a Renamo military base making Maringue a safe haven for former Renamo combatants. In the GPA, it was agreed that Renamo could maintain a group of 'presidential guards' to guarantee the safety of the former rebels' leaders.<sup>37</sup> These guards were to be demobilised and incorporated into the national police after the 1994 elections, but this never happened. At the time of the fieldwork, Renamo still maintained an unknown number of 'presidential guards' at a military base in Maringue and in a few other places in Mozambique. It is likely that at least some of the 'presidential guards' joined Dhlakama in the recent armed resistance, as these were said to be trusted and well-trained men (as far as I know, all were men). In addition, Renamo maintained arms caches in several locations across the country, including in Maringue, although exact data on the quantity and conditions of these arms is hard to come by.<sup>38</sup> In reaction to Renamo's military presence, the government employed the allegedly Frelimo-allied rapid intervention force (*Força de Intervenção Rápida* – FIR) in Maringue and in several other districts known for 'trouble'. In this context political but also personal conflicts often hovered on the edge of violence and, especially at election time, many violent incidents were reported. Hence the findings presented in this article do not reflect the position of Renamo ex-combatants across Mozambique, but rather shed some light on the relationships between Renamo's (local) leadership and the party's most fervent supporters in the region where the former rebels returned to armed struggle.

## Big-Man Dynamics in Renamo

To grasp the relationships between Renamo veterans and the party's leadership, it is first necessary to understand what people in Maringue mean by 'political party' and 'political power'. This is disclosed by the words of the district leader of a minor party, who described Mozambique's political situation to me by sketching the following image: 'it is like two parties [*festas*]. One party has grilled chicken, Coke and Fanta. The other party has rice, sand and a simple curry. Where would you eat?'<sup>39</sup> With this remark, he stressed that there were only two relevant parties (*partidos*) in Mozambique, of which one (Frelimo) had most of the resources. A Frelimo member, also present at the conversation, added: 'at least we are all eating! And when you're a member of a party, you eat well. Look at that motorcycle'. He pointed to the political leader's shiny new bike, a symbol of luxury and status in Maringue. 'There is nothing wrong with people from parties eating well', he concluded.

35 Carbone, 'Continuidade na Renovação?', p. 431.

36 N. Wiegink, 'Why Did the Soldiers Not Go Home? Demobilized Combatants, Family Life and Witchcraft in Postwar Mozambique', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 86, 1 (Winter 2013), pp. 107–32.

37 Hall and Young, *Confronting Leviathan*, p. 216.

38 S. Faltas and W. Paes, *Brief 29: Exchanging Guns for Tools: The TAE Approach to Practical Disarmament – An Assessment of the TAE Project in Mozambique* (Bonn, BICC, 2004), pp. 11–12.

39 Informal conversation with political members of the Party for Peace, Democracy and Development (PDD) and Frelimo, Maringue, 10 November 2008.

Eating and food were recurrent themes in people's descriptions of their living conditions and politics in Maringue. In a place that has been ravaged by famine, and where food shortages are an annual occurrence, having enough to eat is one of the most pressing aspects of life. People also talked about eating as a reference to power. Witches are said to turn into hyenas at night and 'eat people', or to send snakes to your house to 'eat your money'.<sup>40</sup> Political leaders, meanwhile, are said to 'eat well', referring to both their physical corpulence and their personal aggrandisement. The notion of 'eating' is also commonly used to describe corruption and other misuses of state funds. This is captured in what Bayart has called '*politique du ventre*' (the politics of the belly), referring to the accumulation of wealth through political power, the symbolic reference to family lineage and witchcraft, and the physical corpulence of 'big men'.<sup>41</sup>

But as the two politicians suggested above, political power is not only about 'eating'; it is also about how powerful people – in this case, political leaders – distribute resources to their followers. It is accepted and expected that leaders of political parties use their powerful positions and funds (predominantly state funds, but also donors' money) to reward their supporters, creating relationships of reciprocity and dependency. Corruption and the misuse of state funds are thus tolerated, as long as the gains are divided through the logic of patronage and so benefit the entire network. These traits have been widely observed in African political systems and have been analysed using notions such as clientelism, patronage, big-man dynamics, and (neo)patrimonialism, all of which, in one way or another, are intended to describe the interconnectedness of the formal and the informal.<sup>42</sup> In this article, I deploy the concepts of 'big man' and network as used in Utas's edited volume on conflict and informal power in Africa as a starting point to capture the dynamics between Renamo's political leaders and their followers.<sup>43</sup> Simultaneously, however, I will draw out some of the limitations of these concepts for explaining ex-combatants post-war loyalties toward Renamo, since they fail to explain fully their continuing loyalty to a party that has nothing to 'eat'.

'Big man' is a term with local resonance. In Maringue, people would refer to '*os grandes*' ('the big ones'), when talking about people in certain powerful, often political, positions. But the main reason to employ the notion of big man is its analytical usefulness. Marshall Sahlins famously described big men in Melanesia as individuals with personal power that is the outcome of a series of acts that 'elevate a person above the common herd and attract about him a coterie of loyal, lesser men'.<sup>44</sup> In other words, these are not official or inherited positions, but are achieved, changeable and context-dependent. Utas situates big men in strategic positions between (state) institutions and the population, which allows them to distribute resources to their followers, thereby creating 'loose social webs based on the ability to gather followers'.<sup>45</sup> Big men are therefore part of informal structures of economic and political power, which are parallel to and intertwined with formal structures.<sup>46</sup>

40 Wiegink, 'Why Did the Soldiers Not Go Home?', p. 117.

41 J.F. Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of The Belly* (New York, Longman, 1993); J. Bayart, S. Ellis and B. Hibou, *The Criminalization of the State in Africa* (Oxford, James Currey, 1999).

42 P. Chabal and J. Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (Oxford, James Currey, 1999); J. Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2006); A. Pitcher, M. Moran and M. Johnston, 'Rethinking Patrimonialism and Neopatrimonialism in Africa', *African Studies Review*, 52, 1 (2009), pp. 125–56; Reno, *Warlord Politics*; M. Utas, 'Introduction: Bigmanity and Network Governance in African Conflicts', in Utas (ed.), *African Conflicts*, pp. 1–34.

43 Utas, 'Introduction'. For Utas, the term 'big men' is gender neutral, as women can also occupy positions of big men.

44 M. Sahlins, 'Poor Man, Rich Man, Big-Man, Chief: Political Types in Melanesia and Polynesia', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 5, 3 (1963), p. 289.

45 Utas, 'Introduction', p. 8.

46 J. Daloz, "'Big Men" in Sub-Saharan Africa: How Elites Accumulate Positions and Resources', *Comparative Sociology*, 2, 1 (2003), pp. 271–85.



Relationships between big men and followers are in many ways similar to patron–client ties, which are vertical and asymmetrical relationships, in which one partner is quite different from the other in position and obligations.<sup>47</sup> Followers' contributions to these relationships are often intangible, and may include loyalty, political support and information. The big man, meanwhile, may offer concrete forms of support, such as economic benefits and protection.<sup>48</sup> In a context like Maringue, such relationships go well beyond economic considerations, as the capacity to maintain a social network of dependents also shapes people's social status.<sup>49</sup>

Following Utas, I situate big men and their followers in networks, in which big men can be regarded as brokers, nodes in a network that comprises them and other, perhaps bigger, men.<sup>50</sup> Networks are regarded as unstable, changing and adaptable, and as comprising individuals with very different reasons for participating in them.<sup>51</sup> The post-war transformations of former military networks illustrate not only the salience of these ties, but also their adaptability. As we will see, positions in these networks are not fixed: big men may lose their legitimacy, and followers may establish ties with other big men. This leads Utas to conclude that big men's positions are fragile and temporary, 'as loyalty must continuously be reinforced and dissatisfaction among followers may have grave consequences for his authority'.<sup>52</sup>

Applying the concept of big-man and network dynamics to the former Renamo military networks is useful, as it allows for an analysis of ex-Renamo combatants who participate, as followers and as big men, in a variety of unstable horizontal and vertical relationships, which are informally and formally situated in a political party structure and in Maringue's political context at large. Additionally, these concepts draw attention to relationships of dependency and corresponding expectations and frustrations.

However, there are also certain limitations to the big-man or patronage paradigm for understanding the social workings of Renamo networks in Maringue. First of all, the work of Utas and others who have developed patronage or big-man dynamics as a lens through which to view social dynamics within (former) armed groups is based mainly on research conducted in West Africa.<sup>53</sup> The armed groups researched in these studies differ from Renamo in objectives, wider conflict context, funding and time-frame, to name just a few factors. Utas's focus on flexibility is based largely on warlord dynamics and shifting alliances in Liberia (and elsewhere), which do not reflect (post-) civil-war dynamics in Mozambique. As I will show further on, feelings of belonging and affinity, and the factor of time – most ex-combatants I interviewed had been 'with Renamo' for more than 30 years – are additional elements that are imperative for understanding the continuation of Renamo networks. Moreover, a strong focus on relationships of dependency risks depicting (former) combatants as 'rational utility maximisers', thereby down-playing political motivations for being part of a (former) armed group.<sup>54</sup> With these caveats in mind, the following

47 G. Foster, 'The Dyadic Contract in Tzintzuntzan, II: Patron–Client Relationships', *American Anthropologist*, 65, 6 (1963), pp. 1280–94; I. Käihkö, 'Big Man Bargaining in African Conflicts', in Utas (ed.), *African Conflicts*, p. 187.

48 Utas, 'Introduction'.

49 See also Hoffman, 'The Meaning of a Militia', p. 651.

50 Utas, 'Introduction', p. 9.

51 M. Duffield, 'War as a Network Enterprise: The New Security Terrain and Its Implications', *Cultural Values*, 6, 1–2 (2002), p. 154; Utas, 'Introduction', pp. 13–14.

52 Utas, 'Introduction', p. 7.

53 The studies in Utas (ed.), *African Conflicts* draw largely on research conducted in west and central Africa concerning armed conflicts since the 1990s. See also: Hoffman, 'The Meaning of a Militia'; Murphy, 'Military Patrimonialism'.

54 There has been recent critique of the portrayal of (ex-) combatants in academia as well as in disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration programmes. See, for example, S. Baas, *From Civilians to Soldiers and from Soldiers to Civilians: Mobilization and Demobilization in Sudan* (Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2012); J. Munive, 'Context Matters: The Conventional DDR Template is Challenged in South Sudan', *International Peacekeeping*, 20, 5 (2013), p. 587.

sections present a layered analysis of Renamo networks, subsequently discussing veterans' relationships with other veterans, with former commanders, and with political party leaders.

## The Colleagues of the Trenches

I arrived home. There I found that my parents had died. I was troubled. I did not even feel safe any more, to live in a zone without direct family members. I left. [...] I grew up in the war, and I got used to being with other soldiers like me. At my home, I did not see anyone who could take care of me. So, I chose to live here [Maringue], with my colleagues of the trenches.<sup>55</sup>

These are the words of Olivia, a thin woman with an aggressive way of talking, whom I interviewed in Maringue. Olivia could not tell me how old she was when Renamo captured her. She grabbed her breasts and said: '*nkabe*' (ChiSena for 'no' or 'not'), meaning she did not yet have breasts when she entered the rebel movement. After demobilisation in Maringue, Olivia travelled to her district of origin, Mossurize (Manica province), where she found out that her parents had died. Even though other relatives received her well, Olivia did not feel safe living without direct family members, and decided to return to Maringue. She said that she had grown up in the war, and it was in the company of other ex-combatants that she felt safe and 'taken care of'.

Olivia's story is typical of many former combatants whom I met in Maringue. On their return to their places of origin, many demobilised combatants found that their families had disappeared, that family arrangements had changed, or that their relatives had expectations the veterans could not meet. Their families and home villages proved to be insecure environments, prompting the ex-combatants to settle elsewhere, away from their kin.<sup>56</sup> They did not reside just anywhere, however, but chose a familiar place instead. In many cases, ex-combatants were acquainted with Maringue, as they had been stationed in Renamo's headquarters during the war. In the wake of war, the district also offered military security, access to fertile land, and assurance of remobilisation if the armed conflict flared up again. Most ex-combatants, however, said that being in the company of fellow veterans had been their principal reason for settling in Maringue.

Co-participation in war seems to generate a sense of belonging and comradeship among combatants.<sup>57</sup> As Grossmann has noted, sharing highly stressful times together and risking one's life in the pursuit of common goals (be they ideological or criminal) creates a particular connection between combatants that 'is a hell of a lot stronger than the bond between husband and wife'.<sup>58</sup> What happens to this 'strong bond' when the guns are put down? Evaristo, a former combatant and president of a veterans' association, theorised that former combatants appreciate the company of other former combatants because they feel comfortable talking to each other. He described his view as follows: 'there are ghosts that creep up on us. With a friend of the war you can talk about it. "Do you remember that time when the war was hot? When that guy tried to kill me?"'<sup>59</sup> Yet the significance of a shared war past is not limited to being able to talk about traumatic experiences. It may be quite the opposite: that someone

55 Interview with Olivia, a former Renamo combatant, Maringue, 4 August 2009.

56 Wiegink, 'Why Did the Soldiers Not Go Home?'

57 E. Ben-Ari, *Mastering Soldiers: Conflict, Emotions, and The Enemy in an Israeli Military Unit* (New York, Berghahn Books, 1998), pp. 98–101; E. Finley, *Fields of Combat: Understanding PTSD Among Veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2011); D. Grossmann, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (Boston, Little, Brown, 1995), p. 90; S. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 46.

58 Grossman, *On Killing*, p. 90.

59 Interview with Evaristo, a former Forças Armadas de Moçambique (FAM) combatant and member of the association of disabled veterans, Maputo, 16 December 2008.

understands your experiences without your having to explain them.<sup>60</sup> During informal meetings in Maringue, the former combatants recalled predominantly glorious and adventurous aspects of the war, in which they found a sense of pride, good cheer and nostalgia. Indeed, the sense of shared identity may be attributable to the sharing of fond recollections rather than traumatic ones.

The ties of friendship between Renamo veterans were most clearly visible in their participation in drinking clubs. During the years of fieldwork, I followed a group of veterans living in the neighbourhood referred to as '*a margem de Nhamapaza*' (the bank of the Nhamapaza river), a relatively rural, poor area close to Maringue town. Each time I visited the *margem*, I encountered the same group of 10–12 former Renamo combatants in someone's courtyard, sitting in the shade of a tree and sharing *nipa* (an alcoholic beverage brewed from corn) or some other kind of home-brewed liquor. As scholars such as Finley and Schafer have noted, excessive drinking is a common trait among veterans of many wars, whether to numb memories of war or to escape the situation of enduring daily hardship.<sup>61</sup> In Maringue, alcohol consumption is also a social event that underlines friendship or bonds of trust. When I asked about relations between Renamo and Frelimo, people often said 'there was nothing bad', and, to illustrate this point, they would say 'you can often see them drinking together'.<sup>62</sup> This was mere rhetoric, however, as social drinking did not, in reality, cross political divides. Yet for the Renamo veterans these drinking clubs were the principal manifestation of their ties of friendship, and such gatherings made me realise that bonds established during the war were integral to the social network of former Renamo combatants in the *margem* and in Maringue town in general. On many occasions, I observed how Renamo veterans offered each other assistance in building houses or harvesting crops, and in times of acute sickness, bereavement, and urgent need. These horizontal ties to fellow veterans thus offered a network of support for Renamo combatants in their daily struggles, based on interdependency and reciprocity, and simultaneously offered a sense of belonging.

## Former Commanders as Gatekeepers

Former Renamo combatants also maintained ties with higher-placed Renamo members. These relationships often resembled the former military hierarchy, but were also endowed with new meanings in the post-war era. The position of former Renamo commanders is illustrative in this respect. Similar to what Themnér observed in Sierra Leone, the positions of mid-level commanders in veterans' networks in Maringue could be characterised as those of gatekeepers and intermediaries, who are 'jealously guarding access' to ex-combatants, as they 'intuitively' sense that such access to ex-combatants may be an economic and political asset.<sup>63</sup> Themnér describes these mid-level ex-commanders as brokers who occupy a position in between rank-and-file ex-combatants and big men in political and military elite groups, for whom ex-combatants may serve as workers, personal security guards, or fighters, in the event of renewed warfare.

During the first months of fieldwork in Maringue, I met several former commanders who exemplified this broker position. One of them was *comandante* Matateo, a former Renamo commander, who 'guarded access' to ex-Renamo combatants in the *margem* of the Nhamapaza river. He even determined my own access to ex-Renamo combatants' networks.

60 See also Finley, *Fields of Combat*.

61 *Ibid.*; Schafer, *Soldiers at Peace*, p. 109.

62 Interview with Fernanda, inhabitant of Maringue, Maringue, 10 November 2008.

63 Themnér, 'Former Mid-Level Commanders in Big Man Networks', p. 208.

On my first visit to the *margem*, a group of Renamo veterans received me with suspicion and aggression. One of the veterans said during this first meeting: 'you cannot talk to us before you talk to *comandante* Matateo'.<sup>64</sup> In our first conversation, Matateo immediately acknowledged his gatekeeper position over these Renamo veterans. 'I'm the *chefe* [boss] of the former combatants', he said to me. 'The Renamo delegate does not know of your work here. What are you doing? Does the administration know you're here?'<sup>65</sup> Matateo's questioning made his position as a broker apparent, inserted between the veterans' community and the Renamo political party leadership, and perhaps also the district government. He would not bear the sole responsibility for a white woman talking to Renamo veterans in Maringue, because *desmobilizados*' issues were regarded as politically sensitive, at the time of my research. My presence had to be confirmed by his superiors. With their approval (which I had already obtained), Matateo said that I could 'walk around as I pleased' and talk to people in the *margem*, but he also suggested that he, or someone of his choosing, should accompany me on my visits to Renamo veterans' homes.

The veterans' loyalty to Matateo was not, however, born of his prior military rank or feelings of affinity that had built up during the war.<sup>66</sup> Matateo had not been their actual commander; rather, he had been a high-ranking Renamo combatant who 'really hit it in the war, with big arms'.<sup>67</sup> After the war, Matateo continued to work at Renamo's military base, and also occupied a position within the local Renamo party structure. He was called '*comandante*' largely due to his post-war position within the party and his relationships of dependency with the rank-and-file veterans. Similar to what Hoffman observed among the Sierra Leonean civil defence forces, military titles received a different meaning in the post-war period, as they were used to 'map patronage networks'.<sup>68</sup> Thus, while there is no doubt that Matateo's wartime rank contributed to his big-man status, his position was shaped even more by his post-war ties to the Renamo political party and military wing. Matateo was responsible for the 'social issues of *desmobilizados*', including the registration of former Renamo combatants in Maringue, which some veterans regarded as a first step toward securing a veteran's pension. This strengthened Matateo's relationships of dependency with the rank-and-file veterans in the *margem*, as he was presumed to be in charge of distributing pensions in the event that such funds became available. For the ex-combatants, a relationship with brokers like Matateo was essential, as it provided them with links to the party, the Renamo military wing, and possible and expected material benefits.

### 'When We Win, It Will Be Our Turn to Eat'

In this section, I focus on Renamo veterans' positions, benefits and expectations vis-à-vis Renamo's party leaders. Here it is also necessary to differentiate between the positions of rank-and-file veterans and veterans of higher ranks. Higher-positioned Renamo veterans, such as former commanders, generals and politicians, had more opportunities to carve out positions for themselves as big men or brokers, as they were more likely to be employed in Renamo's party structure or in its military wing, which provided them with both status and (temporary) job opportunities.

To illustrate the post-war possibilities of higher-ranked veterans, I introduce Efrain, a former Renamo commander, who was recruited at the age of 14. Because he could read and

64 Group meeting with former Renamo combatants, Maringue, 3 October 2008.

65 Conversation with Matateo, former Renamo commander, Maringue, 3 October 2008.

66 Cf. Themnér, 'Former Mid-Level Commanders in Big Man Networks', p. 209.

67 *Ibid.*

68 Hoffmann, 'The Meaning of a Militia', p. 651.

write, Efrain was deployed in 1986 in the secretariat of the rebels' leadership. After the GPA was signed, Efrain became part of a small, privileged circle of Renamo members involved in establishing the political party, and worked as a courier between Maringue and Maputo. Although he always complained that he did too much work for too little payment, he realised that he was in an advantageous position compared to his fellow Renamo veterans in Maringue. Yet over different fieldwork periods, I saw him become more and more pessimistic about Renamo, which was, in his opinion, not 'taking care' of its people, a trend that began, again in Efrain's opinion, in the wake of the war. 'Dhlakama made mistakes with us, [those] who were with him in the bush. He put *dotores* [doctors – educated people] within the party. They came from outside and were in fact Frelimo. But what he should have done is send us to school', he reflected.<sup>69</sup> His testimony illustrated two crucial aspects of big-man dynamics in party networks. First of all, Dhlakama should have taken care of the people loyal to him, in this case ex-commanders who fought with him in the war. Second, Efrain reasoned that this would have provided Dhlakama with loyal party members. He suspected that the 'educated people' whom Dhlakama employed were secretly 'with Frelimo' and were contributing to the decline of Renamo. In Efrain's view, Dhlakama was not taking care of his followers, which diminished his legitimacy and power as a big man. Later in our conversation, Efrain also hinted at the possibility that Dhlakama had secretly aligned himself to Frelimo. This was a common rumour in Mozambique, implying that Dhlakama was deliberately keeping Renamo weak, which contributed to Frelimo's political dominance.

Like other Renamo veterans, Efrain often contemplated changing his loyalty to Frelimo. 'Maybe I can get 8,000 [*meticais*] from the administrator of Maringue', he told me one day, while we were having a Coca-Cola at one of Maringue's drinking stalls. He hinted about applying to the District Development Fund, the so-called 'seven million', which he would receive only if he left Renamo. Yet, over the course of the fieldwork, he never 'deserted' the party. Like most Renamo veterans, he continued to wait for the Renamo leadership to reward him properly.

But whereas Efrain had a steady job and occupied a powerful position in the local party structure, most former Renamo combatants demobilised as simple rank-and-file combatants, and had few employment possibilities in either Renamo's military wing or its political structure. For them, participation in relationships of dependency with higher-placed Renamo members yielded largely intangible, but none the less valued, benefits, such as protection, social security and the promise of material wealth. Their positions were characterised by 'waiting' and, increasingly, by frustration. Ex-Renamo combatants in Maringue would frequently illustrate their political position by saying: 'when Renamo wins the elections, it will be our turn to eat'. Ex-Renamo combatants felt that their wartime services and post-war loyalty entitled them to certain rewards, which they would receive only when their party came to power, as it is the ruling party that is in a position to 'eat'. Caetano, a former Renamo combatant in his 50s, expressed these feelings as follows:

Frelimo is paying the *antigos combatentes* [veterans of the liberation war] because they are in power. Now Renamo is not able to pay because the party is not in power. [...] The money the party gets is not enough to pay the pension. And this is how we remain; we live like this, we live in poverty, in disgrace. [...] We want our party to win but we don't have luck.<sup>70</sup>

Renamo ex-combatants in Maringue expected the political party, and Dhlakama in particular, to take care of them after the war. Such expectations were born of a mixture of promises made

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Efrain, former Renamo combatant, Maputo, 12 October 2010.

<sup>70</sup> Interview with Caetano, former Renamo combatant, Maringue, 26 November 2008.



during the war, the post-war continuation of dependency relationships, and policies regarding *antigos combatentes*, who receive pensions and other benefits from the state. These expectations, however, were not met, because Renamo did not have the means to reward the veterans, or chose to allocate resources in a different way. Yet despite Renamo's leaders' inability to take care of them, most veterans I met in Maringue remained loyal to Renamo.

The dynamics of this loyalty are well illustrated by the story of former Renamo politician Oscar, a fragile, trembling man, but with a resolute voice. He recounted how Frelimo members had tried to 'buy him'. 'They [the Frelimo members] said: "sir, you are in a sad situation, you are sick and your wife ran away with someone from Renamo. That is what they [Renamo] did for you. We can help you"', Oscar recalled. 'But here they mixed up social things with politics', he added determinedly. 'I'm strong and I know what I stand for'. On some days, however, his convictions were not so strong. Oscar knew that it was unlikely that he would get better or that he would return to work for Renamo. In fact, he felt forgotten and bitter. The district Renamo leaders rarely visited and he never received any financial aid from the party.<sup>71</sup> One afternoon in August 2009, with the national elections fast approaching, Oscar and I were sitting on a mat in his courtyard. We heard drums and singing in the distance. 'It's Simango's party' [MDM], Oscar explained. 'They are celebrating at Silvo's house'. I had known Silvo as a person who leaned slightly toward Renamo, but, like many people, especially Renamo supporters, he had joined the newly founded MDM. 'So he [Silvo] also went with them. What about you?' I asked Oscar, bearing in mind his feelings of betrayal by Renamo. Oscar's reply was defiant, 'I won't. Dhlakama is my father. I came to him when I was a boy. The son who doesn't get along with the father goes to the uncle. Simango is the uncle. It is not bad to go to the uncle, but I will see what the father can give me. I will still wait some time'.<sup>72</sup>

Ex-Renamo combatants often said that they were 'waiting', 'waiting for some things', or that they 'had to have patience', when asked about their relations with the party. As noted, this was an issue not only for ex-combatants but a general expectation of Renamo supporters and, in particular, of people who lived and 'worked' under Renamo rule during the war. The leadership was well aware of the expectations and the increasing frustrations among its supporters, ex-combatants and non-combatants alike. On a visit to Maringue in 2009, Dhlakama pleaded for patience and perseverance. 'It is like a woman in labour, she is suffering', Dhlakama said during his public speech in the centre of Maringue town. 'You, being Renamo, are suffering. But after labour the new mother is satisfied. She has a baby. Have patience!'<sup>73</sup> Election time stirred up the hopes of some Renamo veterans and thus reinforced ties between the veterans and the party. But to most veterans it was apparent that Renamo's electoral prospects were bleak. Several felt that their patience had been tested enough; in Maringue a number of higher-ranked Renamo veterans 'switched sides' and joined either Frelimo or MDM. The former Renamo combatants in Maringue spoke of their fellow veterans 'being bought' by Frelimo. Some switched sides openly, but most 'disappeared' with their families to set up a life elsewhere, probably with a significant sum of money.

On one occasion during fieldwork in Maringue, Renamo's presidential guards caught 'one of their own', who apparently had been 'bought' by Frelimo and had plans to leave Maringue. They buried the man in sand, leaving only his head sticking out of the ground. He was left in this position for one night. This was portrayed in the media as an example of Renamo's

71 Conversations with Oscar, former Renamo politician, Maringue, 5 September and 1 October 2008.

72 Conversation with Oscar, former Renamo politician, Maringue, 7 October 2009.

73 Observations during visit of Dhlakama to the village of Maringue, 18 August 2009.

'savage' nature.<sup>74</sup> But what this case of violent revenge makes even more apparent is Renamo's powerlessness, as it could not prevent Frelimo from 'buying' Renamo members. This case exemplifies Renamo's 'crisis of patrimonialism',<sup>75</sup> revealing the party's incapacity to reward its followers, and thereby losing support. Furthermore, these defections show that Renamo and Frelimo do not exist in separate worlds, but rather that the parties compete with unequal amounts of leverage to maintain networks of patronage. But again, most Renamo combatants did not switch sides; they remained loyal, 'waiting' for 'their time to eat'. Thus while those switching from Renamo to Frelimo show that these networks, as Utas and others have underlined, are fluid, and that alliances between big men and followers are changeable, this flexibility should not obscure the other factors, such as feelings of belonging, at play within these networks. This leads my analysis to a consideration of marginalisation and conceptualisations of citizenship.

### **'Only a Bit Mozambican': Imagining Citizenship and Democracy**

The participation of Renamo's former rank-and-file combatants in Renamo networks was shaped not only by individual relationships between big men and followers, but also by a particular understanding of state–citizen relationships, and corresponding expectations of what would happen if Renamo came to power. In this section, I will explain how the state was imagined by many ex-combatants in Maringue as an 'exclusive caretaker', highlighting the state's ability to exclude as well as to reward specific groups of people. This conceptualisation of state–citizen relations informed, to a large extent, the former Renamo combatants political discourse, and – in some cases – their imaginings of any possible new rebellion against the Frelimo government.

Renamo's sense of marginalisation at the hands of the Frelimo state is exemplified by the way the Renamo veterans regarded the allocation of the District Development Fund, the so-called 'seven million'. The following remark made by Zacharias, one of Renamo's leaders in Maringue, illustrates this sense of exclusion:

A friend of mine handed in a project for the seven million. It was not approved because he is my friend; he is not even a member of Renamo. They want to keep the money within the party. The President [Armando Guebuza] said that projects have to go to the poorest people in society, and there are many of those in Maringue. But that does not happen; the money goes to those who have a [Frelimo membership] card.<sup>76</sup>

Perhaps this particular project was declined for reasons other than the applicant's friendship with Zacharias, but I heard many similar stories about Renamo members or people associated with Renamo being excluded from these funds. Taken together, these stories suggest that funds were distributed along political lines, strengthening patrimonial ties between the local district government, the local wing of the Frelimo party, and Frelimo members in Maringue. While exclusion from state resources is not limited to people associated with Renamo, former rebels in Maringue interpreted these exclusionary practices along political lines. This is well illustrated by the words of ex-Renamo combatant Caetano. He, his wife, and their five children lived in dire poverty. The family did not have enough money for clothing and school supplies, and, while they sustained themselves with food from

74 Televisão de Moçambique news item, 22 July 2009; telephone conversation with Vinte, former FAM combatant and member of ProPaz (an association of former combatants that implements conflict-resolution projects), Beira, 22 July 2009.

75 P. Richards, *Fighting for the Rainforest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone* (Oxford, James Currey, 1996).

76 Interview with Zacharias, Renamo politician, Maringue, 29 August 2008.

their *machamba* and an occasional donation from the Catholic Church, they regularly experienced periods of food shortage. Caetano reflected on this situation in relation to wider policies and debates about poverty:

When President Guebuza says, 'we want to stop absolute poverty', I doubt this. He says so, but he will not achieve this. Why, you will ask me. Because the soldiers of Renamo are only a little bit Mozambican [*são pouco Moçambicano*]. During ONUMOZ [the UN mission in Mozambique that organised the disarmament and demobilisation process], we ate together with those of Frelimo. We all ate the same. I was receiving here and he was receiving the same on the other side. Now ONUMOZ has left, and the government of Frelimo is not able to maintain equality. They pay one part, but the rest they do not. Is that how we will stop poverty? If Renamo does not win the elections the *desmobilizados* will die like this, in a life of disgrace. [...] How do you think a former combatant feels who suffered and now has to suffer again to feed his children? While someone from the other party receives [subsidy, salary, pension] and his children can go to school? That is not a good situation. But I stay calm. I do as my leader [Dhlakama] tells me to do and stay calm. I don't demand anything. I don't take up a gun. We'll wait for the elections.<sup>77</sup>

As Mozambique is one of the world's poorest countries, discourses on the eradication of absolute poverty shape politics at both national and local levels. For people like Caetano, however, these discourses are meaningless, as he knows he will never get 'paid', because, for him and many other Renamo veterans, the wrong party is in power. These veterans are aware that they do not fall into the privileged category and are thus not eligible to share in the government's resources. This understanding of the political situation fuelled veterans' references to possible renewed violence, and shaped their imaginings of statehood.

While some Renamo veterans spoke about this exclusion in fairly mild terms, musing that things were 'not completely all right', others used far stronger language. Despite Caetano's claims of remaining peaceful, he said, at a later moment in the same interview, 'who provokes a cobra has to know: this is an animal that can bite'.<sup>78</sup> Renamo's potential for renewed violence came up occasionally in conversations with Renamo veterans in Maringue, especially when the discussion touched upon the state's or Frelimo's differential, at times violent, treatment of certain citizens. Almost all of the demobilised Renamo combatants who were interviewed for this study said that they did not want to 'go back to the bush', but sometimes the combination of poverty, feelings of exclusion and the sense of an increasingly hopeless political future seemed to trigger the consideration of 'taking up a gun' again. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to make any conclusive statements on the individual motivations of the remobilised Renamo fighters, Renamo's recent revolt has been generally seen, at least partly, as a response to Frelimo's exclusionary practices.<sup>79</sup>

Caetano's words reveal not only how poverty is interpreted in terms of continuing animosities between Renamo and Frelimo, but also how it fuelled the veterans' conceptualisation of the state as an exclusive caretaker. This perception is connected, first and foremost, to the experience of soldiering and of being a veteran. Ex-Renamo combatants in Maringue often compared themselves with *antigos combatentes*, and expressed the view that Renamo veterans should be treated with equal dignity and be taken care of by the state, because they consider themselves 'the fighters for democracy'. This image of the state as a caretaker was further strengthened by Renamo's wartime promises of benefits for its veterans, and by the demobilisation process as it was executed by ONUMOZ. As Caetano said, 'during ONUMOZ, we ate together with those of Frelimo. We all ate the same'. Ex-Renamo

<sup>77</sup> Interview with Caetano, former Renamo combatant, Maringue, 20 October 2008.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> G.A. Dzinesa and D. Motsamai, 'Renamo's War Talk and Mozambique's Peace Prospects', Institute for Security Studies, *Policy Brief* 50, December 2013, p. 2, available at <http://www.issafrica.org/uploads/PolBrief50.pdf>, retrieved 15 May 2015.

combatants often claimed that during the ONUMOZ mission they were ‘taken care of’, as they received clothing, tools, and a bi-monthly allowance. In their eyes, ONUMOZ had acted as the state, and this had shaped their ideas about how veterans should be treated by the government.

But while Caetano and other Renamo veterans spoke of the lack of equity between people who are ‘with Frelimo’ and people who are ‘with Renamo’, their imaginings of the state did not necessarily involve equal citizenship for all Mozambicans. On the contrary, they imagined state–citizen relations in terms of exclusivity. References to exclusivity should thus be seen not only as a criticism of the workings of the state, but as a fundamental feature of Renamo veterans’ imaginings of state–citizen relations and democracy. They expected exclusionary practices also from Renamo, if it were to come to power; then they would be the ones to ‘eat’. For Caetano and many others, democracy effectively means that the winning party has four years of power to reward its supporters. References to democracy are thus not necessarily related to a coherent set of government practices and ideologies, but refer rather to patrimonial understandings of the distribution of resources and power. For Renamo veterans, ‘democracy’ implies a political system that promises ‘the good life’ when their party wins the elections. This provides further insight into why veterans maintain their ties to the Renamo leadership: they are waiting for their ‘time to eat’.

## Conclusion

Renamo’s recent upsurge has shown, in an unfortunate way, that an understanding of former combatants’ re-integration processes from the perspective of the veterans themselves is more relevant than ever. This article has demonstrated that ex-Renamo combatants’ post-war social lives were deeply intertwined with former military networks, comprising not only fellow veterans but also the Renamo political party and Renamo’s military wing. These networks consist of a mesh of horizontal ties between fellow veterans and vertical ties between rank-and-file veterans and big men, often their former commanders and politicians. Participation in such networks provides Renamo veterans with social and physical security, a sense of belonging and, for some, social mobility and economic benefits. In this sense, these networks contributed much to the re-integration of the former Renamo combatants into post-war politics. This article has also highlighted the instability of these networks, however, and the way in which Renamo’s leaders were losing legitimacy as big men, as they were increasingly unable to reward their followers, resulting in dissatisfaction and frustration among the latter. But while some former Renamo combatants joined either Frelimo or the MDM, the position of most rank-and-file Renamo veterans regarding Renamo’s leaders could be characterised as ‘waiting for their time to eat’. This waiting is partly explained by relationships of dependency between ‘big’ Renamo men and rank-and-file followers, but is shaped also by habit, affinity, and the sense of belonging that have been established over time.

The accounts of ex-Renamo combatants in Maringue cannot explain why and how Renamo’s recent revolt came to pass, nor do they reveal much about Renamo’s current ranks, for which more research needs to be done with Renamo in central Mozambique. But they do provide some clues to understanding the motivations of those former Renamo combatants who have joined Dhlakama in ‘the bush’. These motivations are likely to have been shaped by veterans’ loyalties, frustrations, and expectations regarding the (local) Renamo party, including possible hope of being demobilised again and being ‘taken care of’ by the state. Additionally, these motivations are formed in a political context that is, from the veterans’ perspective, characterised by marginalisation at the hands of a Frelimo-dominated

government. Thus, while Renamo's recent armed struggle stems from a mixture of factors, over which rank-and-file Renamo veterans have little influence, on an individual level their remobilisation may offer novel opportunities in their search for a tolerable life.

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