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Elections in Mozambique

A smooth journey, or a hurdle to skip?

Nelson Alusala

Recommendations

1 Mozambicans should carefully take stock of the potential post-election security challenges that the country may face, especially with regard to the opposition parties.

2 Both the government and Renamo should renounce armed violence and commit to the outcome of the ongoing negotiations with a clear disarmament and reintegration process for Renamo rebels.

3 A peaceful outcome in the forthcoming election could save lives and possibly result in a post-conflict peace and reconstruction roadmap for the entire country.

4 Afonso Dhlakama should show leadership and character, even if it becomes apparent that he might be defeated in the forthcoming election.

5 In all aspects, the parties should agree on some form of security guarantee to ensure post-conflict peacebuilding processes are preserved.

Summary

Mozambique's fifth democratic election is due to take place in October 2014. Until June 2014, it appeared as if Renamo would escalate its armed resistance against Frelimo, the ruling party, because of alleged unfulfilled terms of the 1992 peace agreement. Now it emerges that Renamo has a renewed interest in a negotiated ceasefire to enable its leader, Afonso Dhlakama, to participate as a presidential candidate. Within this positive development, it is crucial to ensure that the newly established peace continues after the election. The stakeholders of the political process must consider potential post-election security challenges: especially the reaction of the opposition parties. Whether Renamo wins or loses, the parties ought to put measures in place that would respond to the demands of remaining Renamo rebels in a sustainable manner.

THE MOZAMBICAN presidential election, due to take place in October 2014, is an important moment in a tenuous peace process. Until June 2014, it appeared as if the Mozambican National Resistance (*Resistência Nacional Moçambicana,* or Renamo) would escalate its armed resistance against the ruling *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (or Frelimo) for what Renamo claims to be unfulfilled terms of the 1992 peace agreement.[1]

The tenuous march towards the election

On 4 August 2014, Mozambique's Constitutional Council confirmed that only three of the 11 potential presidential candidates[2] had met all the legal requirements.[3] The candidates are former defence minister Filipe Nyusi (Frelimo), Afonso Dhlakama (Renamo) and Daviz Simango, the leader of the *Movimento Democrático de Moçambique* (MDM), who is also the mayor of Beira. MDM is a splinter party of Renamo.[4] To a certain extent, this removes the uncertainty about the candidates in the presidential race.

The country's citizens and investors, locally and internationally, are no doubt keenly following the election and hoping for a smooth transition. Such a success will not only demonstrate the country's democratic progress that started with the

first election in 1994, but also reassure investors that their interests will be preserved in the future. Economically, a successful election will be a major turning point for a country where large mineral deposits were recently discovered.[5]

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) will no doubt welcome a transparent, timely and peaceful election in Mozambique, especially so shortly after successful elections in neighbouring South Africa and Malawi (the latter having overcome challenges that almost marred its presidential elections). Most importantly, the election will be an indication of President Armando Guebuza's ability to safeguard the legacy of his predecessor, former president Joaquim Chissano.

Historical rivalries between the ruling Frelimo and its rebel-led archrival, Renamo, had again flared up prior to the ongoing negotiations that are linked to the run-up to the fifth presidential election. From early 2013, Renamo staged random armed attacks against government forces in the country's central provinces of Sofala and Inhambane, amidst negotiations to end the hostilities.[6] The situation threatened not only the country's socio-economic stability but also the political stability of the SADC region as a whole.

President Guebuza's initial assurance that the election in Mozambique would proceed regardless of the outcome of the negotiations between his government and Renamo was a clear indication of his determination to pursue diplomacy and not war – a declaration that affirmed the government's determination to put the interests of the country ahead of personal and/or party interests.[7] Unlike what has happened in some other African countries, President Guebuza has thus far not used the on-going strife between his government and Renamo to either stall the election process or extend his term in office.

In contrast to some of his peers on the continent, President Guebuza has resisted the temptation to postpone the election until the security situation has been stabilised; if sustained, this determination would mark the difference between Mozambique's democratic maturity and the political opprobrium that his peers face elsewhere on the continent.

Underlying the promise to keep to the election timetable is a number of challenges that the country's leadership (both the ruling party and the opposition) must overcome to ensure a peaceful process and a prosperous Mozambique. There are two major practical hurdles. The first of these is how the country will balance the ideals of a democracy with the interests of an armed former rebel group that is set to use both the bullet and the ballot to achieve its own agenda. President Guebuza's legacy largely depends on how he will navigate this dual challenge, especially because Afonso Dhlakama is also a presidential candidate.

> If both sides embrace diplomacy, the outcome could save lives and possibly result in a roadmap for the disarmament of Renamo, once and for all

In the interest of Mozambique's stability, the 'bullet option' was never going to be a relevant one in addressing any of the grievances that Renamo may have had against the government, no matter how serious and valid those grievances might have been.[8] The positive side of things, however, was that although it was armed, Renamo continued to engage the government in negotiations until a ceasefire agreement was reached. This is a rare occurrence for an internal conflict in Africa. Often the parties have to wage a lengthy (civil) war marked by colossal loss of life and damage to property before negotiation can even be considered as an option.

It is therefore possible that if both sides embrace diplomacy, the outcome could save lives and possibly result in a roadmap for the disarmament of Renamo, once and for all. Should this milestone be achieved, it would effectively mark the termination of the consequences of the age-old civil war and herald the start of a new era of prosperity for Mozambique. It is an opportunity that all the political parties in Mozambique must embrace.

Mozambique should expect a stable post-election environment, but it should also prepare for a negative outcome. It has taken more than 60 rounds of negotiations between the Frelimo government and Renamo to agree on the modalities for the cessation of hostilities and the integration of former Renamo rebels into the defence and security forces and others into the community.[9] Hopefully it does not take another 60 attempts before the outcome of the negotiations is successfully implemented.

It is imperative that Renamo, if it is serious about a peaceful Mozambique, must remain forthright in its democratic ideals, as it has been in this instance. It should renounce an armed struggle and abide by an established, transparent disarmament process. Dhlakama should show leadership and character even if it becomes apparent that he might be defeated in the forthcoming election.

The manner in which the government has dealt with the renewed resistance by former Renamo rebels is commendable. Despite having the ability and enough

reason to launch an assault on the Renamo stronghold, the Mozambican government has carefully avoided contributing to internal conflict, thereby lessening the possibility for a relapse into civil war.

A peaceful election will also depend on whether the ongoing negotiations, which are entirely dependent on the goodwill of all the parties, manage to deliver a long-term solution to the political impasse between Frelimo and Renamo. This represents the second hurdle that needs to be overcome.

> If Frelimo and Renamo agreed on some form of security guarantees, it would form an effective strategy for the post-election peacebuilding process

There are two practical situations that seem obvious and which all the parties to the negotiations should be prepared to deal with after the election. Firstly, there may not be sufficient time, between now and the time of the election, for the former Renamo rebels to disarm satisfactorily. Serious consideration must be given to what the implications of this would be on the post-election peace and security of the country. Secondly, it is highly probable that only one political party may emerge victorious in the election and therefore form the next government. Should this be the case, will the other parties readily concede defeat, or will they take up arms?

Both these situations raise the question of how the parties would ensure that the spirit of the outcome of the negotiations is not jeopardised in the post-election period. For instance, what would the implications be should Renamo renege on the pre-election pact if it senses that it will be defeated in the election? Could it resume war?

To prevent this from happening, the parties need to establish built-in mechanisms in the outcome document that will ensure a sustainable peace after the election. If Frelimo and Renamo agreed on some form of security guarantees, it would form an effective strategy for the post-election peacebuilding process. One of the ways of doing this is for the SADC secretariat to act as a security guarantor of the negotiations. For instance, the government of Mozambique could entrust a certain percentage of the revenue from its natural resources for a set period of time to the trusteeship of the SADC secretariat to support post-election confidence-building measures (CBMs).[10] This is just one possible way of mitigating possible post-election violence.[11]

Conclusion

The situation could develop into two main possible scenarios: first, the ongoing negotiations between the parties could lead to a solid peace agreement with integrated CBMs, and subsequently result in the cessation of armed activities and therefore a peaceful election. This is the wish of all peace-loving Mozambicans and should as much as possible not only be supported by Mozambican political parties, but also by neighbouring countries and the international community at large. This scenario would also signify a formal end to the after-effects of the 16-year civil war that ended with the 1992 Rome peace agreement.

The second scenario is that the on-going negotiations do not yield fruit, which would lead to the election being held in an atmosphere of armed hostilities perpetuated by Renamo rebels. This may lead to post-election instability, negatively impacting on the country's socio-economic development. As Mozambicans go to the polls, they should know that the entire continent stands behind them as they make their choice.

Notes

1 N Alusala, *Renamo's armed activities: it's time to find a solution,* 11 July 2014, www.issafrica.org/iss-today/renamos-armed-activities-its-time-to-find-a-solution.

2 All Africa, *Mozambique: Nyusi, Dhlakama and Simango confirmed as candidates,* 5 August 2014, allafrica.com/stories/201408060266.html?aa_source=acrdn-f0#ixzz39ibQZan6.

3 NSNBC International, *Mozambique: 35 parties and coalition groups registered for elections,* 21 May 2014, nsnbc.me/2014/05/21/mozambique-35-parties-and-coalition-groups-registerd-for-elections/.

4 L Mwiti, *Vibrant emerging 'middle class' parties threaten old order in Mozambique, Angola,* 23 July 2014, mgafrica.com/article/2014-07-23-vibrant-middle-class-parties-threaten-to-upset-established-order-in-mozambique-angola.

5 PriceWaterhouseCoopers, *From promise to performance – Africa oil and gas review: Report on current developments in the oil and gas industry in Africa,* June 2013, www.pwc.co.za/en_ZA/za/assets/pdf/africa-oil-and-gas-review-2013.pdf.

6 All Africa, *Mozambique: government forces, Renamo men clash in southern, central Mozambique,* 28 July 2014, allafrica.com/stories/201407301101.html?aa_source=useful-column.

7 All Africa, *Mozambique: Elections Will Go Ahead Regardless of Renamo,* 16 June 2014, allafrica.com/stories/201406162347.html.

8 N Alusala, *Renamo's armed activities: it's time to find a solution,* 11 July 2014, www.issafrica.org/iss-today/renamos-armed-activities-its-time-to-find-a-solution.

9 All Africa, *Mozambique: government forces, Renamo men clash in southern, central Mozambique,* 28 July 2014, allafrica.com/stories/201407301101.html?aa_source=useful-column.

10 CBMs are agreements between parties on information exchange and verification of military forces and armaments. CBMs contribute to transparency in military and political activities. They can be used to establish rules regarding the movement of military forces, as well as mechanisms for verifying compliance with such rules. Such agreements are meant to build trust among the conflicting parties and limit escalation.

11 H Higgins, *Applying confidence-building measures in a regional context,* http://isis-online.org/uploads/conferences/documents/higginspaper.pdf.

About the author

Nelson Alusala is a research consultant at the Institute for Security Studies. He previously worked for the United Nations Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He has also undertaken research on disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration in various contexts in Africa, including in Mozambique and Liberia. He remains engaged in similar initiatives in the continent's Great Lakes region.

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