

THE COLLAPSE OF MOZAMBIQUE'S 2013 PEACE AGREEMENT AND WHY IT MATTERS

John Filitz | 2018



An OEF Research Discussion Paper



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This discussion paper analyzes the structural and causal factors that led to the collapse of Mozambique's landmark 1992 General Peace Agreement in October 2013 and why they matter for the country's future stability. In doing so, it also offers some key policy recommendations:

- The recent and unexpected death of Afonso Dhlakama, leader of Mozambique's largest opposition political party the Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo), amidst advanced discussions to secure a new peace agreement raises the level of uncertainty that a successful peace agreement can be renegotiated. Efforts should be undertaken to speedily conclude a peace agreement with his interim successor, Ossufo Momade, to ensure political stability before the October 2019 general elections.
- A concerted effort is needed to reintegrate the roughly 800 Renamo ex-combatants into social and economic development programs, including the national military.
- The failure to decentralize political power and enfranchise Renamo in a ruling coalition government—a long-standing grievance—played a significant role in the dissolution of the peace agreement and the re-emergence of armed conflict. If left unresolved, the issue of political decentralization will remain a site of contention and a catalyst for future conflict.
- Part of the decentralization debate concerns the adequate provision of social and economic services to rural and marginalized territories. Included in this is the need for greater transparency in natural resource-related project concession negotiations and development.

The first section of this paper provides a brief background to the reemergence of armed conflict in Mozambique. Section 2 provides a socioeconomic overview of Mozambique with a specific focus on natural resource-related foreign direct investment. This is framed against the backdrop of literature on the resource curse hypothesis. Section 3 details the collapse of the peace agreement and the ensuing conflict in the 2012–2016 period. Section 4 provides policy recommendations on the way forward for Mozambique. The final section concludes the analysis.

I. BACKGROUND

After emerging from brutal and lengthy civil war (1977–1992) that killed in excess of 1 million people, Mozambique enjoyed close to 20 years of political stability.¹ At the height of the commodity boom of 2002–2012 Mozambique's economy was cited as one of the fastest-growing in the world, with a sustained annual GDP growth rate of 6.7 percent between 2006 and 2017.² Natural resources, particularly coal and titanium deposits, offshore natural gas discoveries,³ and more recently, rubies,⁴ have been central to fueling the optimism for the country's potential for economic development.

The reemergence of armed conflict in the 2012–2016 period has, however, significantly tempered optimism in the country. According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), in the 5-year period of 2012 to 2016 there were 446 conflict events resulting in 272 battle-related deaths and 107 civilian deaths. This is contrasted against the 251 conflict events reported for the 15-year period of 1997 to 2011, which resulted in 7 battle-related deaths and 12 civilian related deaths.⁵ The surge in conflict resulted in more than 11,500 refugees fleeing into neighboring Malawi and Zimbabwe.⁶

Coinciding with the reemergence of armed conflict, Mozambique has endured commodity price declines, and widespread fiscal mismanagement by the previous administration has surfaced. Together with the structural

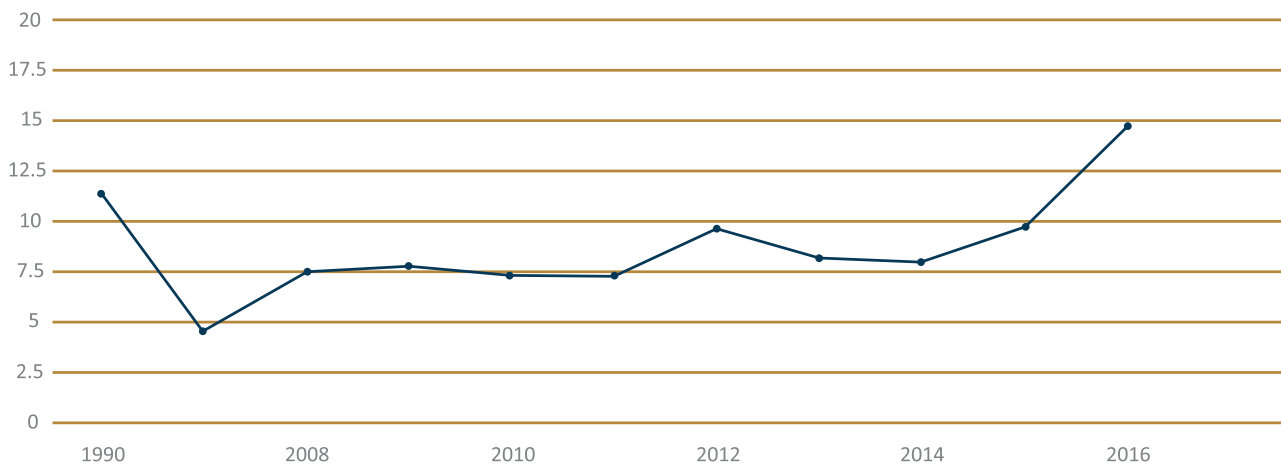
challenges of stubbornly high poverty, unemployment and poor human development indicators have seemingly tarnished the once-glistening prospects for the country. Compounding matters, recent indications are that the threat of radical Islam-inspired insurgency in the northeast of the country is growing.

Given the plethora of challenges facing the Mozambican state, decisively addressing historic grievances that threaten the state's legitimacy should be the foremost priority. The signing of a new peace agreement between the ruling Frelimo government and the opposition, Renamo—which is expected in 2018—should therefore be seen as an important first step towards providing the stability necessary to address some of the systemic challenges facing the country. The recent and unexpected death of Renamo's long-serving leader Afonso Dhlakama and the lack of a clear succession plan within Renamo adds a new layer of complexity and uncertainty to peace discussions that are currently underway.

II. SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE

Mozambique's economic development remained relatively stagnant until the advent of the natural resources commodity boom in the 2000s. In the period 2011–2016 Mozambique received \$27.2 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows, and in the 2013–2015 period attracted FDI inflows greater than Nigeria's.⁷ However, much of this investment was concentrated in the extractives sector and was accounted for through multiple acquisitions; for example, in transactions such as Rio Tinto's \$3.7 billion purchase of Riversdale Mining, or the major Italian oil and gas company ENI selling a 25 percent stake to ExxonMobil for \$2.8 billion in early 2017.

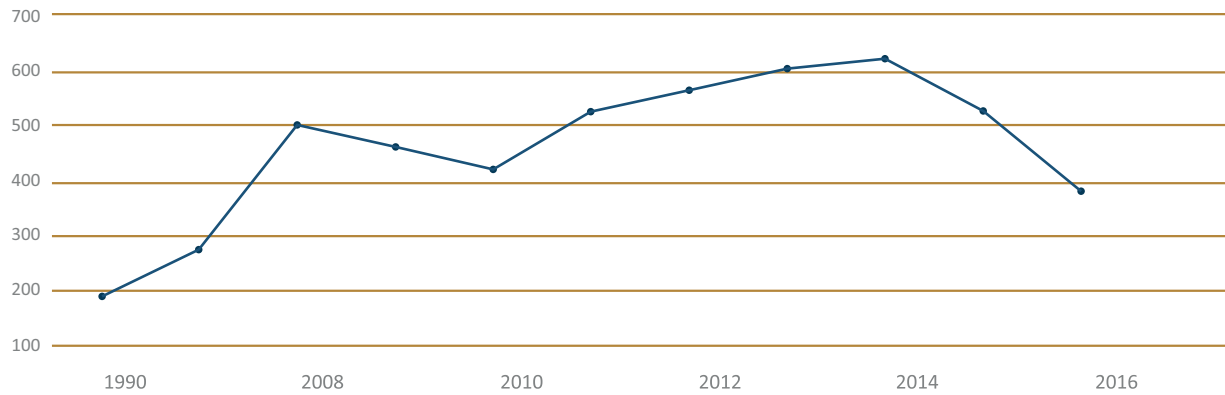
FIGURE 1: MOZAMBIQUE'S TOTAL NATURAL RESOURCE RENTS (% OF GDP)



Source: World Bank

Other than raised expectations, ordinary Mozambicans have yet to see the dividends of the natural resources boom and may have to wait for some time. The Human Development Index in 2016 placed Mozambique in the “low human development” category together with South Sudan and ranking 181 of 188 tracked countries. Life expectancy at birth is 55.5 years, with 58.2 percent of the population not having a formal education. Those who do attend school receive, on average, 9.1 years of schooling.⁸ The most current data (2008) indicate that 68.7 percent of the population lives on less than \$1.90 a day. World Bank data indicate that income inequality remains problematic, with a general deterioration in this trend evident in Mozambique's Gini Index score (0.44 in 1997 and 0.48 in 2009).⁹

FIGURE 2: MOZAMBIQUE'S GDP PER CAPITA

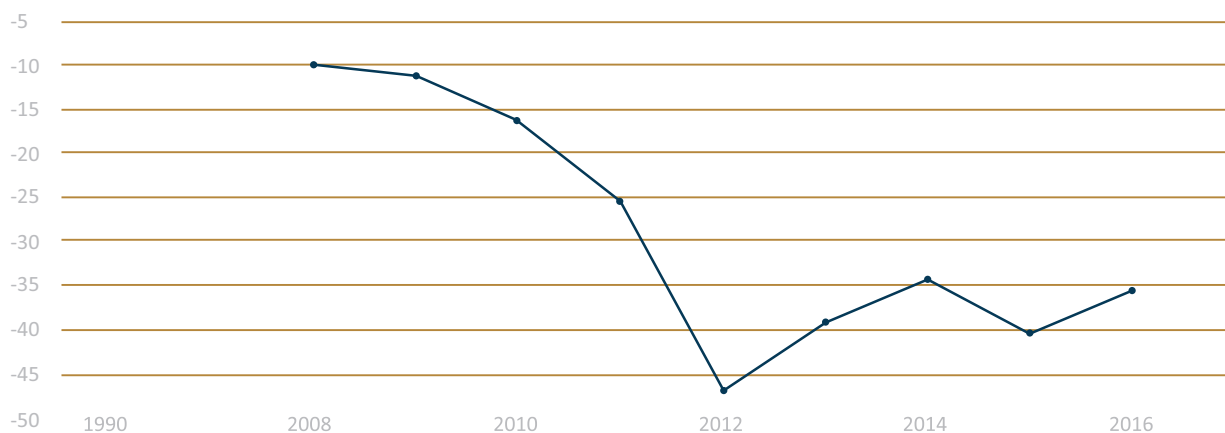


Source: World Bank

Compounding matters is the fact that many of the extractives-related projects, especially in the oil and gas sector, have long lead times, with most of the investments only expected to become commercially operational by 2023 at the earliest. The much-touted coal sector, too, has faced challenges in turning stranded assets into economically viable operations given the poor state of most infrastructure, and in many cases, the absence of any infrastructure whatsoever. For example, the major coal mining players in Mozambique have had to construct rail as well as port infrastructure to get their commodities to market.

It is within this context that allegations of corruption totaling \$2 billion in hidden loans by the former administration resulted in escalating political tensions between the ruling political party, the Mozambican Liberation Front (Frelimo) and the opposition Renamo party. Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index ranks Mozambique 153 out of 180 countries in 2017 with a score of 25 (0=highly corrupt, 100=very clean).¹⁰ The significant slowdown in the global commodities sector has not helped matters either, and the standing of the Mozambican economy in respect to meeting its debt obligations has deteriorated significantly.

FIGURE 3: MOZAMBIQUE'S CURRENT ACCOUNT BALANCE (% OF GDP)



Source: World Bank

From the data above, it is clear that the Mozambican economy bears many traits that make it highly susceptible to the resource curse hypothesis. According to the resource curse hypothesis, natural resource-based economies are highly vulnerable to declining terms of trade and market instability as a result of the inherent commodity booms and busts, which can negatively affect the overall stability of the economy and country.¹¹ Ownership is

usually highly concentrated and redistribution in these economies is narrow in scope,¹² and it is particularly challenging in weak state settings to break the cycle of booms and busts.¹³ Corruption and despotism become defining features comprised of clientelist networks of elites seeking to protect their privilege by narrowing economic discourse and policy to often short-sighted and personally vested agendas.¹⁴

Natural resources and the propensity for armed conflict

The propensity for armed conflict in natural resource–rich states is high for a multitude of reasons. Bell and Wolford have demonstrated that the *discovery* of petroleum resources and the long lead times associated with commercialization of those resources increase the risk of civil conflict, specifically in poorer states.¹⁵ This is due to the prospect of significant natural resource revenue streams threatening “to alter the balance of power between regimes and their opponents, rendering bargains in the present obsolete in the future.”¹⁶

Similarly, Cortright, Seyle, and Wall argue that the likelihood of armed conflict is often high in natural resource–dependent states as a result of actors in a region attempting “to gain control over the resource riches generated by onshore oil production and mineral development.”¹⁷ An alternate outcome, as Fjelde has shown, can result in the risk of civil war being bought off with natural resource rents.¹⁸ The key consideration for the propensity of civil conflict in natural resource–rich states, as Bell and Wolford have demonstrated, concerns the time-lag between natural resource discovery and realizing rents, and how poor the state is at the time of natural resource discovery.

Collier and Hoeffler, in a seminal paper on greed versus grievance using a dataset spanning 1960–1999, were able to determine that so-called “grievance” factors including income inequality, political oppression, and ethnic and religious differences performed less well than the “greed” factor of financial sources to fund a civil war.¹⁹ For Fearon, the association of states with high natural resource–related revenues and the onset of civil war is an indication of state weakness, with high per capita income and is less about natural resources. High per capita incomes make the prospect of capturing the state through violent means attractive.²⁰

Ross, however, supports the notion that natural resource–related wealth is causally related to civil war, often exacerbating the impact and length of conflict. According to Ross, there is no one single mechanism but multiple mechanisms associated with natural resources and the onset of civil war.²¹ A similar finding is made by Le Billon, who argues:

*In the light of the prominence of resource dependence as a characteristic of conflict-ridden countries, both greed and grievances need to be acknowledged; as does the influence of resource dependence on the vulnerability of institutional arrangements and the conflictuality of power politics.*²²

Ross, however, finds that natural resource wealth does not necessarily make existing conflicts worse. In fact, in two cases it brought wars to a quicker end. Ross did find that geographic distribution of natural resources was an important consideration, especially if the territory was under rebel control. A further and significant finding noted harsh state repression if the state felt the rebel movements threatened state control over resources.²³

III. COLLAPSE OF THE PEACE AGREEMENT

Its socioeconomic profile and the significance of natural resources to Mozambique's economic development is but one important component to understanding the reemergence of armed conflict there. Renamo has called for a greater share of the country's wealth to be distributed among citizens and accused the Frelimo-led government of endemic corruption. Of equal significance are the historically protracted ideological differences between the political parties, the need to prioritize electoral reforms, including decentralization of power to the provinces, and the reintegration of Renamo ex-combatants into the state security apparatus. On this basis, the reemergence of armed conflict in Mozambique becomes a useful reflection point on the 1992 peace agreement and the prevailing political settlement that was reached at the time.

Reluctance to disarm and demobilize

Vines notes that during negotiations for peace in 1991 and 1992 in Mozambique, fighting raged on across the country. It was only widespread famine and diminishing supply lines that brought Renamo to the negotiating table. After the peace agreement was signed in Rome on 4 October 1992, Renamo violated the agreement in a demonstration of military muscle by seizing four towns between 17 and 20 October 1992. After a special appeal by the UN Special Representative to Mozambique, Dhlakama conceded to refrain from further confrontations and abide by the conditions of the peace agreement.²⁴

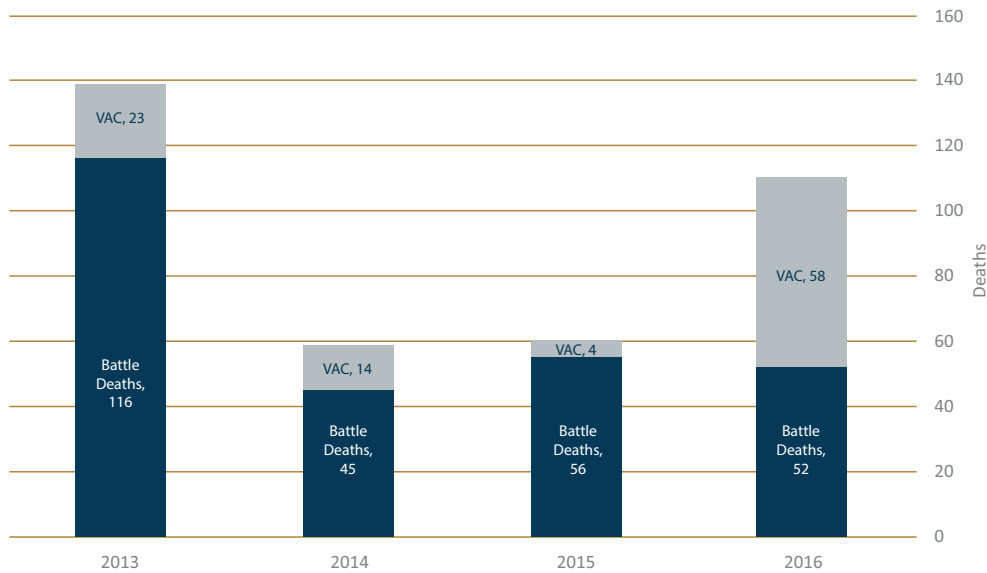
The disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process was fraught with delays, distrust, tension, and riots.²⁵ Nearly a full year after the peace agreement was signed in August 1993, the two leaders, President Chissano and Dhlakama, finally had their first meeting on Mozambican soil. Demobilization of the more than 100,000 combatants only began on 10 March 1994, with the government, according to Vines, maintaining "a moderate rate of demobilization."²⁶ Renamo, however, to a large degree did not demobilize its troops. Although under the peace agreement it was agreed that each side would contribute 15,000 troops to form a national army, in the end there were only 12,195 soldiers total with Renamo contributing 3,662.²⁷ Although the signing of the 1992 peace accord marked an end to the 16-year civil conflict, tensions resurfaced and escalated, resulting in the reemergence of armed conflict.

Power politics

In October 2012, Renamo indicated it was withdrawing from the formal political process, including from bodies such as the National Electoral Commission. This was, according to media reports, in response to Renamo's political party headquarters allegedly being destroyed by the government on 7 August 2012. On 15 October 2012 Renamo leader Dhlakama instructed his 800-strong rebel force to regroup at its stronghold in the Gorongosa mountains.²⁸

A series of low-level skirmishes and attacks marked the build-up to the collapse of the 1992 peace agreement on 21 October 2013. On 22 October 2013 Renamo withdrew from the historic peace agreement, and in November 2013 it boycotted municipal elections. October 2013 was a particularly bloody month in Mozambique, with 84 people killed. On 12 October 2013, an attack by Renamo on a police station in the town of Samuecuza in Sofala Province resulted in the death of 10 policemen, one soldier, and an unknown number of Renamo fighters.²⁹ This was followed by a bloody military operation on 28 October 2013 wherein government forces seized a Renamo base, resulting in 58 fatalities in the Maringué district in Sofala Province.

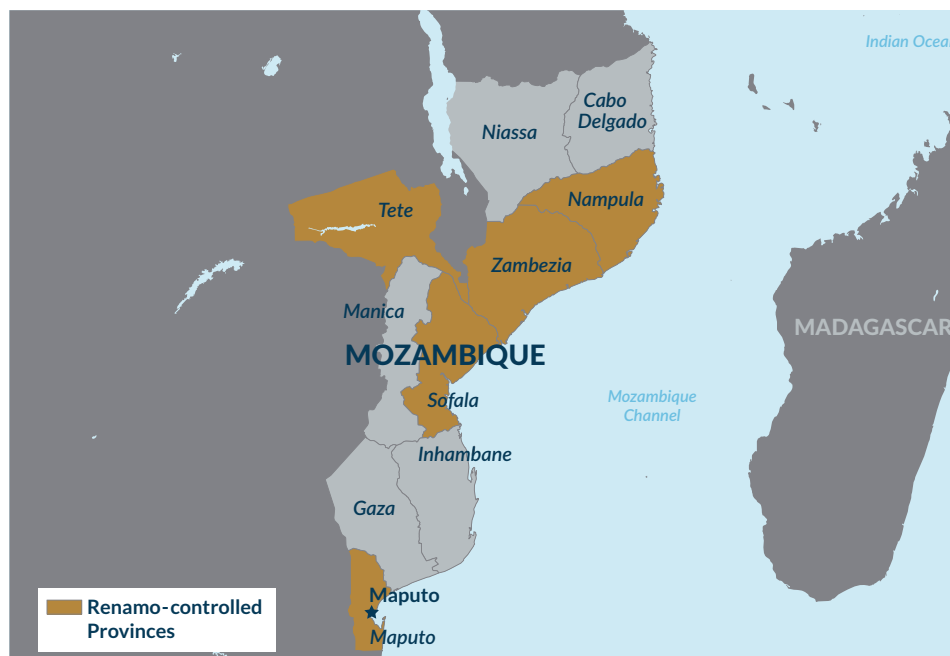
FIGURE 4: VIOLENCE AGAINST CIVILIAN (VAC) AND BATTLE DEATHS, MOZAMBIQUE; ARMED CONFLICT LOCATION & EVENT DATA PROJECT



Source: ACLED, <http://www.crisis.acleddata.com/mozambique-october-2016-update/>

Renamo did, however, contentiously decide to participate in 2014's October national election that saw Filipe Nyusi of the Frelimo ruling party win with 57 percent of the vote against his Renamo rival Dhlakama's 32 percent. The failure of Frelimo to appoint Renamo governors to the territories won by Renamo further increased tensions. There were 145 conflict events reported in 2014, of which 57 were battles and 43 were violence against civilians.

FIGURE 5: 2014 PROVINCIAL ELECTION RESULTS INDICATING RENAMO TERRITORY VICTORIES IN THE NATIONAL ELECTION



Source: Stratfor

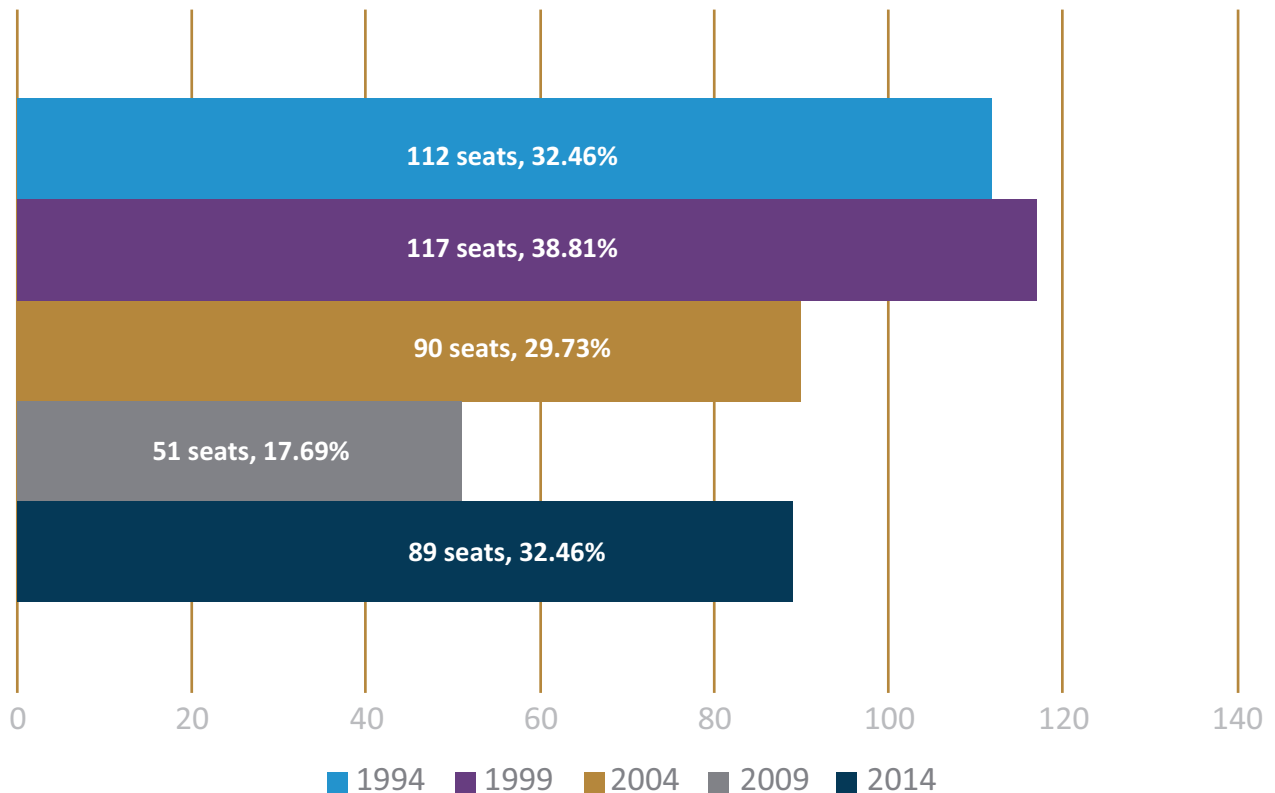
In 2015 there were a total of 61 conflict events. Most notable was the attack by government forces on Dhlakama's motorcade on 25 September 2015, which killed 25 of his troops. Dhlakama managed an escape and retreated to his base.³⁰

Renamo subsequently issued an ultimatum on 1 April 2016 for the transfer of the four provinces it won under the 2014 general election: Tete, Sofala, Zambezia, and Nampula. The deadline passed without the Frelimo government making any concessions. This led to an escalation in attacks, resulting in the displacement of many communities within the four provinces to neighboring Zimbabwe and Malawi.³¹ In total there were 134 conflict events in 2016 resulting in 52 battle-related and 58 violence against civilian deaths. A truce and ceasefire were declared on 27 December 2016.³² Since then, peace talks have been underway, with the talks expected to reach a conclusion in early 2018.³³ However, the recent unexpected passing of Dhlakama has cast a long shadow on proceedings.

Explaining the Conflict

For Vines, Renamo's withdrawal from the formal political process in 2012 has its roots in a failed strategy of politics of exclusion which culminated in 2002. The withdrawal from the political process, argues Vines, is one of desperation: "Dhlakama has failed to make the transition from guerrilla leader to democrat."³⁴ Hazvinei argues that the historically protracted ideological differences between the two political parties is a key factor contributing to the reemergence of the conflict.

FIGURE 6: NATIONAL ELECTION OUTCOMES RENAMO 1994–2014



Source: Joseph Hanlon, "Mozambique Elections: A Collective Research Project," London School of Economics, n.d., <http://www.lse.ac.uk/internationalDevelopment/research/mozambiqueElections/home.aspx>.

Based on fieldwork conducted in Maringué, Mozambique in 2008–2010, Wiegink argues that the reemergence of conflict underscores the threats posed by informal wartime networks, specifically in a post-conflict Mozambique. According to this view, the remobilization of Renamo's approximately 800 soldiers indicates that DDR processes, although effective in physically disarming and demobilizing combatants, do not disrupt or destroy the social networks. It also points to the durability of past rebel military alliances, which to a large degree is underpinned by a common and shared social identity.³⁵ Wiegink goes on to explain the high degree of loyalty and kinship inherent in these networks: "For former combatants in Maringue the former military network prevailed after the war and functioned as their main network for social, political and economic relations and opportunities."³⁶

Wartime networks and ideological differences aside, in the intervening years since the 1992 peace agreement the structural challenges of poverty, inequality, and unemployment have remained intractable. In the absence of equitable and sustainable economic development since 1992, the Mozambican state has remained vulnerable to challenges to its legitimacy.

The effects of the commodity boom coinciding with the collapse of the peace agreement, too, should not be understated. One cannot underestimate the disruptive effects of significant FDI capital inflows in an institutionally weak post-conflict state, and into territories historically under the control of Renamo. In this regard, it could well be argued that significant natural resource–related FDI inflows exert a destabilizing effect on the political economy in fragile states similar to that of natural resource–related busts.

IV. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several policy recommendations that emerge as necessary to ensuring that the Mozambican state can put in place a lasting and sustainable peace agreement with Renamo:

- The recent recidivism calls for an interrogation of possible failures or weaknesses associated with the original disarming, demobilization, and reintegration process.
 - In this regard—and more urgently, given Dhlakama's recent passing—the state should increase efforts to ensure the approximately 800-strong Renamo combatants are reintegrated into meaningful socioeconomic programs, starting in conflict-prone areas.
 - Delays in concluding the peace agreement should be mitigated, and extra efforts should be made to ensure lasting peace by both parties should a new peace agreement be reached. On the latter point, the unexpected passing of John Gurang—charismatic and unifying leader of South Sudan and vice president of Sudan—soon after signing the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement offers a useful and cautionary reflection point. It can be said that Gurang's sudden death, leaving no legitimate heir apparent, is largely to blame for the reemergence of conflict that has engulfed South Sudan since 2013 to the present.
- It is vital that the ruling Frelimo government undertake steps to amend Mozambique's constitution to allow for greater decentralization of political control to the provincial level.
- Part of the decentralization debate should concern the adequate financing of social services to rural and marginalized territories. Included in this is the need for greater transparency in natural resource–related project concession negotiations and development. This should also translate to increased local economic participation and beneficiation at the project level.

V. CONCLUSION

Mozambique offers an important case study on the fragility of peace in a post-conflict state in the context of a natural resource–related commodity boom. It can be argued that greed and grievance factors are at the heart of the 1992 peace agreement's collapse. The failure to realize broad-based and inclusive economic growth since the 1992 peace agreement and the ensuing natural resource commodities boom is central to contextualizing the reemergence of armed conflict in Mozambique.

In the context of post-conflict states with fragile institutions, significant natural resource–related capital inflows related to economic booms can have effects on the political process that are equally as disruptive as the effects of rapid economic busts.

It would be fair to state that more could have been done by the ruling Frelimo party to ensure greater political and economic inclusion through earlier decentralization efforts since the signing of the 1992 peace agreement. Conversely, Renamo is also due criticism in failing to cultivate and consolidate a democratic culture within the party in the intervening period.

The danger inherent in post-conflict natural resource–rich states centers on the limited political and economic alternatives for opposition political groups and ordinary citizens, as witnessed in Mozambique. Once the formal political process has failed, opposition political parties and former rebel groups like Renamo resort to reactivating durable wartime networks to achieve political objectives.

Key to reaching a short-term successful outcome for the ongoing peace talks is the issue of decentralization and the election of four governors for the states that Renamo won in the 2014 national election. This will, however, require the political will of the ruling Frelimo party to agree to amend the constitution. The stakes are now even higher given the untimely death of Renamo's charismatic leader, Afonso Dhlakama. It will require working with a new, legitimate leader of Renamo, once the party concludes its congress to elect a new leader with the expectation that this will be concluded in the late 2018.

In the medium to long term, however, it is imperative that the Mozambican government create an inclusive economic agenda to reduce the likelihood for recidivism to armed conflict. The failure to do so places the country at a relatively high level of risk of further challenges to the state's legitimacy. This was most recently demonstrated in several radical Islamist-inspired insurgent attacks in the remote northeast of the country.

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- 4 Mozambique's Montepuez Ruby Mining company is the world's largest ruby supplier, with recent discoveries hailed as the most important in the twenty-first century. For more information, see: Tao Hsu, Andrew Lucas, and Vincent Pardieu, "Mozambique: A Ruby Discovery for the 21st Century," *Gems & Gemology* 51, no. 1 (3 December 2014), <https://www.gia.edu/gia-news-research-mozambique-expedition-ruby-discovery-new-millennium>.
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