

Is Frelimo dying, leaving only a failed state, or can Frelimo and Mozambique be saved?

Many Mozambicans have been surprised by the strength and violence of the five weeks of protests, and that they are continuing to grow. And the demonstrations have made clear that they may have been triggered by a fraudulent election, but in practice they are a scream of pain by young people about corruption taking much of the country's wealth, leaving youth with poverty and joblessness, and with no future.

These two articles published at the weekend (7 and 8 December) are thoughtful looks at how to move forward. The first is by Marcelo Mosse, editor of *Carta de Semana*. The other is by Severino Ngoenha, Rector of the Technical University of Mozambique, and Augusto Hunguana, a Supreme Court judge

They were published in Portuguese only, and these are our English translations.

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Is Frelimo dying?

By Marcelo Mosse, 7 December 2024

The incidences of the Venancist PREC (Revolutionary Process in Progress) in the country have shown once again that Mozambique is a multi-ethnic nation with a failed state. Failed! The Venancist call to paralyse social and economic life this week seems to have had an effect, as has its by-product of vandalising public and private property.

The striking factor of the demonstrations was not the pacifist backing that VM7 proclaims in its prayers - which never materialised - but the unparalleled violence of the young people who were mobilised in revolt in the face of a police force ready to kill in an unrestrained manner, sparking more violence.

The day before the all-out protests began, a leading figure from the state's military elite guaranteed that public security would be under control. It was a deception!

On Wednesday (4 December), a Lalgys bus was set on fire. Frelimo party offices in various locations and a courthouse were destroyed by arson. Private property was targeted everywhere. Traffic was disrupted on many roads across this immense country. The country was burning at the stake and there were no firefighters available. It was the image of a country out of control, the symptoms of a collapsed state.

The Frelimo elites had accumulated so much wealth over all these years, corroding the state from within, but they had forgotten to invest in their own protection, in the reproduction of the regime. Eneas Comiche was almost greeted with sticks and stones somewhere in Sofala; Shafee Sidat was expelled from his town, Marracuene; Frelimo buildings were vandalised.

There was violence everywhere and a cruel absence of legitimate state violence. And after this terror, it is reasonable to conclude that the power of the state and of Frelimo has waned. The party

is moribund. Its absence and the impotence of the government are the critical indicators of this funeral state. Filipe Nyusi is driving the final nail into the coffin of his own party.

Now, whatever the outcome of this post-election violence, one thing is certain: Frelimo is 'dead'.

Look at the subconscious aversion to the narrative of revolt against the regime by the student population of Gaza! In the bastion of Gaza, Frelimo was vilified, humiliated. In Chibuto and Chókwè, the youth called for 'Venâncio'. In fact, this was the case almost everywhere in the country. The demolition of Alberto Chipande's statue in Pemba was another strong indication that, for the new youth, the anti-colonial liberation elites are no longer any use. They are disposable puppets!

This means that the ongoing revolt is cementing in the consciousness of a young layer of voters a deep sense of anti-Frelimo rejection, whose leaders are now connoted with ugly things like thievery and corruption. This was an unthinkable reality just a few years ago. Who would have expected such anti-Frelimo vilification in a square in Chibuto?

So perhaps the X-factor of Venancism is its positive effect of bringing down the mask of fear, freeing the minds of society from five decades of being cloistered in the Frelimist revolutionary narrative, in its never-fulfilled promises of a better future.

On the other hand, whether we like it or not, another positive effect of the VM7 struggle has been to unleash in the communities excluded from big mining a more audible and fierce demand for their rights, which have been trampled underfoot by foreign companies that dig up our land, take all the wealth and leave nothing, as we have now seen in Topuito in the heavy sand mines of Ireland's Kenmare - a final wake-up call to Mozambique Rubi Mining and Vulcan, not to mention Jindal, among other mining companies.

Society was co-opted into a fairytale that proclaimed the redistribution of wealth for all, but it only reached a select few and often by insidious means.

This 'liberation' will certainly bring Frelimo's punishment at the ballot box in the near or medium term. The party has no way of covering the sun with a sieve. Its only solution is to be born again. How? Through rupture!

In other words, not everything in Frelimo is rubbish. The party is full of good people with good intentions, and many of them have had no space to assert themselves since the emergence from the stomach-churning self-esteem of guebuzismo to the corrupt autocracy of nyussismo.

What to do?

The elements of this good Frelimo must now abandon this machine, which has been corroded to the core over the last two decades, and embrace a new political project. The current machine is full of terrible vices that are difficult, if not impossible, to get rid of. It is the epitome of all evils. From corruption to illicit enrichment, with the capture of the state in the background.

Frelimo is dying, but it can still be reborn. But only outside of this Frelimo, and the perverse legacy of Guebuza and Filipe Nyusi.

Marcelo Mosse is editor of *Carta de Moçambique*

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The Peace of the Brave

In Mozambique, where disputes threaten the stability of the country, the peace of the brave is urgently needed to disarm the trap of internal fragmentation, the plundering of resources and the collapse of common coexistence. Insistence on absolute victories will lead to mutual destruction. A Mozambican peace is only possible with mutual concessions and pragmatic alliances to preserve the peace and unity of the country.

Severino Ngoenha & Augusto Hunguana

6 December 2024

The chaos in which we are immersed seems to have its origins in the last, botched electoral process. However, the reality of the demonstrations shows that the problems in question transcend the elections and reflect a broader crisis that questions the deep structures of social contact that the state has been failing to fulfil in recent years.

The demands that underlie and accompany the demonstrations have a multifaceted profile.

The demonstrations reveal a feeling of distrust and discontent with the electoral institutions, but the slogans that emerge on the roads, markets, schools and hospitals reveal something even deeper. On the one hand, they express intense nationalism, an emotional attachment to the country - evident in the anthems that send shivers down the spine - and pride in being Mozambican. On the other hand, they show a structural clamour against the elitism of the current model of economic governance, which is at odds with the citizens' aspirations for justice and equity.

In the current state of affairs, even if the results of the elections were announced by the Pope, the Secretary General of the United Nations or Trump - and after a forensic audit - we would still be heading for a civil conflict with unpredictable and dangerous proportions for the stability and integrity of the country.

The proclamation of the election results is a fuse for a (social-political) bomb that is already booby-trapped and ready to explode. The urgent question is how to defuse the bomb; avoid/stop the war and seriously seek solutions to the social contract crisis that is plaguing us as a society.

The bomb going off exposes us to alarming risks of violence and anarchy that no country can live with - with everyone making the law as they please. The Haiti-isation of the country - in part already underway - in which gangs make laws in neighbourhoods, towns and districts; congolisation, in which foreign countries intervene militarily in the country; libyanisation/iraqisation (also already underway) in which we become entangled in internal conflicts, while third parties plunder (Cabo Delgado) the resources or, worse, somalisation (with its twelve million displaced people) which consists of dividing the country.

It would be a historical anachronism to try to analyse facts from the present with parameters and solutions from the past. Reducing the ongoing upheavals to elections, thinking that the problem can be solved by accommodating the insurgents - giving more votes to the opposition, accommodating the leadership or resolving the dispute with force - would be the historical anachronism of those who do not seek to understand the core of

the ongoing problem. The solutions adopted in the 1980s and 1990s do not respond to today's demands, where civil society is looking for more participation, transparency and social justice. Some people still think that there will be small revolts and then they will kill each other and make compromises, as in the past. This historical anachronism is the result of a superficial analysis of the nature and scale of the problem in Mozambique today. Today, Machiavellian compromises are not accepted, it's not just Venâncio Mondlane - in fact, he is the fruit of the discontent and frustration of the youth - who no longer accepts compromises and collusion with elites behind their backs. The youth want to be present, they want guarantees, they want fundamental and structural changes. This requires a complete overhaul of institutions, from the electoral system to governance mechanisms, including the redistribution of resources and structural reforms to constitutions. Young people demand legitimacy from leaders based on trust and consensus, built on transparency, courage and the active participation of all segments of society.

We don't have to hesitate to denounce the current *modus vivendi* - steeped in promiscuity, in the appointment and election of judges, parliamentarians, university rectors, senior officials; the way we make careers, the transparency of everything that is the economic life of our country, from the salaries of senior leaders, to the way in which public goods are appropriated for individual issues. All of this has to be included in a package of major discussions if we are to overcome the moment of dissonance in which we are immersed.

We can't even hide behind legal artifices; constitutions and laws are historical and political responses that countries give at a given moment in their history. It's clear that the laws we have and the mechanisms for making politics no longer satisfy our common life. So we don't have to be afraid, we don't have to have any qualms about denouncing them. The Constitution is not the Koran, it wasn't written by God. The Constitution was meant to help us live together peacefully, without violence and with as much justice and transparency as possible. If it can no longer do this, it is no longer useful. The Constitution and the laws are historical and political instruments, created to serve the common good. If they can no longer fulfil this function, they must be fearlessly adjusted to reflect current realities and needs.

It is now a commonly accepted truth that changes are necessary. It takes lucidity and courage to reinvent new ways of finding new solutions to solve new problems. But the Kantian dilemma about the French Revolution is how to put an end to the danger of violence and realise the reforms and the new contract that are needed?

The changes are necessary, but they have to be deep, structural, and not based on compromises between parties, individuals or groups. They have to be changes that allow for a new beginning, a new politics that integrates the interests of all the people of Mozambique. How can this necessary change of thinking be achieved without violence, the polarisation of society, the paralysis of the economy and the lives of individuals - which subsequently harms the lives of the poorest?

Only a government (now unlikely) that everyone recognises as legitimate - and with credible institutions - can mobilise everyone for a major development process and project. The role of the elites is central to this process. The responsibility of the elites is not simply to echo the gossip and demonstrations and shirk their responsibility to put forward ideas and propose solutions that can open up paths of peace and hope.

Intellectual elites are called upon to think in new ways and propose viable and daring paths that respond to the country's structural issues. They must imagine a new beginning, a new nation project aimed at a fairer and more united tomorrow. The political elites are called upon to implement a new project for society. But in order to do so, it is imperative that they abandon defensive or domineering postures and assume the courage to engage

in dialogue and build genuine consensus. Mozambique's future depends on the capacity of its intellectual elites to re-imagine the nation and of its political elite to implement a new project for society. But for such a project to have a future, it has to be consensual, and consensus is built through serious discussion and not through false compromises, accommodation, but with the will to make a common agenda. The starting point is mutual recognition between the forces in dispute and a conscious decision to abandon the logic of domination; to build national consensus that transcends partisan interests.

We cannot ignore the fact that the fuse for the chaos is the election results, the proclamation of which could add fuel to the fire in a country already in flames. Whatever the Constitutional Council's results, they will not be such as to appease tensions, depolarise society and bring social peace. That is the basic condition for solving any and all of the population's problems, particularly poverty and inequality. In fact, the CC's announcement risks heightening tensions.

When firefighters arrive at a burning house, the priority is not to find out who the arsonist was. It is not to find out if the fire was deliberate or accidental. The most important thing is to put out the fire. So this isn't about trying to incriminate people, find those responsible, find those to blame, find out who has to pay for this or that. The first and most important thing to do is to put out the fire. The first thing we have to do is save what is salvageable from a burning house. And after that, let's find ways to try to rebuild the house so that it's habitable, seeking justice.

It's important to seek justice. But not the justice of the courts. That would be an ingredient that doesn't help us overcome the very serious crisis we're facing. The justice we need is the justice of a seamstress who, taking different parts and, with a needle and a lot of tenacity, creates a Mozambicanity - possible and desirable - capable of uniting us to build a different future together. This justice must overcome divisions (racial, tribal, regional, religious, which are on the rise today) and historical inequalities, allowing the country to move forward as a cohesive and inclusive nation.

The moment demands urgency. Mozambique is facing a political and social fire that needs to be contained before it completely consumes the national fabric. Just as firefighters give priority to saving lives and putting out the fire before looking for culprits, we must also focus on stabilising the country before getting lost in accusations or reciprocal disputes. The urgency of an agreed solution, before the proclamation of results, is greater and more urgent than any dictionary, encyclopaedia or grammar can teach us about the meaning of the term urgency, it is the condition for avoiding an even greater conflict, even if we have to subvert the legal and constitutional orders, on the altar of peace and the integrity of the country.

When there is a danger that our single, common home will be consumed by flames, we must act with the speed that the situation demands, which imposes on us a speed of thought and action. We need to find solutions very quickly to prevent polarisation from escalating even further, discontent from escalating even further, conflicts from escalating even further. We have to act quickly, with speed, but a measured speed that is not to be confused with haste.

This urgent need can only be achieved through what has been called the peace of the brave, which is not a defeat for either party, but rather a path towards a return to harmony, a common journey in which the ideals that each of us holds - which correspond to part of the population - can be combined to create a platform on which all Mozambicans can recognise each other.

The Peace compromise of the Brave is an act of courage and vision. It requires abandoning old-fashioned solutions and tackling today's challenges with innovation,

compassion and a commitment to the future. At the heart of the peace of the brave is the idea that, in times of crisis, true bravery lies not in perpetuating conflict, but in giving up self-interest in favour of the greater good.

There can be no peace without concord, which in turn involves justice. But both concord and justice require the courage of compromise, of knowing that in some things I have to learn to give in, to not always be right but, above all, to co-construct (with others) a structure in which we all recognise each other and are ready to collaborate to build a better Mozambique for everyone.

We need the courage to accept that, in a negotiation, no one is absolutely right, that no one is the owner of truth and reason. We can't build with others by making monologues, but neither can we build with others by making polylogues - where everyone speaks in their own direction without listening to the reasons of others. We have to find a meeting point, dialogue for dialogue's sake, the only means that can lead us to convergence. It is this dialogue that can bring about compromise and promote consensus.

The peace of the brave in Mozambique can only be built when leaders realise that the well-being of millions of vulnerable Mozambicans depends on their courage to engage in dialogue in order to build the future together. It's time for Mozambique to stop looking back with resentment and start looking forward with responsibility.

The peace of the brave is not a peace imposed by fear or submission, but a peace won by those who courageously recognise that the continuation of the conflict is a defeat for everyone. It is a peace that requires sacrifice, honest dialogue and, above all, the courage to give in where necessary in the name of the common good. The 'Peace of the Brave' is not a surrender, much less an act of weakness. On the contrary, it is a gesture of courage, sacrifice and vision (Kant, Rawls, Mandela), where the leaders of opposing sides, recognising the weight of the conflict on the most vulnerable and on the integrity of the country, abandon personal interests (and those of parties) and commit to joining forces in the name of the common good.

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