Peace and Democracy in Mozambique: An Endless Transition

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Abstract

Mozambique has long been considered a political success story in Africa. Nevertheless, it was clear from the signing of the General Peace Agreement in 1992 and the first general elections in 1994 that the official narrative of this success hid severe problems. The major challenge for Mozambican democracy has been the management of the electoral process. With little transparency and not much evidence of legal process, the consequence has been the repeated resurgence of political tensions and military clashes between Renamo and the Frelimo-led national Government. This paper seeks to explore the relationship between 'negative peace' and the lack of transparency in Mozambican electoral processes, whose main consequence is an 'endless transition' towards a 'normal' model of democracy.

Resumo

Moçambique foi considerado durante muito tempo como um caso de sucesso em África. Entretanto, estava claro desde a assinatura dos Acordos Gerais de Paz em 1992 e desde a realização das primeiras eleições gerais em 1994 que a narrativa oficial sobre esse sucesso escondia sérios problemas. O maior desafio para a democracia moçambicana tem sido a gestão dos processos eleitorais. Considerando que estes processos foram sempre geridos com base em princípios muito distantes da transparência e da justiça, a consequência foi—na prática em todas as eleições moçambicanas—o retorno de tensões políticas assim como de confrontos militares entre a Renamo e o governo nacional liderado pela Frelimo. Esta pesquisa procura mostrar a relação entre falta de paz e falta de transparência nos processos eleitorais moçambicanos, cuja consequência principal é uma 'transição infinita' para um modelo de democracia 'normal'.

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Introduction

This research starts from the premise that the most complex transitions to peace in Africa have not achieved their desired results, in terms of their outcome (i.e., the war continued) or in terms of the quality of the peace achieved (i.e., the fighting stopped, but in a climate of 'negative peace', often associated with an anti-democratic regime).

The United Nations reports that 42 per cent of all peace agreements in the world relate to African countries. A large proportion of these fails, primarily due to a culture of non-compliance and distrust among the parties involved (Adetula, Murithi and Buchanan-Clarke 2018). Recent research highlights the link between the failure of the peace process and the nature of the African state, defined as a 'failed state', also taking into account the ambiguous role of the international community (Pureza et al. 2006).

The quest for an immediate and measurable outcome (the signing of a peace agreement) generally characterises the *modus operandi* of international mediators. Nevertheless, peace is not a simple 'cessation of hostilities'; it should influence people's daily lives positively and directly, introducing a culture of respect for justice, human rights and economic benefits for the whole population (Adetula, Murithi and Buchanan-Clarke 2018:4). However, African peace negotiations are generally opaque: they are carried out through secret meetings without involving any other actors than the parties directly involved in the conflict. The result may be a peace agreement, but broad civil society sectors feel excluded without the diffusion of a culture of positive peace across society. Thus, the outcome is a 'negative peace', a weak democracy with a permanently destructive attitude towards the 'other', with the substantial risk of new conflicts (Galtung 1967).

'Negative peace', or the 'absence of personal violence', is a concept that Johan Galtung first expressed in 1964 (Galtung 1964), and was summarised in eight principles, including social justice, tolerance and the absence of corruption (Positive Peace Academy 2020). The Global Peace Index measures peace in the nations of the world, using these eight pillars. In the 2020 Index, there were no African countries in the top thirty positions but six in the worst ten (Institute for Economics & Peace 2020).

Within this scenario, it is worth pointing out the absence of women in African peace processes. A UN Report confirms that only 9 per cent of the delegations for peace negotiations in thirty-two African cases saw the participation of women. In only 2 per cent of these, women led the negotiation process. 'Women's approaches to defusing conflicts, mediating disputes and building trust—from the community to the national level—have likewise been neglected in approaches to building peace' (UN Women 2012:6).

Women are seen as 'naturally' against violence; feminist theory purports that contemporary society is based on patriarchy and sexism, two expressions of a culture of violence. Women use dialogue to solve problems and conflicts, in private and public life (Izquierdo 1998; UNIFEM 2005). Recent experiences demonstrate that the involvement of women in peace processes has led to positive peace, in such cases as the Balkans, Northern Ireland and Cyprus. Women have been 'building bridges of dialogue and empathy in polarised societies that go beyond the reasons for the armed confrontation and the deep-rooted hatred and division' (Villellas Ariño 2010).

In Africa, there are many cases of failed peace processes: Democratic Republic of Congo (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2003); Guinea-Bissau (Sangreman et al. 2003; Barros 2014); Central African Republic (Carvalho and Lucey 2016); Somalia (Dersso 2009; Mohamoud Barawani 2017); South Sudan (Gebremichael 2018); and so on. At the 2019 Global Gender Summit in Kigali, the need for home-grown solutions to the conflict was highlighted, including the active participation of women (African Development Bank 2019). Yet, in recent years the involvement of women in African peace processes has not substantially improved the negotiations, with some exceptions. According to Bineta Diop, the African Union's Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, understanding the factors fueling conflict in Africa still presents a challenge. But women can play a vital role at the peace negotiation table and the stabilisation of a country. The incorporation of women into post-conflict peace processes in Côte d'Ivoire and Rwanda is one of Africa's few examples of success (African Development Bank 2019). In these cases, women participated at a high level, and they tended to establish a positive peace environment after the end of the armed conflict.

The Mozambican 'success story'

Among the cases of transition to peace in Africa, the process of peace and democratisation in Mozambique is held by the international community to be a model of success. In the literature, too, this example is frequently cited positively. After the signing of the 1992 General Peace Agreement (AGP) in Rome, many participants proposed using the model of the agreement for other African countries (Morozzo della Rocca 1994). They referred to it as the 'Italian formula' because of the 'ability of Sant'Egidio and the other central mediatory actor, Mr Mario Raffaelli', then Deputy Foreign Minister of the Italian Government (Gentili 1996:522). Other authors have emphasised the role of local society in this process of reconciliation (Lundin 2004).

But some of the literature on the peace agreement, which was sidelined at the time, pointed out its extreme fragility. This has since been demonstrated by the fact that, from 1992 to date, three peace agreements have been signed. In addition, the country faces two fronts of war: one against the breakaway from the main opposition party, Renamo, the self-proclaimed Renamo Military Junta, led by General Mariano Nhongo; and the other against the supposed Islamic terrorists in the north of the country (Cabo Delgado province), where frequent and very violent attacks started on 5 October 2017. In the second of these, the Mozambican Government is trying to solve the situation militarily, excluding women and civilians from the negotiations and involvement in programmes of local development (Bussotti and Torres 2020).

The weakness of the Mozambican pattern of democracy and its environment of negative peace is the basis for the failure of the development model (Hanlon 1984; Vines 1991; Geffray 1991; Cabrita 2004; Bussotti 2018a). This point of view is rarely discussed in Mozambican literature. But it is illustrated by the following example. After a period of peace between the government forces and the Renamo Military Junta, which started at the end of 2016 when Dhlakama declared a unilateral suspension of the war and signed a peace agreement on 6 August 2019, military attacks began once again. This confirms the fragility of Mozambican peace, and that the 'Mozambican success' was a myth.

Despite studies showing the links between the way peace negotiations are conducted, the transparency of the electoral processes, and the building of a favourable peace settlement (a concept based on the idea that peace is a process, not a goal) (Hearst 2008; see also Interpeace 2008), there is very little literature on why peace has failed in Mozambique.

Objectives, Hypotheses and Methodology

The main objectives of this research are to demonstrate that the Rome agreement could not change the context of mutual mistrust between Frelimo and Renamo, which has been a significant contributory factor to 'negative peace', and how this influenced the process of democratisation in Mozambique. Hence, the central question of this research is: What is the correlation between the climate of negative peace and the weakness of Mozambique's democracy?

To answer this question, I propose two hypotheses, as follows:

 The climate of negative peace stemmed from the way the peace negotiations and the process of military demobilisation (DDR) were conducted, respectively, through a goal-oriented approach and an incomplete programme. 2. This climate of negative peace contributed to the reciprocal mistrust between Frelimo and Renamo, whose objective has always been their mutual cancellation instead of mutual recognition. At the same time, this 'negative peace' excluded a priori Mozambican civil society, women and other essential groups from the economic benefits of peace. Hence, an opaque democracy, 'blocked' and 'bipolarised' (Bussotti 2014) but formally free, gave rise to a 'competitive authoritarianism' (Levitsky and Way 2002).

This research has been carried out using a qualitative approach and a multidisciplinary methodology. The qualitative approach aims to understand the complexity of a specific process (the interpretive approach). Its main objective is to identify the interests, ways of acting, alliances and interactions of the social and political actors examined. It is impossible to extrapolate results applicable to other contexts in dealing with a specific case study, so this approach does not produce general conclusions (Hoepfl 1997). Nevertheless, it aims to shed light on a complex phenomenon that the academic community does not yet comprehend clearly—Mozambique's democracy (Eisner 1991). However, qualitative research cannot ignore the criteria of scientific validation. Consequently, two different tools have been adopted here: a triangulation methodology (Golafshani 2013) and a multidisciplinary approach.

It is essential to study the complex relationship between negative peace and democracy in Mozambique from different perspectives. Therefore, adopting a multidisciplinary approach—typical of the African Studies epistemology (Curtin 1971; Bates, Mudimbe and O'Barr 1993; Robinson 1997)—is a logical choice, especially in addition to the triangulation methodology. The main focus here is on politico-sociological analysis, the basis of which is political risk theory. This approach considers a historical and juridical analysis, together with a sociopolitical anthropological perspective, which examines the main political actors, the importance of their symbolic power, and the influence of their ethnic identity (Cohen 1959; Cahen 1994; Funada-Classen 2013).

The contribution of this research consists of the attempt to associate the peace process with democracy, particularly stressing a symbolic feature (mistrust) and the lack of transparency in the management of the electoral system as decisive factors in the failure of Mozambique's democracy.

Demonstrating hypotheses: The peace process and democracy in Mozambique

This section aims at demonstrating the hypotheses mentioned above, focusing on an analysis of the relationship between the way the peace processes were carried out and the type of democracy in Mozambique.

Hypothesis 1

'The climate of negative peace stemmed from the way the peace negotiations and the process of military demobilisation (DDR) were conducted, respectively, through a goal-oriented approach and an incomplete programme.'

The narrative spread in the aftermath of the signing of the first General Peace Agreement suggested this was a model to be followed by other African countries, an 'Italian formula' for peace (an expression coined by Boutros Ghali, the United Nations Secretary-General at the time). It was supposedly different from other agreements in that multilateral as well as bilateral organisations supported it. Morozzo della Rocca in particular has defended this theory, emphasising the Community of Sant'Egidio's role in addition to that of the Italian Government—in this challenging negotiation. One of his articles published in the Italian journal, Limes, shows that five years after the signing of the General Peace Agreement, the 'myth' of the Mozambican example was still alive, despite evident problems with the contents of the deal as well as its implementation. Morozzo della Rocca argued that the General Peace Agreement had the following positive consequences: first, peace, since the war ended and military conflict ceased; second, a rapid and effective implementation; third, the first free elections in 1994, with a large percentage of Mozambican electors voting, and the unexpectedly strong results for Renamo, although they lost. The author underlines the 'stability' of Mozambique, presenting Renamo as a mature political opposition (Morozzo della Rocca 1997).

In truth, the 'Italian formula' and the nature of the peace agreement signed in 1992 never resolved the Mozambican issue at a structural level. It is worth remembering that Renamo retained its army, broadly interpreting that the General Peace Agreement allowed its leader, Afonso Dhlakama, to have a personal guard dedicated to his exclusive security. At the same time, Renamo did not demobilise its military operatives, leaving the country in a 'no war' situation, which is very far from a condition of peace. Speaking about the history of the various peace agreements, former President Chissano stated that problems of interpretation and ambiguity have always characterised their implementation. As a consequence, Mozambique has never lived at peace (Macuácua 2019).

Morozzo della Rocca did not address the fact that the peace process and Mozambique's adherence to the Structural Adjustment Programme of 1986 and the liberalism of the Constitution in 1990 never involved people other than Renamo and Frelimo. The paradox of the new Constitution was that a liberal and pluralistic Constitution was voted in by a one-party Parliament without waiting for the negotiations in Rome with Renamo to conclude.

Even if it is true that the first general elections registered a very high turnout, Renamo did not recognise the results until they came under intense pressure to do so from the international community. Further, starting with the general elections of 1999, the evidence of fraud carried out by Frelimo and the Mozambican Government was so significant it was apparent to all.

Perhaps even more challenging to the success of peace was the marginalisation of all other civil and political society segments, leaving every political decision to the two major parties. This situation continues today, since—despite the pressure exerted by the MDM (Democratic Movement of Mozambique, the third Mozambican party, led by Daviz Simango) and civil society organisations to be allowed to participate—the Frelimo government and Renamo continue to be the only parties to decide the future of the country.

We cannot ignore the role of the international community in Mozambique's democracy. In one of the rare studies of international cooperation in support of democratisation, De Tollenaere (2006) considers three areas of international cooperation with Mozambique: human rights, media and electoral aid. De Tollenaere concludes that in the field of human rights, some significant improvements have been achieved, especially in the prison system as well as at the institutional level (for instance, with the institution of the Central Office for Combating Corruption) and in terms of vibrant, judicial organisations, such as the Mozambican League of Human Rights, for many years led by Alice Mabote. In addition, Mozambique's independent media has flourished and has represented local civil society, especially after the approval of the 1991 Press Law, which opened the doors to private media. Specific initiatives, such as providing aid for creating a network of Mozambican community radio (Forcom), resulted in successes whose outcomes are visible today.

The international community invested about USD 150 million in the management of elections between 1994 and 2004. De Tollenaere states that the Mozambican technical entities that deal with elections—the National Electoral Commission (CNE) and its executive arm, the Technical Secretariat for the Administration of Elections (STAE)—were equipped with informatics tools, specific training and methodology to carry out the registration of voters. Notwithstanding the computerisation of the electoral roll, the tabulation of the results was overseen by Mozambican

institutions only, which rejected every international offer of cooperation and collaboration. The result was that in all the elections considered by De Tollenaere (but the same conclusion is valid also for all the others), 'the clearance of the results revealed a dubious quality' (De Tollenaere 2006:11) so that the conclusion was the following: 'The donors were able to influence the establishment of democratic rules, but much less the practice of the democratic play' (De Tollenaere 2006:28).

The Mozambican Government insisted on managing the electoral processes itself. At the same time, the international community's aid was mainly in the technical dimension and training electoral observers, with no opportunity to intervene in the transparency of the elections. It meant that issues related to peace stayed in the hands of the Frelimo government, which could manage the electoral processes according to its will and political objectives.

Hypothesis 2

'This climate of negative peace contributed to fostering the reciprocal mistrust between Frelimo and Renamo, whose objective has always been their mutual cancellation, instead of mutual recognition. In addition, important segments of civil society, such as women and NGOs, were systematically excluded from the country's management, at the local, regional and central level.'

The Constitution itself is the first instance of the concentration of power and the marginalisation of many social and political actors. According to the Mozambican Constitution, the head of state—elected directly—is the leader of the Government and selects all the ministers, including the prime minister; he is the commander-in-chief of the defence and security forces; he guides foreign policy; he appoints all the supreme judges, the chiefs of the Mozambican armed forces, secret services and police, as well as all the principals and vice-principals of the public universities, and many other institutional figures. There is no system of checks and balances to constrain these powers. Therefore this figure represents an almost absolute despot and has free rein over the interpretation of this role. Outside of parliamentary debate, the only arena where there can be negotiations around the president's decisions is within his party, Frelimo.

Contributing to this aspect of political weakness in Mozambique's democracy is that Renamo did not object to this system of Government, even in the negotiations of the General Peace Agreement of 1992. The result is that the country's institutional structure is highly concentrated in the president's hands and that there is a structural distance between private citizens and the institutions. This is reinforced because the electoral system does not indicate a preference for a specific candidate to Parliament since it

is possible to vote only on a party list. The rationale behind this institutional and electoral system is that the two major parties believe in the concept of Government as an absolute power that cannot be shared with any other entity. Consequently, they project their endless armed struggle onto the political field, aiming at reciprocal elimination.

Mozambique has always put forward the narrative that women have played a vital role in its politics since the struggle for independence carried out by Frelimo. Within this war logic, all those elements that could contribute to peace and reconciliation have been systematically excluded. Women were the first of these groups. According to an official version, Frelimo's Destacamento Feminino (Female Detachment) was created on 4 March 1967 by a group of 'illiterate girls', fighting for the liberation of Mozambique from the colonial regime of Portugal (Macie 2012). In 1973, during the Mozambican War of independence, another essential organisation was created, the Organisation of Mozambican Women (OMM). This civilian organisation is responsible for how women are organised within Frelimo.

Starting with the heroines of the struggle for independence (such as Josina Machel, the first wife of President Samora Machel), Frelimo has created a history in which women have occupied prominent roles in Mozambican politics. These include Graça Machel (the second wife of President Samora Machel and the last wife of Nelson Mandela), Luísa Diogo (former prime minister), Verónica Macamo (a former president of the Assembly and currently Minister of Foreign Affairs) and many others. Renamo, too, has promoted some female figures. Ivone Soares, a niece of Afonso Dhlakama, has been the leader of Renamo's parliamentary bench. In general, the presence of women in Mozambican political life and Parliament has always been relatively high (Osório 2010; Da Conceição and Quenane 2013).

Nevertheless, their contribution to the diffusion of a political culture of peace has been negligible. No woman has been involved in any process of peace negotiation in Mozambique; no woman has been named to head crucial areas such as defence, internal affairs, and so on. A culture of peace and tolerance, which in many cases women promote, has not entered Mozambican peace negotiations and institutions due to the lack of the direct involvement of women.

Elections versus Peace: Why the Mozambican model did not work

The relationship between the lack of transparency in the electoral processes and the negative peace has marked recent Mozambican history. The following examples of the reactions of the main opposition party, Renamo, to the official electoral results suffice as an illustration.

Renamo never recognised the results of Mozambican elections; at specific points, this rejection had, as its consequence, new military tensions or, as in 2014, a new war. The two examples here focus on the 1999 and 2014 elections for two reasons: firstly, they were the most contested elections in Mozambican political history; secondly, they span a long period in time, over which we can see the mechanisms at the base of the tensions between Renamo and Mozambican Government, which are constantly repeated.

In the 1999 general elections, Chissano obtained 52 per cent of the valid votes. Frelimo ran the risk of losing power, so 'administrative' measures were implemented to avoid it. Of the total valid votes, 377,773 were not processed. Curiously, they came from Zambezia, a province that broadly supports Renamo. More curiously yet, this number of votes 'was larger than President Chissano's margin of victory', as the Carter Foundation observed (The Carter Center 2000:2). In the conclusion of its report, the Carter Foundation pointed out that, 'Unfortunately, technical problems and a lack of transparency in the final tabulation of results undermined the credibility of the process, fueling political suspicions and doubts about the final results' (The Carter Center 2000:5).

Renamo did not accept the results. After it attempted to get justice and failed, protests were organised by the local leaders of this party, especially in the north of the country. In Montepuez (Cabo Delgado), in November 2000, about one hundred members of Renamo were captured and put in a tiny cell, where they died, officially from asphyxia (Heitor 2000). The independent press clamoured very aggressively against this terrible event but without affecting any judicial or political result. The subsequent trial convicted two correctional officers, whereas the Chief of Police, Khalau, was promoted in Maputo, becoming, after few years, the General Chief of Mozambican Police; the Governor of Cabo Delgado, Pacheco, assumed the role of Minister of the Interior, then of Agriculture, and finally of Foreign Affairs, and is today a favourite to succeed President Nyusi in 2024.

The second example showing the link between the lack of transparency in electoral processes and the kind of peace prevailing in Mozambique can be found in the general elections of 2014. In the offices of the National Electoral Commission (CNE), a heated debate took place about whether to validate the results or not. In this event, too, Renamo did not recognise the final results, which saw the victory of the candidate put forward by Frelimo, Filipe Nyusi, with 57 per cent of the votes cast, against Renamo's Dhlakama, with 36,61 per cent, and Simango (MDM) 6,36 per cent. The final vote was ten against seven for the results.

Nevertheless, Dhlakama asked for a recount of the votes (RFI 2014). He waged a country-wide campaign, with the aim, as before, to divide Mozambique and to retain control of the six provinces Renamo had gained in the provincial elections (which had taken place on the same day as the general elections). On 3 March 2015, after publishing his legal opinion defending Renamo's request to make the six provinces semi-autonomous, Professor Gilles Cistac, a Franco-Mozambican lecturer in Constitutional Law at the University of Eduardo Mondlane, was killed in the centre of Maputo. Many Mozambican and international observers contended that a death squad murdered Cistac at the behest of the Mozambican Government. The investigation into Cistac's death still has not produced any result, which only continues to feed tremendous suspicions regarding the involvement of Mozambican intelligence (Issufo 2015; Muchanga 2016; Canalmoz 2016). Armed hostilities started again between the two sides, and Dhlakama was forced to take refuge in the Gorongosa mountains, where he died on 3 May 2018. The lack of transparency in the electoral process constituted the basis for a new wave of tension, which had a new war as its immediate consequence.

A new peace agreement was signed on 6 August 2019 between the head of state, Nyusi, and Renamo's new president, Ossufo Momade. Once more, this agreement immediately revealed its limitations: the day after it was signed saw a recent outbreak of military clashes. In this instance, a division of Renamo did not accept the deal reached with the Government. Mariano Nhongo, a member of Renamo's army, declared himself head of the Renamo Military Junta and did not recognise Momade's leadership of Renamo. Nhongo had hoped for the postponement of the elections, which had been fixed for 15 October. He was unsuccessful, but he still controls about 3,000 Renamo operatives, who have carried out ambushes and other actions of the war in the centre of the country, opening a new front of tension and the conflict in the north against supposed Islamic terrorists.

These examples show how peace in Mozambique is closely related to the management of the electoral processes, lack of transparency about which results in tension, clashes and war. It is clear that if the Frelimo government continues to ignore the political will of the Mozambican people, any discourse about peace will be doomed to failure.

Conclusion

The research presented here shows why the rhetoric of many Western thinktanks, politicians and international organisations proclaiming Mozambique's political success as an African nation should be reviewed. Frelimo has never accepted the model of governance in Mozambique's Constitution, based on political pluralism and electoral competitiveness. How general elections have been run—and the same could be said for local elections, for instance, the municipal elections in Maputo in 2008 and Matola in 2018—represents a clear demonstration that Frelimo is not ready to give up power, nor Renamo its weapons, without the guarantee of absolute transparency. This guarantee is the crux of all the Mozambican political scenarios: at the moment, no entity can ensure that future elections will be transparent. On the one hand, Mozambique's 'independent' institutions—such as CNE and the judiciary—are strictly controlled by the head of state and, thus, by Frelimo. On the other hand, as shown in this article, the international community has no power and/or interest to step in, leaving the Frelimo government to manage the electoral processes at their convenience.

These conclusions confirm the two primary hypotheses presented at the beginning of this work. A climate of negative peace, which characterised Mozambique after the General Peace Agreement of 1992, manifested itself in various aspects of Mozambican governance: at the institutional level, in the concentration of power in the hands of the head of state; at the policy level, in an electoral law which privileges the two main political parties over the free choice of the voter; in the electoral process, in the refusal of any form of collaboration with international partners, opening up the field for the Frelimo government to manipulate the elections and their results.

Mozambican society, more broadly, has not been included in the country's democracy. As shown throughout this work, the first group to be consistently excluded from the decision-making process were women, despite the significant role some of them play within Mozambican institutions. And those women who are political appointees have been co-opted into a masculine, gerontocratic and elitist system, which has not enabled them to change the climate of negative peace established between Renamo and Frelimo. In an attempt to create autonomous spaces of discussion, groups of women from different political and cultural backgrounds have founded associations and organisations, such as the Fórum Mulher or the Fórum da Mulher Rural, free from the influence of political parties. These organisations have influenced important initiatives in the public sphere, such as lobbying for a law against domestic violence (which was approved by Mozambique's Parliament in 2009). Nonetheless, this critical effort did not affect the political framework.

The same conclusion has to be made about the contribution of other political and social actors. Things changed partially in Mozambique from 1992 onwards. An aggressive private press and groups of civil society

organisations established themselves. There were some meaningful institutional changes at the local level, with municipalities like Nampula, Beira, and Quelimane now managed by opposition parties. Nevertheless, a great many of the features of a climate of negative peace have been maintained, with the aggravating circumstance of a terrible, new war in Cabo Delgado province, itself another aspect of negative peace: the socioeconomic inequalities between the south and the north and between different ethnic groups in the north, with the domination of a closed political and economic elite represented by the Makonde, to the detriment of groups like the Kimwane and Makhuwa. This is not another story but a different and more violent manifestation of the same problems highlighted by this work.

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