Between Political Party and Armed Group
Understanding Renamo as a Hybrid Party

Johanna Nilsson
Abstract

This thesis explores the concept of hybridity within the context of rebel-to-party transformation, with a particular focus on Renamo during the period of 2015-2017 in Mozambique. This timeframe was marked by a resurgence of organised systematic violence, disrupting the relative peace that had prevailed in Mozambique since 1992. The central conflict revolved around the issue of local self-governance, with Renamo asserting its claim to govern in six out of Mozambique's ten provinces. During this period, Renamo operated both as a political party with a significant presence in parliament and as an armed group engaged in systematic violence.

The rebel-to-party literature has sparked discussions about groups that seem to retain elements of their violent past while transitioning into political parties, leading to the emergence of the concept of hybrid parties. However, this concept remains relatively undefined and underexplored. This thesis seeks to contribute to this discussion through an in-depth qualitative study of Renamo's elite-level politicians, aiming to enhance our understanding of hybrid parties.

The study, conducted during the conflict years, closely examines how elite politicians in Renamo navigate their dual roles. It encompasses 14 months of fieldwork from February 2015 to January 2017, drawing on elite interviews, elite-level public statements, and elite observations of parliament, enriched by ethnographic sensibility. The analysis is grounded in a theoretical framework that allows for an exploration of Renamo's behaviour and perceptions as both an armed group and a political party, particularly concerning the issue of local self-governance. Through this analysis, the study aims to elucidate the intersections, thereby advancing our comprehension of how hybridity manifests.

The main findings suggest that Renamo's hybridity predominantly manifests through processes related to contemporaneity in behaviour, elite-level legitimisation, and one key political issue. Furthermore, I argue that the hybridity is maintained through narratives of democracy and a charismatic leader. The thesis advocates for a deeper exploration of these processes to enhance both empirical understanding and the theoretical discussion surrounding hybrid parties.

Keywords: hybridity, elite politicians, behaviour, perceptions, Renamo, Mozambique, elite interviews, war to peace transition

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Till Elliot

Allt jag gör, gör jag för dig
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## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIM</td>
<td>Agencia de Informação de Moçambique (Mozambique News Agency)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDR</td>
<td>Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frelimo</td>
<td>Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Mozambican Liberation Front)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FADM</td>
<td>Forcas Armadas de Defesa de Moçambique (National defence forces of Mozambique)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LC</td>
<td>Local Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDM</td>
<td>Movimento Democrático de Moçambique</td>
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<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRM</td>
<td>Polícia da República de Moçambique (Police force of Mozambique)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renamo</td>
<td>Resistencia Nacional Moçambicana (Mozambican National Resistance)</td>
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1. Introduction

It was the evening after the important vote in Parliament. Renamo's bill on provincial self-governance, autarquias provincias, had been put to a vote, and it was voted down. Renamo's leader Dhlakama had made it clear that if Frelimo did not approve the bill, Renamo would resort to violence. On that day, I was in Parliament to observe; often, the audience section was nearly empty, but on this day, it was filled with representatives from the international community. Everyone wanted to know what would happen now: would there be a war, as Dhlakama had threatened?

I had been invited to join three of Renamo's MPs for dinner. They frequently met to discuss matters, and this time, I was asked to join so that I could hear their thoughts about the unfolding situation. We gathered at a central hotel in Maputo and dined at their outdoor restaurant. One of the men ordered a local fish dish for me, emphasising that I should sample the local cuisine, as this fish was particularly popular in Beira, Renamo's stronghold. They mentioned that they were not surprised by Frelimo's rejection of the bill; the outcome could not have been different.

Their demeanour was not one of anger but rather an expression of weariness about the situation. I inquired about their expectations for what would happen next, considering Dhlakama's threat of using violence. One of them replied that probably nothing significant would occur, as Dhlakama often made threats that did not materialise, and they would soon again be approaching the next election. This pattern had been observed before: Renamo contested elections, issued threats immediately after, leading to elite negotiations, and then Renamo returned to its usual state. The other MP pointed out that this time, the rest of Renamo was fed up, tired of Frelimo, and frustrated with the lack of progress. They wanted Renamo to act; they desired violence because, in their view, nothing would change without it. He stated, "Maybe this time, Dhlakama will find it difficult to do nothing. This time, everyone wants violence."

I was taken aback by how openly these elite politicians discussed the need for violent actions and how they rationalised violence when political developments did not align with their desires. It intrigued me how, as parliamentarians, they demanded and justified violence, presenting it as the only viable option when democratic political channels failed them. (Maputo, 30 April 2015)
This short field note illustrates the conundrum that I encountered and serves as an illustration of the empirical starting point for this thesis. Renamo (Resistência Nacional Moçambicana – Mozambican National Resistance) appears to operate both as a political parliamentary party with elite politicians actively pursuing political goals and as an armed group where the same elite politicians not only have knowledge of but also support acts of systematic violence. I was intrigued by how to perceive Renamo and its actions and sought to gain a deeper understanding of this duality and how it functions. Early observations suggest that Renamo, to some extent, assumed two roles. This thesis explores how these two roles of the party interact and how they function in practice within the context of a theoretical discussion on hybrid parties. This discussion primarily unfolds within the broader theoretical framework focusing on rebel-to-party transformation.

We have witnessed a general deterioration of democracy worldwide and an increased use of violence in politics, both in Africa and the Western world (Diamond 2008; Rakner 2019). Political parties employing violence is not a unique phenomenon, but there is still limited understanding of hybrid parties and how a combination of violence and politics is perceived from an actor-centred perspective. This thesis specifically focuses both on the perceptions and behaviours of Renamo elite politicians to comprehend how the two roles become intertwined. It adopts an actor-centred perspective to explore the nuances of hybridity and how violence and politics are combined. The thesis relies on unique material based on interviews conducted with elite politicians during the period of unrest from 2015 to 2017, supplemented by observations of parliament and public media statements. Therefore, it offers a rare insight into how hybridity manifests. An improved understanding of the processes through which hybridity manifests enhances our comprehension of, and the theoretical discussion surrounding, hybrid parties.

In this chapter, I will introduce the reader to the focus of this thesis by elucidating the aim and research question, the research design, some critical concept discussions, the primary contributions, and finally, the outline for the entire thesis.

The Duality of Renamo: How are the Roles Combined?

This thesis analyses the behaviours and perceptions of elite members of Renamo in Mozambique, with a focus on advancing our comprehension of political parties that resort to violence as a means of achieving political objectives. The political party Renamo competed in the general elections (Eleições Gerais) in Mozambique in October 2014, ultimately losing to its long-standing opponent, Frelimo (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique – Mozambican Liberation Front). While Renamo significantly increased its share of votes compared to the previous election and secured a relatively large number of
seats in parliament, its members perceived the election not only as a political defeat but also as yet another manifestation of their lack of influence. The fact that Frelimo retained the presidency and maintained its majority in parliament meant that it retained full political control, a source of disappointment for Renamo.

The aftermath of the election was marked by allegations of electoral fraud, a common occurrence in Mozambique. However, this time, the situation escalated from mere accusations to concrete violent action. Renamo announced that it would only accept the election's outcome if it were granted the right to govern in the six provinces where it had received a majority of the votes. If Frelimo did not agree to this, Renamo threatened to resort to force to achieve its goals. The quote below illustrates this:

If Frelimo does not approve the project [local governance], it will even be good, because we shall remove them from power by force. Afonso Dhlakama, 4 March 2015 (Josef Hanlon, 2015)

In the quoted statement, Renamo's president, Afonso Dhlakama, openly threatens to employ armed force to oust the ruling party, Frelimo, while simultaneously referring to a parliamentary project. The general elections in 2014 followed a tumultuous year in Mozambique, marked by increased acts of violence between the two rival parties, Renamo and Frelimo. In contrast to the sporadic pre-election violence, Renamo made post-election proclamations containing explicit threats of systematic violence if its political objectives were not met.

Renamo is officially a self-proclaimed democratic political party that argues it strives for the advancement of democracy in Mozambique. Since 1994, it has been an active opposition party with representation in parliament. Renamo holds a strong political position in Mozambique, maintaining its status as the largest opposition party with substantial numbers of seats in parliament and a significant majority of votes in certain provinces. Renamo, however, originated as an armed group and has a lengthy history as such, stemming from the 16-year civil war that spanned from 1976 to 1992. During the peace process initiated in 1992, Renamo transformed into a political party.

Through its violent actions following the general election in 2014, Renamo reverted to a form of systematic violence reminiscent of its past. Renamo refers to this as reengaging the armed wing of the party, emphasising Renamo's identity as a political party. The nature of the armed systematic violence closely resembled that of their earlier days as an armed group, with insurgent groups targeting government forces and civilian targets to incite unrest. What set this instance apart was the use of systematic violence to swiftly attain a specific, relatively limited, political issue. In contrast, as an armed group in the past, they had fought to dismantle Frelimo and the one-party system of that era. Renamo's historical trajectory will be further explored in Chapter 4.
In the aftermath of the 2014 election, the violent response was linked to the political objective of attaining local self-governance over six provinces, out of ten in Mozambique. Renamo leveraged the results of the 2014 election to assert that it had the majority of votes in six northern and central provinces: Sofala, Manica, Zambezia, Tete, Nampula, and Niassa. Renamo's official contention was that they should be granted the right to govern the provinces in which they secured a majority of votes. This constituted the primary political demand behind the conflict that escalated during 2015 and 2016. Renamo actively pursued this claim for local self-governance through its elite politicians, who introduced a bill to parliament and subsequently sought revisions to the constitution. Renamo thus maintained an active presence within parliament and employed democratic parliamentary political means to advance this issue.

Renamo's most prominent leader, Afonso Dhlakama, served as both a military leader and as the leader of the party. He held this leadership role from 1979 until his death in May 2018, encompassing a remarkable 39-year tenure. It could, therefore, be argued that Renamo never entirely shed its armed past, even though it officially transformed into a political party and operated as such. Its return to organised systematic violence following the 2014 general election suggests that the transformation may not have been as successful as previously assumed in research (Manning 2004; Moran and Pitcher 2004; Söderberg Kovacs 2007; Vines 1996).

The contemporary political elite in Renamo comprises a mixture of members who joined after the peace agreement of 1992 and former soldiers. These elite-level politicians, the Members of Parliament (MPs), form the nucleus of Renamo's political activities, and are thus the individuals primarily responsible for shaping Renamo's actions, behaviour, and identity as a political party. What became evident after the 2014 general election was that these Renamo members appeared to accept the use of systematic violence and deemed it a necessary aspect of Renamo's political existence. As described in the opening paragraph of this chapter, this observation was something I noted early on during my interactions with Renamo. I found it intriguing that these elite politicians did not distance themselves from violent actions but rather justified them. These initial observations laid the foundation for the aim of this research project, which seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how we can interpret Renamo both as a political party and as an armed group. More importantly, it aims to explore how these two roles coexist at the elite-level within Renamo, with a focus on how this hybridity manifests.

Research has delved into the challenges associated with transforming an armed group into a political party. The theoretical concept of "rebel-to-party"

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1 There are 10 (+1) official provinces in Mozambique: Maputo (and Maputo City as its own province within), Gaza, Inhambane, Sofala, Zambezia, Manica Tete, Niassa, Nampula, Cabo Delgado. See map on page 72.
transformation began to gain traction as a research field after the end of the Cold War. This shift occurred because the conversion of armed groups into political parties became an integral component of peacebuilding efforts in the 1990s. Wittig (2016) discusses the burgeoning literature within this field, suggesting it can be delineated into three waves.

The first wave of literature specifically examines the success or failure of transforming armed groups into political parties (Manning 2007; 2004; 1998; Söderberg Kovacs 2007; Stedman 1997; Stedman, Rotchild, and Cousins 2002; Vines 1998; 1996; Zartman 1995). This initial wave of literature predominantly views the process as theoretically linear, transitioning from an armed group to a democratic political party and imposing an ideal-typical differentiation between the two. In this perspective, a political party is a social organisation where actors exclusively employ democratic political means, while an armed group is a social organisation structured around armed violence. Success or failure was assessed based on the ability to adhere to these ideal types, implying leaving the violent past behind and evolving into a democratic political party. Parties that continued to exist without resorting to violence were considered successful cases (Allison 2010; 2006; Söderberg Kovacs and Hatz 2016; Manning and Smith 2019; Moran 2006; Moran and Pitcher 2004; Rufyikiri 2016; Söderberg Kovacs 2007; Zeeuw 2013; 2008).

The second wave of literature concentrated on comprehending the more long-term aspects of the transformation of post-rebel parties that endured within the political system, with a primary focus on ideology and identity. The extent to which groups had managed to alter their ideology was seen as crucial for their ability to function effectively as political parties (Curtis and Sindre, 2019; Ishiyama, 2019; Ishiyama and Batta, 2011; Ishiyama and Marshall, 2015; Sindre, 2019, 2016; Sindre and Söderström, 2016).

The third wave, as discussed by Wittig (2016) and her own contribution, centres on the debate surrounding groups that appear to exist as hybrid versions of political parties and armed groups. This discussion is relatively new and challenges the linear notion of transformation. Berti (2013) argues that the linear argument is flawed because it assumes that politics and rebellion are mutually exclusive. She posits that empirical evidence suggests many groups oscillate between these two states in a cyclical manner. Her analysis primarily focuses on the armed groups Hamas and Hezbollah, often perceived as primary violent actors, but who also have a political wing. It also examines the IRA and Sinn Féin, which operate symbiotically but maintain a clear distinction between politics and violence, or groups that act as one or the other at different times (Berti 2019; 2016; 2013; Berti and Gutiérrez 2016; Wittig 2016).

Nevertheless, the rebel-to-party literature has not yet placed sufficient emphasis on enhancing our understanding of what constitutes a hybrid party and how hybridity manifests. There is no consistent understanding of the term hybridity and how to analyse political actors who appear to function as hybrid
entities, blending armed and political roles. This thesis enters this ongoing theoretical discussion by examining how we can comprehend political parties with a history as armed groups that, following transformation, appear to assume dual roles. The simultaneous engagement of Renamo in parliamentary activities and armed struggles for the same cause is at the core of this analysis. I aim to deepen our understanding of Renamo both as a political party and as an armed group, with a specific focus on the manifestation of this hybridity. Consequently, while this thesis uses the rebel-to-party theoretical framework as a starting point, its primary aim is to contribute to the theoretical discussion surrounding hybrid armed political parties.

This thesis will centre on understanding the elite perspective on how Renamo, as a group, functions simultaneously as a political party and an armed group, through an analysis of elite politicians’ behaviour and perceptions. The term elite politicians is employed to distinguish between those who actively work for the party at the grassroots level and those who hold official positions of power. Identifying who qualifies as part of the elite may be challenging due to informal structures, but here, elite politicians are defined as individuals who hold a national public role within the party, granting them insight into the party’s workings, and who has the capacity to influence its public narratives. The elite perspective offers insights into the level at which a hybrid identity is believed to take shape.

Renamo serves as the primary case study, with a specific empirical focus on actions related to their declared key political issue: local self-governance. According to their own statements, Renamo representatives seek local power, implying a political solution aligned with formal decentralisation, while also employing threats and engaging in systematic violent actions to assume control of the desired local constituencies.

Aim and Research Question

I embarked on this research project with a general interest in understanding how former armed groups transform into political parties. However, while I began to study Renamo, the group reverted to employing armed systematic violence. Consequently, my research focus changed in response to this shift in empirical reality. The pronounced duality within Renamo emerged as the primary research focus, with the overarching goal of enhancing our comprehension of hybrid parties.

My particular emphasis lies in describing and analysing Renamo as an actor concurrently operating in the political arena and employing coercive systematic violence. I adopt an approach centred on Renamo's behaviour and perceptions concerning their self-proclaimed key political issue: increased access to local self-governance. This issue of local power was central to the conflict and Renamo's political endeavours. This empirically driven analysis contributes
to the discussion on hybrid parties within the theoretical field of rebel-to-party transformation. Consequently, the aim of this study is to elaborate on how Renamo’s hybridity manifests, during the conflict in Mozambique, from October 2014 to January 2017, particularly in relation to its claim to achieve local self-governance (decentralisation).

The narrower research question I pose is therefore:

*How does Renamo try to implement its claim for local self-governance (decentralisation), and how does it justify the means used (political and violent)?*

This question takes the ongoing conflict dispute over local self-governance as a starting point, and the thesis delves into how it has been pursued both through political channels and using armed systematic violence. An analysis of this issue provides insights into how a hybrid party combines political and violent methods.

To analyse this rather complex empirical reality, I heavily rely on a theoretical framework designed to enhance our capacity to comprehend groups like Renamo, which employ both political and violent tactics. In 2015, Renamo presented itself as a self-proclaimed political party with an armed wing. The duality I study is from that perspective given and my main aim is to further discuss how these two roles coexist and manifest as a hybrid. While the presence of two roles suggests some form of hybridity, a broad definition alone does not facilitate a comprehensive understanding of it, nor does it shed light on how hybridity functions in practice and how actors rationalise the combination of these two roles. Consequently, I have developed a theoretical framework to aid in studying a party with two roles and, and through this framework with a focus on elite politicians’ behaviour and perceptions, analyse how hybridity manifests. This framework can also contribute to an improved understanding, and definition, of what constitutes a hybrid party.

The theoretical framework distinguishes between political and violent means, enabling a nuanced description of hybrid organisations by highlighting commonalities with both political parties and armed groups. I utilise this framework to examine behaviour and perceptions as either political or violent, thereby allowing the identification of instances where violence and politics intersect. This framework will be applied in the analysis of Renamo's pursuit of local self-governance.

Through this focused approach and the unique empirical material, the thesis aims to elucidate how Renamo operates as a political party while simultaneously employing organised systematic violence. By doing so, it contributes valuable insights to academic discussions on hybrid parties, particularly in the context of rebel-to-party transformations. It advances our understanding of how this hybridity manifest, and how we can analyse hybrid parties. Placing
a greater emphasis on comprehending these processes enriches our overall understanding and theoretical discussion on hybrid parties.

In summary, this thesis commences with an empirical observation that Renamo appears to assume two roles, implying some form of hybridity. Through systematic analysis of a unique empirical material, I trace how Renamo's hybridity manifests.

Research Design: Armed Group versus Political Party

One of the primary contributions of this thesis is to elaborate a theoretical framework to analyse political parties that also use systematic armed violence. There is a lively theoretical discussion on rebel-to-party transformation, but there is still a need for further systematic analysis of the groups that never fully transform and seem to exist with dual roles. Hybrid parties are often discussed but rarely in how they function. To perform such an analysis, I use a theoretical framework based on an analysis of what it means to be a political party and an armed group. There is, of course, an abundance of features that could be added to such a classification, from more formal features and standards, actions, ideology, ideas, and perceptions. This thesis focuses on elite members, with the goal to understand how the two roles may become intertwined. The theoretical framework I propose is therefore based on an analysis of behaviours and perceptions of elite politicians. I do not discuss the more formal organisational aspects of what it means to be a political party or an armed group. Nor do I dwell on ideological messages or party programmes. These are aspects that could also have been rewarding to include, but as my focus is on where I assume that the two roles meet, I have chosen to only analyse the elite-level and the human structure of the group. The full framework is described and discussed thoroughly in Chapter 2.

I have three main sources of material on which to conduct the analysis. First, I have interviews with elite politicians conducted over a period of two years on-site in Mozambique during the low-intensity conflict. This means the perceptions are expressed in direct proximity to actions, making the interview material unique. Second, I use public media statements by Renamo’s leadership to analyse the leadership level and how hybridity manifests in public narratives. Third, I use elite-level observations of parliament to understand whether and how violent perceptions also penetrate parliamentary discussions, and how Renamo behaves as a political party. This combined material is also enriched by an ethnographic sensibility and the fact that I stayed in the country for a substantial period during the actual time of conflict. I experienced first-hand the conflict under study and performed my research while it was unfolding. My methodology is discussed at length in Chapter 3.

My research design focuses on the elite-level, with three sources of material, and a theoretical framework based on ideal-type categories to facilitate
my discussion of Renamo as a group that uses both democratic politics and systematic violence. The framework, however, is designed to be wider than Renamo and can be used to analyse other groups that seem to function somewhere in between the endpoints of armed group versus political party. This will be highly beneficial for the rebel-to-party literature, as there is currently a need for an increased focus on groups that never seem to fully transition or to fully reverse.

The framework is based on general areas of analysis of behaviour and perceptions in relation to being an armed group or a political party. How these manifest or around what issues they centre is context- and case-specific. For Renamo, the issue of local self-governance is at the centre because this was the main claim for why Renamo chose to use systematic violence. As this question is important for Renamo and is at the centre of the analysis, I will provide a background chapter, chapter 4, where I thoroughly describe and analyse why this issue has become such a contested issue for Renamo. This sets the scene and provides contextual understanding that is crucial to the overall understanding of Renamo as a hybrid party.

Conceptual Clarifications and Discussions

There are two main concepts I use in this thesis that I believe need some clarification from the onset. First, one of the main terms used in this thesis is armed group, but it was not a given that it was that specific term I would use. There is an abundance of different terms that correspond to the same thing. From the onset of this research project, I primarily used the term rebel group in relation to Renamo. So, what is the difference between a rebel group and an armed group? Both refer to an organised group that uses armed violence to launch a struggle against a government. The term rebel group, however, does have more negative connotations, in that legitimacy is tied to the government, and the group rebelling is cast as engaging in wrongful actions. To rebel means to resist authority and to act in defiance. This term was more often used historically, both in policy and theory, to describe groups in internal conflicts, but it was questioned because it puts an emphasis on who is right and who is wrong.

In relation to Renamo, it was termed a rebel group during the conflict between 1976-1992 (Emerson 2014). This was due to the general time period, but also because Frelimo controlled the agenda and had the ability to frame Renamo as an illegitimate actor and itself as legitimate. When discussing Renamo today and how it seems to have reversed back to some of its old features, it therefore felt natural to call it a rebel group. I was, however, not at ease with this definition and struggled with what to use. There are other terms used such as insurgency or acts of terrorism. These are, however, more limited to referring to certain acts and not to the actual group and how it is structured.
If you look within the theoretical field, you will see the use of *rebel group* almost as often as the term *armed group*, but there has been a shift in recent years to use the more neutral term: *armed group* (Fjelde and Nilsson 2012; Nilsson 2008; Nussio and Howe 2016; Sindre and Söderström 2016; Söderberg Kovacs 2008). The fact that this discussion exists reflects the difficulties involved in defining groups that use violence. It becomes even more blurred when this group is also a political party, and then sometimes are the terms *armed opposition party* or *armed political organisation* used (Berti 2013; Manning 2004). I will discuss this more in my theoretical chapter, but I want to make it clear at the beginning of this thesis what term I use. I have opted to use the term *armed group* because it simply describes a group that uses armed systematic violence. It does not place any value on this action.

I will, however – in relation to the theoretical field and in certain theoretical discussions – use the term *rebel* if this is used in that specific literature. For instance, the theoretical field that discusses the transformation of rebel groups/armed groups into political parties is often called *rebel-to-party*. I will not change established discussions, but in my own thesis I use the term *armed group*.

The second important concept that requires clarification is *violence*. Violence is a key concept in this thesis, and it is a term that can encompass various meanings. I would argue that *violence* as a term has become so broad that it becomes challenging to understand its specific meaning without additional descriptors, such as *physical violence*, *psychological violence*, *structural violence*, *sexual violence*, and so forth.

Violence, according to its core definition, involves actions intended to harm, assert power, punish, and control. It entails using physical force with the intention to hurt, damage, or kill someone (Cambridge Dictionary 2022). Violence entails inflicting pain and suffering. The definition of violence that I address specifically pertains to the *organised use of systematic physical violence, at a group level, to inflict physical harm, death, pain, and suffering*. This primarily refers to physical forms of violence, which may include sexual violence if it is organised and employed as a group strategy. I do not delve into psychological violence, although I would argue that all forms of physical violence inherently involve elements of psychological violence. However, I do not focus on pure psychological violence that exists without instances of physical violence to leverage it. Furthermore, I do not emphasise structural violence as a strategic aspect. If this thesis were centred on the government's use of violence, structural violence might be a category for more extensive discussion. Occasionally, I may touch upon structural violence or symbolic violence, but I will clearly indicate when I am engaging in a separate discussion of these concepts.

My intention is to be as precise as possible, and I use the term *systematic violence* to describe *acts of physical violence that are authorised, carried out,
and organised at a group level. When I employ the broader term violence, I am referring to its core definition as an act intended to inflict physical harm.

Key Contributions and Main arguments

It is a common practice to transform armed groups into political parties during peace processes. This is done to establish a new democratic system with legitimate political actors, providing armed groups with new avenues for wielding power, thereby fostering lasting peace (Söderberg Kovacs and Hatz, 2016; Lyons, 2005; Manning, 1998; Söderberg Kovacs, 2007). However, rebel-to-party transformation is a process that institutionalises conflict behaviour and conflict structures within the new democratic system. Violent actors are also legitimised by transforming them into recognised political actors, offering them acknowledgment and new channels for their actions (Themnér, 2017).

The long-term consequences of rebel-to-party transformation are not yet fully comprehended, as this practice gained prominence during the post-Cold War era. This thesis aims to advance our understanding of rebel-to-party transformation, particularly focusing on hybrid parties, through an examination of Renamo, and primarily its elite politicians. Renamo has experienced a process of rebel-to-party transformation, but after more than 20 years as a political party, it once again resorted to systematic violence. Renamo was long considered a successful case of rebel-to-party transformation (Manning 2004; Moran and Pitcher 2004; Söderberg Kovacs 2012; Vines 1998; 1996). However, the process appears to be more intricate.

This study empirically demonstrates that Renamo functions as a political party by actively participating in parliament, yet it also resorts to systematic violence. Consequently, I do not consider Renamo's current actions as indicative of a failed rebel-to-party transformation. There are nuances in this that require further exploration. I advocate for a deeper understanding of hybrid parties as actors operating in two spheres. Through this thesis, I contribute to this discussion by closely examining Renamo's behaviour and perceptions in relation to both roles, a political party and an armed group, to gain a better grasp of how hybridity manifests.

I have formulated a theoretical framework based on distinct categories of being a political party and an armed group, which enables an analysis of the behaviour and perceptions of Renamo's elite politicians. These categories, however, should be regarded as ideal types, as they are not mutually exclusive classifications used for sorting observations (Esaiasson et al., 2017). Through this framework, I can illustrate and analyse how Renamo's hybridity manifests. This will also enhance our overall comprehension of groups that appear to function as both political parties and armed groups. This analysis and framework contribute to the broader literature on rebel-to-party transformations and can potentially be applied to better understand other groups that
straddle the line between being a political party and an armed group. Confining these groups to one of these identities alone prevents us from comprehending all aspects of their identity. The framework should not be considered a categorisation tool with mutually exclusive labels but rather as a tool that enables interpretation to advance our understanding of hybridity.

Within this thesis, the framework aids in comprehending Renamo and the behaviour and perceptions of the elite-level during the period of 2015-2017. The analysis revolves around Renamo and its primary political concern: local self-governance. The empirical data for this thesis holds the advantage of being collected during the unfolding events. Over the course of two years, I closely followed and interviewed a group of elite politicians within Renamo, commencing in February 2015 when the unrest in Mozambique began to escalate, and concluding in January 2017 when a ceasefire was eventually achieved. This presented various challenges but also numerous advantages, as I had the opportunity to interview and observe elite politicians in close proximity to both political and violent occurrences. I also had the opportunity to personally witness and experience these events. This provides a rich foundation for analysis, rendering the thesis a unique empirical contribution.

One of the primary methodological strengths of this thesis lies in the actor-centred approach it offers, with the perceptions of Renamo's elite politicians forming one of the central parts of the analysis. This thesis is grounded in a long-term field study that includes first-hand elite interviews, elite observations, and an ethnographic sensibility. These elements provide exclusive material and close-up insights into both behaviour and perceptions. The ability to listen to and analyse the perceptions expressed by elite politicians, revealing how they themselves perceive and comprehend their party's behaviour, enhances the value of this research, and underscores the benefits of engaging in qualitative methodology influenced by an ethnographic sensibility. Consequently, this thesis holds both theoretical significance in advancing our general understanding of hybrid parties in rebel-to-party transformation and empirical richness in comprehending Renamo and the political landscape in Mozambique.

Presently, peacebuilding and democratisation efforts are frequently collaborative initiatives, often imposed by external actors or significantly influenced by international donor presence, especially in fragile, less developed, post-conflict nations. To make well-informed decisions it is important to address policy issues with as much knowledge as possible. This research and the knowledge generated could have significant policy implications, both at a general level and concerning the ongoing process in Mozambique.

I would argue that one of the key overarching policy implications this thesis highlights is the notion of adopting an actor-centred perspective when understanding the complex issue of when political actors resort to systematic violence. Understanding the full nuances of a situation necessitates incorporating the perceptions of the actors. From a mediation perspective in the context of
peace negotiations, it is paramount to comprehend the full spectrum of actors and their reasons for employing violence. This research offers valuable insights into how we can approach and understand actors in the mediation process. I engaged with and interacted with elite politicians during the conflict to grasp their behaviour and their perspectives, which is crucial for effective mediation and negotiation.

The specific political issue under scrutiny in Mozambique was local self-governance, an issue with a long history of conflict. Consequently, the thesis also sheds light on how unresolved conflict issues persist and lead to new conflicts even two decades after the conclusion of the initial conflict. It provides insights into the necessity of combining short-term and long-term efforts in peacebuilding, particularly concerning rebell-to-party transformation.

The main argument and conclusions discussed in this thesis revolve around how Renamo's hybridity manifests through specific processes related to contemporaneity in behaviour, elite-level legitimisation, and one key political issue. Additionally, I discuss how hybridity is maintained through narratives of democracy and a charismatic leader. An increased focus on understanding these processes and how hybridity manifests will enrich our understanding, and the theoretical discussion, surrounding hybrid parties. The analysis also contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of, and definition for, what it means to be a hybrid party.

Outline of Thesis

Chapter 1, the Introduction, focuses on drawing the reader into the empirical problem from which this research originates. It also introduces the main theoretical implications used in the thesis and explains how the thesis will contribute to our understanding of hybrid parties within the rebell-to-party literature by examining Renamo and how hybridity manifests.

Chapter 2 elaborates on key theoretical discussions and concepts that are crucial to grasp before delving into the analysis. It navigates through the main theoretical discussions, with hybridity at the core. The chapter elaborates into past theoretical discussions concerning the definitions of a political party and an armed group, with the aim of understanding how hybridity might manifest. Building on these discussions, the chapter presents the theoretical framework that will guide the analysis. The framework is founded on a conceptualisation of the two categories, political party and armed group, enabling an analysis of Renamo’s hybridity.

Subsequently, in Chapter 3, a methodological discussion is provided to clarify all stages of the research process, making it evident how the material has been collected, what material has been utilised, and how the analysis of that material has been conducted. The benefits and pitfalls of employing an interpretative research methodology, influenced by an ethnographic
sensibility, and based on long-term field studies, are also discussed, as well as ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 offer the reader a background to comprehend Renamo and its role in the Mozambican political system and history, considering the potentially perplexing situation in Mozambique for those unfamiliar with it. This chapter specifically addresses and analyses the political issue at hand, local self-governance, and the historical factors that have contributed to it being a contentious issue for Renamo. This empirical analysis provides contextual understanding, essential for the subsequent analysis of Renamo as a hybrid party.

Chapter 5 represents the primary empirical chapter in this thesis, where the main empirical material is presented, and an analysis of Renamo as both an armed group and a political party is conducted. In this relatively extensive chapter, I will present and demonstrate how Renamo has pursued local self-governance (decentralisation). This will be analysed using the framework, commencing with the analysis of Renamo as an armed group and then as a political party, in relation to both behaviour and perceptions.

By employing a systematic analysis based on the framework, we will gain a comprehensive understanding of Renamo's dual roles. This, in turn, will enable an analysis of how hybridity manifests. Chapter 6 is dedicated to this empirical analysis, extracting information from Chapter 5 and tracing how hybridity manifests through specific processes and how it is maintained.

Finally, in Chapter 7, overall conclusions, contributions, and key arguments will be presented based on the research and analysis of Renamo. This chapter also includes a broader discussion of the primary theoretical contributions and policy implications. Towards the end, I will also explore key narratives arising from the empirical analysis in relation to theory and potential directions for future research.
I was just starting to wrap up an interview with a woman I had met with at the Renamo Sofala office. The office is located in Ponta Gea in Beira, an affluent neighbourhood consisting of villas just on the edge of the Indian Ocean. The woman takes out her phone and says she wants to show me a picture. I lean in, and she scrolls through some pictures of her at the Renamo Santujira military base. There is specifically one picture that catches my attention. It is her standing between two soldiers. I had the image that all Renamo soldiers are rather old today, that they are the ones who were left over from the 16-year war. These two soldiers, however, are not that old. I would put them in their twenties. They are dressed in military green clothing, tight t-shirts, and they have scarves tied around their necks in the Renamo colours, dark blue, green, and red. They are young men, smiling, and they are both holding an AK47. Or I think that is the weapon; I am not an expert on machine guns. But these look like the newer weapons I have seen in the regular army.

She shows this picture to me with pride, and I am slightly shocked. I ask her if it is common for her to meet with the soldiers of Renamo. She stands up and moves to the window, she points outside and says, “who do you think these men are around the house, sitting in the yard, sitting across the street? They are all Renamo soldiers. They do not have their guns out here, we are in the city, but they are here for our protection.” I remember seeing the men sitting on the other side of the street from the house when I arrived; they had greeted me, but I assumed they were just loitering around, which is a common sight on any street in Mozambique.

Now I know that these men are soldiers there for the protection of the politicians. The Sofala headquarters has been targeted several times by police on various raids. The picture she showed also informs me that there are new recruits fighting for Renamo; their military wear and weapons suggest that they used to be in the national army. This is the first time I have myself encountered the two parts of what Renamo seems to be, that they have both politicians and soldiers. When I leave the compound that day, I make sure to offer a very polite goodbye also to the men sitting across the street under a tree. (Beira, 20 March 2015)
The field note above indicates that the two sides of Renamo seem to exist in some form of symbiosis. Renamo is a political party that contains an armed wing. So, how should Renamo be viewed and how do the roles interact? As already mentioned, the rebel-to-party literature has primarily focused on the outcome, success or failure. This idea has started to be questioned, as this dichotomy of either an armed group or a political party limits analysis, and the concept of hybrid parties is being discussed increasingly (Berti 2016; 2013; Berti and Gutiérrez 2016; Parkinson and Zaks 2018; Wittig 2016; Zaks 2017).

The concept hybrid also exists outside the rebel-to-party literature, and it is an accepted, although disputed, idea within the literature on democratisation (Bogaards 2009; 2009; Diamond 2002; Levitsky and Way 2010). Hybrid regimes are seen as an established form of governance where countries exist in a fused form of democracy and authoritarianism. Hybrid regime is even used as a descriptive class in the classification of countries, such as the index by Freedom House and International IDEA, which are acknowledged actors. The discussion of hybrid regimes, however, sheds little light on how this is manifested in institutions as well as political parties. There is less known about the actors who exist within hybrid regimes, and in general about political actors who combine democratic political strategies with systematic violence to achieve their position and political leverage. The literature on hybrid regimes has pointed out that this needs to be further understood regarding how it shapes behaviour, and therefore also the behaviour of political parties. This is an aspect that is still not fully explored, especially in relation to the rebel-to-party literature.

This study explores how hybridity manifests in political parties. I do, however, limit myself to discuss hybrid armed political parties, in relation to the theoretical field of rebel-to-party transformation since Renamo empirically is part of such a transition. Some aspects of my findings could, however, also be of relevance to a larger discussion of parties that combine violence and politics. This field is broad and there is little consensus on how to address and understand violent political parties or military-politico organisations (Allison 2010; Berti 2013; Angerbrandt 2018; Basedau, Erdmann, and Mehler 2007; Smith 2009). The idea of hybrid parties could, however, also include other roles, such as a combination between activism and a political party (Peña 2021), which is a discussion I do not aim to contribute to.

The rebel-to-party literature is starting to acknowledge that there sometimes seems to be an incomplete transformation, where groups continue to use both violence and politics. The current debate within the rebel-to-party literature revolves to an increasing extent around the different kinds of parties that emerge. There is a growing focus within the rebel-to-party literature on how parties may also exist in some kind of hybrid version. However, there is limited research into understanding the nuances of hybridity in political actors and how it functions for political actors who use both systematic violence and politics. This is the discussion my thesis primarily contributes to. My study
enters and contributes to a theoretical discussion of hybrid parties within the field of rebel-to-party transformation. I focus on understanding Renamo as a political opposition party that also resorts to using armed systematic violence. I will do this through a framework that traces out an understanding of the two theoretical sides of the hybridity, what it means to be an armed group and a political party. The aim is to see how Renamo’s behaviours and perceptions fall within these two and through that analyse how hybridity manifests.

The previous theoretical discussions on hybrid parties in the rebel-to-party literature have portrayed it primarily as a cyclical change of identity (Berti 2019; 2013; Wittig 2016) or as separate sub-groups (Whiting 2018). Through a thorough analysis of Renamo, we can, therefore, gain further insights into how these parties’ function and how we could make sense of the concept of hybrid parties within the rebel-to-party discussion.

In this chapter, I outline the key theoretical knowledge that is important to understand to be able to analyse hybrid parties within rebel-to-party transformation and what it may mean to exist as both a political party and an armed group. This will end with the construction of a framework for analysing a party that holds dual roles. The framework will enable an analysis of how hybridity manifests.

Rebel-to-Party to a Hybrid Party

In 1992, Renamo changed from an armed group to a political party through a UN initiative during the peacebuilding process. Rebel-to-party is, therefore, the backdrop and empirical starting point for this thesis. The focus is, however, as mentioned, on understanding hybridity. I will, therefore, take us through some important theoretical insights that take us from the two roles in rebel-to-party and further into the idea of hybridity.

Post-conflict societies emerging after civil war face many challenges. Transforming armed groups into political parties has been an actively promoted endeavour during peacebuilding in the process of constructing a new, hopefully more peaceful political system. Political parties are seen as imperative for channelling grievances that were handled with violence during the war, but they also need to incorporate the new cleavages and grievances often created by conflict. There is a risk, however, that parties in post-war settings will end up simply representing one specific conflict interest or group, leading to further division, and transferring conflict structures to the political system (Reilly 2006; 2001; Reilly and Norlund 2008). Reilly (2006) argues that it is important to engineer the political system and political parties in the aftermath of conflict to avoid further fragmentation. It is, therefore, important to understand how political parties are transformed and what role they assume in society.
One issue that is often raised is how to address grievances after conflict, primarily on an elite-level. The actors who have been active in the conflict need to find other avenues to express their grievances and other avenues of power. Here, inclusion of violent actors into the political system is seen as a solution. Power-sharing agreements are one aspect of this, where the political system is constructed so that violent actors gain access to democratic means to address issues within the democratic system, either through the construction of a consociational democracy (Lijphart 2007; 1969) or as a democratic mechanism used during a transitional period after conflict (Binningsbø 2013; Hartzell and Hoddie 2003; Hartzell and Hoddie 2015; Jarstad 2008; Jarstad 2008; Jarstad and Nilsson 2008; Mehler 2009; Sisk 1996).

This can cause problems, however, when the aim of democracy clashes with the need for peace (Jarstad and Sisk 2008). When armed actors are provided political positions, this can be seen as a reward for violence, meaning violence to gain political power becomes institutionalised in the system. One way of dealing with this issue has been to actively transform violent groups into political parties during the democratisation process. If the parties have problems in leaving their violent past behind them, however, this may also lead to the construction of a frail new political system.

Rebel-to-party literature indicates that former armed groups should transform into political parties. It is, however, evident that the transition may not be that smooth, moving back and forwards, or that groups exist with dual roles. Hybrid parties as a theoretical concept have, therefore, started to become more and more discussed within the rebel-to-party literature. There is, however, little actual consensus on what hybridity means and how we could analyse it. It is seen as complex, but the complexity is seldom systematically explored or spelled out. This is a shortcoming in the current understanding of hybrid parties within the rebel-to-party discussion.

Berti (2013) offers one of the first discussions of hybridity, arguing that the linear argument of moving from rebel-to-party is flawed because it assumes that politics and rebellion are mutually exclusive. She argues that empirical evidence indicates that many groups move between these two states in a cyclic manner. Her analysis focuses on armed groups such as Hamas in Palestine and Hezbollah in Lebanon, whose members are often seen as primarily violent actors but who also have a political wing, and on the IRA and Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland, who work in symbiosis with each other but with a clear distinction between politics and violence. Even if a complete transition is desirable, the reality is that many groups function differently, and it is, therefore, important to understand these groups not just as a success or failure but rather how they function as a hybrid (Berti 2019; 2016; 2013; Berti and Gutiérrez 2016). The cyclical argument for hybridity discusses it as a strategy through which the two parts are chosen based on the circumstances required. The two aspects are equally important but not used at the same time.
This new focus within the discussion of rebel-to-party transformation is what Wittig (2016) refers to as the third wave, which I discussed in the introduction chapter. Wittig (2016) claims that, in Burundi, there are several strong political parties with an armed history that although today remain strong as a political party, they occasionally resort to violent acts to gain leverage within the system. Violence is an integral aspect of politics and of being a political party in Burundi.

This thesis will theoretically expand on our understanding of hybrid parties within the theoretical field of rebel-to-party transformation. It focuses on how we can understand groups that use both parliamentary politics and systematic violence to pursue their political aims, and it primarily discusses how hybridity manifests. An increased focus on understanding these processes will enrich our understanding and the theoretical discussion of hybrid parties.

First, to be able to analyse hybridity, we need to understand the dichotomy of being an armed group and a political party. This discussion will then be used to create a framework for analysis.

Hybridity: Armed Groups and Violent Politics

The first role in the dichotomy is the existence as an armed group. What this means, however, varies considerably between different actors. There are some features that are often discussed as key to the understanding of what it means to be an armed group. It is important to remember that actors are complex, and different actors have different circumstances that shape their existence.

What characterises an armed group?

As a theoretical concept, armed groups have evolved within the vast academic literature on civil wars. Civil wars have traditionally been understood as a situation in which a group within a country rebel against a government. The term used for this group can vary. But because it acts against a sitting government, which is seen as the official holder of political power, and because it uses different forms of rebellion, the generic concept rebel group is often used. As discussed in the introduction, the term rebel group comes with connotations of legitimacy, and therefore the more neutral term armed group started to prevail. These groups can have many different organisational structures, and how they function and why they choose conflict may differ substantially between different groups in different settings. Traditionally, the focus within the literature has often been on understanding civil wars taking place between two actors: government and opposition (armed group) (Besley and Persson 2011; Besley and Persson 2008; Huang 2016).

In practice, it may often be the case that many civil wars commence owing to actions of one group, but this situation becomes more complicated along
the way, and groups during many civil wars become fragmented. Fragmented armed groups can consist of loose structures around one group identity or common cause, where all armed groups fight against the government, but it can also become a situation in which different armed groups are fighting between themselves as well as against a government. This situation is more prevalent when state structures are very weak, and ethnic relations play a significant role in the causes of war (Fjelde and Nilsson 2018; 2012; Nilsson 2008). Armed groups that have more formal group status, however, have a clear central command, while those more fragmented are rather referred to as an armed or rebel movement (Fjelde and Nilsson 2018).

Armed warfare is when a group actively uses armed violence to cause distress to the government it is fighting against, to create leverage, or to remove the government from power using force. This includes attacks that affect civilian populations both by directly targeting civilians and by targeting property that affects civilian life, such as infrastructure. On an operational level, when the fighting reaches certain levels, it is called a civil war. Civil war is when at least two groups are fighting within a country, including government forces, and annual civilian battle-related deaths are above 25 people (UCDP).

Armed groups exist and fight in relation to a proclaimed agenda. How this agenda is proclaimed and what underlying causes may exist are the topics of a lively theoretical debate. The agenda may also be multifaceted, with both open and hidden causes for war, which means that, from a theoretical point of view, we sometimes need to draw conclusions based on behaviour rather than agenda. A significant input to this debate is the understanding that economic reasons often underlie rebellion. This has been discussed in relation to economic grievances, economic exclusion, as well as economic plundering of vast natural resources (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; 1998; Keen 2012; 2005a). These armed groups are often viewed as opportunistic and as having loose political agendas for fighting. There may be a difference between an officially proclaimed political agenda and a more hidden economic agenda.

Coming primarily from the research on armed groups in Latin America is a larger focus on ideology and politically driven armed groups. Armed groups were seen to rally against oppressive, often right-wing, governments, and a communist-driven movement took form. These armed groups were formed around an agenda to achieve equality and impose a left-wing political agenda (Allison 2010; Koonings and Krujit 1999; Wood 2003; 2000). In Latin America, there are also instances where there are difficulties separating the political and economic incentives for conflict, and where time may have distorted the original agenda for insurgency, such as in Colombia, where FARC started as a communist left-wing armed group with a clear ideological agenda but has over time also become closely connected to the drug trade (Ballvé 2012; Sanín 2004). Armed groups with ideological connections were primarily big during the cold war era, where allegiance with ideology also meant financial and military support from one of the superpowers.
In Africa, the discussion around armed groups has primarily been focused on ethnicity and identity. There is often an underlying idea of exclusion, because power is held by certain privileged ethnic groups, and therefore other ethnic or identity-based groups do not get access to political benefits, such as aid allocation or land rights. Armed groups are therefore formed around a joint identity of exclusion that seeks inclusion, increased political representation to guarantee their survival, and prosperity. The agenda is based on a desire to gain a government position or at least to increase control of a government position due to perceived mistreatment by the sitting government (Angerbrandt 2015; Braathen, Boás, and Sæther 2000; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Fujii 2011; Mann 2005; Reilly 2001; Smith 2009). However, again the purpose often seems to have an inherent duality, and many armed groups in Africa are seen as pursuing both ethnic and economic claims simultaneously, such as diamonds in Sierra Leone and Liberia (Collier and Duponchel 2013; Keen 2005b; Moran 2006), oil in Nigeria (Angerbrandt 2015; Uche 2008) and minerals in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Baaz and Verweijen 2013; Samset 2002).

Armed groups have an agenda that they try to pursue through their actions. This agenda may be diverse and complex, and parts of it may be official while other parts are hidden. What distinguishes an armed group from a political party is not the political agenda as such, but the means the group uses to pursue the agenda, how it intends to pursue the agenda, and how democratically legitimate the agenda is considered to be within the given context. Kalyvas (2006) argues for trying to understand the logic of violence rather than focusing on the conflict. Violence serves different purposes for different actors; there is a difference between state actors, civilian movements, and acts of terrorism. Kalyvas (2006) aims to move the analysis from conflict to violence, analysing groups' use of violence to understand the overall conflict. This implies an increased focus on actors in civil war and the diversity of their agendas, as well as how they aim to pursue that agenda and how they argue for their logic of violence.

The officially expressed logic of violence, or the agenda, is often proclaimed by the elites. Armed groups may, as mentioned, have various structures that are sometimes more official than others. If group structures are looser, they tend to sometimes be referred to as movements rather than groups. How a group is organised is also a key aspect mentioned in the possible success or failure of the transformation from armed group to political party, an aspect I will return to below. What differs between, for instance, political violence and violence by an armed group is the organisation of an elite that controls and orders violent acts. Armed groups are military organisations that have a clear level of command. Leaders of armed groups are sometimes referred to as warlords (Themnér 2017). They are the top military leaders of an armed group, the ones officially in charge of all actions of the armed group. These men are then also the ones who take on the role as party leader after a
**rebel-to-party** transformation. This may be seen as rather controversial because these leaders do not have any political training. They are also, upon becoming party leaders, sometimes given amnesty for their war crimes. This can even be seen as a reward for their actions, as indicating that violence leads to political wins.

The structure of armed groups, as mentioned, may range from being rather undefined to very well organised. This is also an aspect that is thought to impact the ability to successfully transform into a political party. If an armed group has proto-party structures during its time as an armed group, this may influence its ability to transform. Zaks (2017) argues that the organisational structure of the actual armed group is of importance. The seed for a possible success is dependent on the organisational structure and on whether proto-party structures existed pre-peace. Zaks provides in-depth descriptions and analysis of how wartime armed group organisational structures, and the process through which they evolve, affect whether they have a viable chance to also exist as a political party. Renamo is one of her cases. She discusses Renamo’s early change to an organisational structure with strong leadership that paved the way for a gradual change towards proto-party structures, which later enabled the group’s transformation to a political party (Zaks 2017).

From this broad theoretical discussion of armed groups, I deduce that armed groups are structured around a common, often, political agenda, and that organisational structure focused on leadership and elites are important issues to analyse. These insights will be incorporated into the framework.

**Armed groups and violent political parties**

Within the definition of armed groups, a political cause is often mentioned, meaning that politics is closely related to rebellion. As the most prominent theorist of war, Carl von Clausewitz, expressed: war is a prolongation of politics (1832/2003). In this connection, it may also be feasible to discuss the concept of violent political parties and how these may differ from either an armed group or a political party.

Increasing theoretical attention is being paid to violent political parties. These may not have had an armed past but use violence as a political strategy (Allison 2010; Angerbrandt 2018; Basedau, Erdmann, and Mehler 2007; Smith 2009). Mehler (2007) argues that systematic violence is used for different purposes by political parties in Africa; violence can be seen as a sanctioned strategy by the actual party, it may be employed by a limited party elite to gain power or economic means, or it may be conducted by people who identify with the party, such as during demonstrations or riots. To attribute violence to a political party, as an act of the party, violence must be controlled by the party and accepted by the elite members of the party as an action that benefits the party (Mehler 2007).
What often differs between a violent political party and an armed group is electoral participation. Elections and electoral participation are also seen as key factors in *rebel-to-party* transformation. If former armed groups manage to participate in elections without resorting to violence and if they complete the process as newly formed political parties, this is interpreted as a sign of success for the party itself as well as for the democratisation process and the future of sustainable peace (Allison 2006; Ishiyama and Batta 2011; Manning 2007; Manning and Smith 2019, Lyons 2005; Söderberg Kovacs and Hatz 2016; Zeeuw 2008).

However, there is also growing theoretical support for the notion that elections in many new democracies and especially in post-conflict countries tend to be marred by violence. In many countries, violence perpetrated by political parties has become an integral part of elections (Allison 2010; Basedau, Erdmann, and Mehler 2007; Höglund, Jarstad, and Kovacs 2009; Laakso 2007; Lyons 2005; Söderberg Kovacs and Bjarnesen 2018). This indicates that the distinction between electoral participation, meaning acceptance of democratic norms, or meaning that one should only be seen as a political party, becomes blurred when violence is also used as a strategy in elections (Höglund 2008). Participating in elections is often the first thing new parties do, but their success or failure may be more complicated. Being a political party is more than just participating in elections, and hence, a successful transformation depends on the ability of an armed group to fully change into a political party in organisation, structure, mindset, and behaviour. Elections and electoral participation and how that relates to violence may be key in understanding a group that has dual roles.

The history of political parties in Africa is strongly linked to the liberation movements, where, in retrospect, violence and rebellion were often attributed positive connotations of liberation and seen as a sign of power. Using violent means was therefore not necessarily seen as anti-systemic, but rather a part of the political system (Mehler 2007). Violence is sometimes used as a means by a political opposition party when normal democratic avenues are not considered sufficient, and repeated historical defeats can eventually trigger a violent response. For instance, repeated experiences of election defeat can lead to a rather swift violent response in the next election because, based on historical experience, the opposition may already be prepared to respond with violence, even before fully knowing an outcome.

This, however, may be linked to a more long-term experience of political, social, cultural, and economic exclusion that leads to grievances building up until violence is constructed as the only valid option. In a semi-authoritarian setting, the opposition may be harassed by government forces, and opposition areas may be excluded from development initiatives to punish people for voting against the government. Violence can be used by ruling parties and opposition parties for several reasons, but it may also be that the system itself has promoted violence as the rule of the game. Violence has become the dominant
mode of competition. This would seem to have stemmed from the long-term experience of systemic violence, coming from the time of colonial rule. The norm for political competition was achieving leverage through the use of violence, meaning it had become a default option (Mehler 2007).

Bertelsen (2016) discusses this specifically in relation to the Mozambican state, emphasising how the historical use of state violence has created a violent political setting. If state formation has been accomplished on the heels of violence, it is not surprising when violence becomes the answer. Violence as a means of politics becomes integral to power. Cheeseman and Klaas (2018) discuss how historical events and traits can often be either deliberately used to create leverage or function as a form of symbolic violence based on memories. Their reference is specific to the abuse of elections, but the same idea could also be present specifically when former armed groups enter politics or when they revert to violence. It is not only the new attacks per se that create leverage and status as an armed group, but history also enhances the magnitude of such actions.

Violence and politics are two aspects that have historically been closely connected. Political goals that are difficult to achieve are often connected to different levels of violence, from revolutions to demonstrations, collective political violence, and outright insurgencies (Addison 2002; Polk 2007; Tilly 2003). Addison (2002) proposes that violence and politics may, in some cases, be so intertwined that they are to be viewed as permanently conjoined. It is neither a stage of peace nor one of war, but he instead calls it violent politics. He actively refrains from using the term political violence, as that puts the emphasis on violence. Violent politics instead implies that politics is pursued through violent acts. It “is the violent form of politics, and not a political form of violence” (Addison 2002). Violence is an active means to pursue political goals, and the political striving is at the centre of the argument for violence. This often results in low-level intensity conflicts, which at some point either erupt in outright civil war or are handled through political compromises.

A concept that has often been seen as contrary to violence is democracy. Democracy is seen as the solution and as facilitating the end of systematic violence. Today, peacebuilding and democracy are two policy measures that are linked together (Jarstad and Sisk 2008). Democracy is seen as an ideal form of governance that is free from violent actions. Moran (2006), however, questions this idea and claims that forms of democracy and violence have been inherently present in the state formation of Liberia. Liberia has often been critiqued for its lack of democracy due to high prevalence of violence. She does not see these two as mutually exclusive but holds that democratic actions and structures can coexist with violent ones and that they are both equally important in the construction of legitimacy. Moran (2006) argues that the use of violence may not directly imply that the party has lost political legitimacy or even democratic legitimacy within its context. Even if one does not aim at
analysing democracy per se, it can be valuable to see and further understand how actors link democracy with violence.

The discussion above demonstrates that distinguishing a violent party from an armed group is not necessarily straightforward. The vast literature discusses these two entities in rather equal terms in relation to goals and political status. What is often mentioned as a difference is the official use of an armed wing that is controlled by the party and integrated into the party structure, rather than sporadic violence. Violent political parties may also not want to overthrow a government but use violence as political leverage on specific political issues. These are important features that I will incorporate into the theoretical framework for the analysis of a party that also functions as an armed group.

Hybridity: Political Party and Oppositional Behaviour
To fully understand and be able to analyse a party that seems to exist as both an armed group and a political party, we must understand what it means to be a political party in general, and specifically what it means to be a post-war opposition party in a semi-democratic setting. Above, I have discussed what it means to be an armed group, and I will now move to the other end of the spectrum and discuss the idea of being a democratic political party.

What characterises a political party?
A classic conception of what it means to be a political party indicates that a political party is an organised formal group of people who share the same ideology or the same political positions, and that the group has mass-based support. Political parties seek to implement their political agenda through participation in elections (Katz and Mair 1994; Panebianco 1988; Sartori 1976). This is a general idea concerning what it means to be a political party that has gained momentum. The idea that political parties always hold or seek mass-based support, the mass party, has however been criticised for being too Western-centric, as many African political parties are more reliant on identity-based support (Erdmann 2007). Nevertheless, for a political party to survive, it needs to seek support from a larger group of people.

Political parties exist in both democratic systems and non-democratic systems. The existence of political parties *per se* is not a sign of a functioning democracy. What is key to a democratic system is the prevalence of effective and competitive opposition parties. Existing as an active political party within a democracy means abiding by democratic rules, being active in pursuing goals through democratic political organs, such as parliament, participating in competitive elections, and rallying support around a politically formed agenda.
For my analysis, I will leave the more traditional theories aside, as they assume a certain form of democratic context. Within rebel-to-party transformation, new parties are constructed in the aftermath of war, meaning that the democratic system is often newly created or faltering due to conflict. My analysis is also focused on Renamo in Mozambique, meaning that this is the specific context that needs to be taken into consideration.

Research on political parties has historically had a Western focus; however, in recent years, we have seen an increasing body of literature focusing on non-Western parties, including African parties (Basedau and Stroh 2008; Mozaffar and Scarritt 2005; Osei 2013; Salih 2003; Sklar 2015). In the 1960s, Africa was present in the political party literature due to the end of colonisation (Basedau, Erdmann, and Mehler 2007; Dudley 1967; Hodgkin 1961; Salih 2003). Subsequently, the research on African parties dwindled, which may have reflected the increasing authoritarian structure of African politics. After the end of the Cold War, democracy was again on the rise in Africa, and there was a renewed scholarly interest in understanding the role of parties, especially how opposition parties tried to exist within semi-authoritarian regimes.

Political parties and the important role of opposition constitute a well-researched area. In attempts to explain African opposition, the prominent theories seemed to be faltering. The conceptualisation of party structures did not fit the reality of political parties in Africa. The most common understanding and classifications of parties, such as the idea of mass parties, are based on ideological parties, which have been rare in Africa (Diamond and Gunther 2001; Katz and Mair 1994; Panebianco 1988; Sartori 1976). When political parties in Africa claim an ideology, this has been seen as an attempt to claim an ideological belonging rather than as a reflection of actual conviction to that ideology, for instance, due to possibilities of gaining outside international support (Rakner and van de Walle 2009; van de Walle and Butler 1999). African parties are often discussed as existing around personalistic features and have patrimonial structures of allegiance, not ideological (Bogaards 2004; Erdmann 2007; Rakner and van de Walle 2009; van de Walle and Butler 1999).

Research on political parties has also primarily focused on the formal structures of parties, which did not fit the understanding of African parties that seemed to be primarily structured around the informal (Bjarnegård 2013; Bjarnegård and Kenny 2015; Helmke and Levitsky 2006; Lauth 2000). The mainstream theories and party research therefore did not fit the understanding of African parties, and hence it was treated as a separate field.

African political parties

The field focusing on African political parties is growing and strives to understand parties within the context. There are, however, issues from the traditional literature on political parties that can aid us in understanding African political parties. Erdmann (2007) strives for an understanding of African
political parties in line with the existing theories. He argues that the ideas are the same; we just need to think more broadly. One of the traditional key issues discussed in political party research is the cleavage model, originally proposed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). In Western Europe, parties emerged based on cleavages in society that were important at the time. The classic cleavages were centre versus periphery, religion versus state, rural versus urban, and capital versus labour. These represented the trends seen in Western Europe at the time and were, therefore, within the party literature, often assumed to be applicable elsewhere.

The focus on these specific cleavages has proven to not always fit within other contexts. Still, the idea of cleavages does serve an analytical purpose, without specifying what sort of cleavages are involved. Erdmann (2007) proposes that the most common cleavage in Africa would be ethnicity, and he, therefore, proposes to add that dimension to the analysis. In many African settings, this is a valid aspect to add, but simply making an addition may again limit the scope of analysis, as ethnicity is also contextually bound. Many African parties may have ethnic dimensions, but ethnicity is not the sole aspect of the party. Other group-based social belongings can exist that construct cleavages that may shape party lines (Randall 2007), or cleavages may be formed around other issues not accounted for when forming predefined categories for analysis. Due to the common instances of conflict in Africa, many political parties are also constructed in line with conflict cleavages, which is an important aspect discussed within the rebel-to-party literature, which I will return to below.

A common assumption about political parties in Africa is that they are generally weak as opposition parties or very strong as ruling parties (Levitsky and Way 2002; 2010). Many African countries are ruled by one dominant party, often a former liberation party. These are to some extent very strong parties, but they are reliant on state structures to exist. There is little separation between state and party. This also shapes the role of the opposition parties, which are embedded in a very challenging structure (Chabal and Daloz 1999; Randall 2007; 2001; Salih 2003). African political parties are thought to be institutionally weak, revolving around a cult of personality. Party elites create parties for their own benefits, and desires for power, and gain support using ethnicity and patronage. Parties in power hold on to that power, often through illicit means and by providing services based on party membership. Parties are said to have little or very weak political programmes, and it is hard to see any real programmatic differences between parties. Opposition parties are known to use identity-based rhetoric to gain support against a strong government party (Bogaards 2004; 2000; Carbone 2007; Mozaffar, Scarritt, and Galaich 2003; Mozaffar and Scarritt 2005; Rakner and van de Walle 2009; van de Walle and Butler 1999).

Opposition parties in Africa are, therefore, seen as primarily having a strong presence around elections, and weaker actual democratic political
presence within other political institutions. There may be many opposition parties, each with a low vote share, leading to a de facto one-party state system (Clapham 1997; Lindberg 2006b; 2006a; Rakner and van de Walle 2009; Randall and Svåsand 2002a; 2002b). What is often discussed as an inherent weakness of African opposition parties may be the product of a democratic system in which countries seem to permanently exist in a form between authoritarianism and democracy. This kind of hybrid democracy means political parties need to adapt to exist within such a system, and they may, therefore, not fit the more traditional understanding of the role of a political party within a democratic state. Levitsky and Way (2010) discuss the fact that many countries have a democratic structure officially, but an unofficial uneven playing field. This means that opposition is hindered by contextual issues, implying that these political parties need to deal with the peculiarities of that system.

Although opposition parties in Africa tend to be weak and often based on identity, this is not the whole picture. There are opposition parties that have remained in a strong position for a substantial amount of time, and there are parties that are ideological and programmatic. There is research suggesting that democratic values in some African countries are increasingly leading to higher trust in opposition parties, and that voters reward parties based on collective goods, rather than clientelism (Orre 2014; Uddhammar 2011; Weghorst and Lindberg 2011). Orre (2014) concludes that the main opposition parties in Mozambique and Angola, Renamo and Unita, have managed to maintain large vote shares for a long period of time despite the fact that they operate within a structure of political exclusion and domination on the part of the government party. These parties are not ethnically based but are made up of members and active politicians who represent many different ethnicities. They have managed to attract voters using non-identity-based political issues and to maintain activities as a political party formed around political cleavages in society. It is also worth remembering that when we discuss African political parties, we often discuss groups that are rather new. This is often even more so the case in post-conflict countries.

Becoming a post-conflict political party

As mentioned, the first wave of research within the rebel-to-party literature focused on the actual transition process, while the second wave started to focus on how these new parties’ function and what kind of role they play within the political system. This was a natural progression of the field because the parties that did undergo a successful transformation began playing an active role in the newly formed post-conflict political systems. It therefore became relevant to start looking more closely at the different features of these parties, how they deal with their new political role, and whether they seem to be active players for peace and stability or, on the contrary, a destabilising force.
In understanding why certain parties tend to persist while others disband or return to warfare, the focus has been on understanding how former armed parties change their identity into being political parties and on understanding how these parties are, or become, connected to a political ideology. Within the core principle of turning armed groups into political parties, there is the idea that, over time, groups become socialised into a new ideology and identity, rather than just changing their official status, and that this will socialise the groups into becoming stable political parties, regarding not only their official status but also their ideology and identity. This stream of research within the rebel-to-party discussion is still rather limited, but there are some important contributions that have highlighted the mechanisms underlying such a process, such as actively rebranding the official party identity and actively changing the output of the party through electoral participation (Berti 2019; Ishiyama 2019; Ishiyama and Sindre 2022; Neumann 2005; Sindre 2019; Wittig 2016).

The focus of this second wave of literature has been on both the process of establishing an ideology and the content of that change. Sindre (2019) discusses whether former armed parties continue to use wartime cleavages to mobilise voters or whether they change and adapt to peacetime issues. If they do the latter, this could be an indication that the parties have attempted to move on from their violent past. If violent wartime cleavages continue to be salient and still present within the newly constructed political system, this is an indication that the transformation is not complete. It may be the case, however, that some cleavages from the conflict are also relevant as a peacetime issue. The latter discussion on political issues and whether they are brought over from the former conflict is an important aspect of furthering our understanding of how former armed parties behave. The fact that they are still pursuing the same issues does not necessarily mean that they are still lingering in their violent past. This depends on how they address these issues, through violent means or within democratic political channels.

One of the main issues of organisational structure is the role of leadership (Ishiyama and Marshall 2015; Sindre 2016b; Sindre and Söderström 2016; Söderberg Kovacs 2007; Stedman 1997). Former armed group leaders may not be strong political leaders because these two kinds of leaders must have different skill sets. The leader is an important factor for all political parties, but when the party structure is new and weak, the leader is often seen as synonymous with the party itself. It has often been said in relation to many African parties that they revolve around one Big Man, rather than a set of principles or an ideology (Daloz 2003; Duffield 1998; Themnér 2017; Utas 2012). Themnér (2017) calls these types of leaders, coming from a military background, warlord democrats, making a statement about the inherent controversy in that term. Warlord democrats are actors who use their previous status and power position to reconstruct a role for themselves in the new political system.
Political parties are often formed around the elites of the former armed groups. How these elites relate to their former soldiers is important to the survival of the parties. Reintegration of soldiers often implies a return to civilian life, but soldiers who have served an armed group for a long time may still demand some level of reimbursements or patronage. Disgruntled former soldiers may be what changes the balance of power towards moving back to fighting, or former soldiers who are properly politically reintegrated may become a stabilising factor for democracy. To construct a well-functioning party in the rebel-to-party transformation, it is important to consider all levels of soldiers and how they behave within a new party (Ishiyama and Marshall 2015; Manning 1998; Sindre 2016b; 2016a; Sindre and Söderström 2016; Zeeuw 2013; 2008). Former fighters may take part in politics in a positive way to achieve change for themselves, their groups, and their communities. Veterans’ associations have at times been known to be positive actors in politics. Former fighters and former leaders of armed factions may constitute a positive force and should not automatically be seen as spoilers (Muriaas, Rakner, and Skage 2016; Söderström 2020; 2016; 2014). It is therefore important to analyse the behaviour of elites within the newly formed party to see how their behaviour shapes the overall identity of the party.

As already mentioned, the organisational structure of the armed group may also have implications for the group’s ability to become a political party. If the group has held proto-party structures as an armed group, this makes the transition more viable. Leadership is here again mentioned as an important aspect, but opinions differ on the importance of changing or maintaining leadership. Zaks (2017) suggests that it was important for Renamo’s transition that the group remained with the same very strong leader, as he had played an active role in reshaping the political output of the group. While Zeeuw (2008) emphasises that, on a general level, internal democracy within parties, meaning changing leadership on a regular basis, is a key factor for success. Leadership may be a contested issue, but the rich theoretical discussions indicate its importance.

What it means to be a political party seems to be context-dependent, but from these theoretical discussions, we can see that ideology, or a common cause, is often mentioned as important for the institutionalisation of a political party and a democratic political system, while cleavages can drive democratisation as well as conflict. Election periods also tell us important things about the durability of a party. The role of leadership is disputed but is regardless mentioned as something that shapes how a party function.

**Theoretical Framework: Analysing Hybridity**

Within the rebel-to-party literature, there is a growing notion and discussion that there are parties that seem to function both as political parties and armed
groups at the same time. This could be a constant feature of the party structure, or it may be an interlude on the trajectory towards becoming a fully-fledged political party. Regardless, we need to increase our understanding of this phase of the rebel-to-party transformation and open our analysis to see not only success or failure but also to understand a hybrid. Although this theoretical discussion is growing, there is still little systematic analysis of what hybridity is and how it manifests.

To understand how a party functions as a hybrid, we need to analyse how it fits into both two roles in the hybrid. The discussions previously in this chapter have shown us the theoretical ideas of what it means to be an armed group and a political party. A short conclusion from that is that a straightforward set of definitions does not exist. I have constructed an analytical framework that will trace out how elite politicians’ perceptions and behaviour infer being an armed group or a political party. This nuanced rich description of the roles will primarily enable an analysis of when the two roles overlap and therefore how hybridity manifests.

In the analysis of rebel-to-party transformation, there has been a tendency to judge the transition on pre-set criteria from an outside perspective. I propose that we also aim at increasing our understanding through an inside perspective by analysing elite politicians’ perceptions of their party’s use of violence, as well as the party’s political work. This will enable an understanding that is shaped by knowledge of how the party functions from the inside. The actor-centred perspective will bring new insights that aid the analysis of how hybridity manifests.

I use the term perception because it includes points of view, opinions, and justifications. However, perceptions and ideas may diverge from what is performed. Behaviour does not always match expressions. To move beyond Renamo’s own ideas of themselves, I will combine an analysis of their behaviour and their perceptions. These two components together provide a basis for analysing a party that seems to exist as both a political party and an armed group. The two components complement each other and together provide an in-depth understanding of hybridity.

These two constitute the first analytical part of the framework, and I will now go through how they will be analysed in relation to the ideal-type categories; armed group and a political party. The next section, therefore, starts with a short recap of the key analytical issues to consider under each category, also presented as a table to facilitate analysis. This thesis focuses specifically on the behaviour and perceptions of elite politicians in the group. In relation to this, there are certain issues related to behaviour and perceptions that we can find in the previous literature and that are important to the analysis. I thereafter discuss how we move on from the dichotomy and discuss how hybridity will be analysed in relation to these ideal-type categories.
Armed group: Behaviour and perceptions of elite politicians

An armed group is a group that uses armed force to strongly oppose the actions of a government or to remove that government. Armed groups are formed around a common cause, where armed force and the use of systematic violence are seen as important leverage against a government. The causes that armed groups fight for may vary substantially. They may be centred on political issues or more identity and ethnicity-based; they may concern territory or sometimes access to resources such as diamonds, minerals, or oil. The proclamation of an agenda is a key behaviour of armed groups, an agenda that is to be achieved using violent means. This will be analysed in relation to how threats and actual systematic violence are used to intimidate the opponent.

The actual use of systematic violence is a broad concept and includes different levels of violence. It may be outright civil war, or rather low-intensity fighting, which does not reach the status of civil war but nevertheless has substantial effects on civilian life. Behaviour as an armed group, therefore, revolves around an active and controlled use of armed force to achieve leverage against the government. This may involve different levels of violent behaviour, but the concrete use of armed systematic violence is at the centre.

I discuss the broader concept of systematic violence and not only armed warfare, as it is a broader indication of behaviour and not just specific armed action. As discussed previously, violence is a broad concept that can include many different aspects. Violence is often separated into physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, and structural violence. Violence is, at its core, an action taken to assert power, to punish and to control. To reiterate, the definition of violence that I address is organised use of physical armed systematic violence, at a group level, to inflict pain and suffering. To the concept of systematic violence, I also add threats when they are clearly backed up, meaning that physical force has been used, and when threats are elaborated on an elite-level so that threats of violence are substantiated.

Analysing armed groups and their actions can be done by focusing on a variety of levels of actors, such as the rank-and-file soldiers, leaders, and other elite-levels of the group. This thesis does not aim at analysing the actions of an armed group in relation to their low-level soldiers, but the focus is on the elite-levels of the group. Behaviour will, therefore, also be analysed through how the leadership and elite politicians claim responsibility and accept violent acts. This approach is used because it is within the elite-level that we can assert whether the use of violence is sanctioned by the party, an active part of the party’s strategy. Violence is, therefore, considered controlled acts of violence by the group, meaning it is ordered or sanctioned by the party. Violent acts perpetrated by party members in demonstrations are therefore not necessarily violent acts by the party. The use of systematic violence, therefore, refers to actions of armed violence that are being controlled by the group, directed by core leadership. Acts of violence on the part of individual members or splinter
groups that are not officially part of the party will not be considered as the use of systematic violence by the group.

The focus of this analysis is on the elite-level within a group that is officially a political party that also uses systematic violence. It is, therefore, important to understand how that use of systematic violence is understood from within the party. The focus on perceptions brings this level into the analysis and adds an extra dimension that increases our understanding of how the party functions and particularly how hybridity manifests. Perceptions revolve around understanding how the elites perceive the behaviour of the party, meaning their opinions, ideas, and justifications of violent behaviour. Violent action can take place without elites knowing about it, or elites can distance themselves from it. If the core elite politicians do express a need for violence and offer a justification of violent acts, this indicates that the armed faction of the group is intrinsically conjoined with the political side.

Leadership is an issue that recurs in the literature on post-armed group parties. In former armed groups, the leader has a very specific role if this leader was also the former leader of the armed group, meaning that the leader is closely related to the violent past of the party. How that leader is perceived by the other elite members may, therefore, also be an indication of how the group functions. A party leader may officially claim to have changed and to play only a political role. However, if that leader is still viewed more as a commander and military leader by the other elites in the party, this indicates that armed group structures are still in place. Organisational change is, as mentioned, an important aspect of transformation, but it is only through an inside perspective we can truly see whether there has been a change in the culture as well as the official structure. I will, therefore, also analyse how the leader is perceived by the other party elites.

Political party: Behaviour and perceptions of elite politicians

When analysing political parties and what it means to be a political party, there are several different issues that are in focus. Political parties are often discussed and analysed in relation to their official formal structures, their ideology, participation in elections, and their behaviour as a political party. These are aspects of being a political party that we can often observe from the outside. The formal structures of being and existing as a political party will not always tell us a great deal about how they function.

It is relevant to discuss what it means to be politically active as a party. Parties can be seen as active because they have a support base, or because members of the party are often present at rallies and other events, or the simplest definition; that they participate in elections. This lower level of activity, however, may not provide insight into official party behaviours. Here we also need to look at elite-level politicians and the party leadership. How they behave and perceive the actions of the party shape the practice of the party. I,
therefore, focus solely on the behaviour and perceptions of elite politicians and the leadership. Literature on African political parties have pointed out that they rarely exhibit activity as political parties, except during election time (Lindberg 2006b; Rakner and van de Walle 2009; Randall and Svåsand 2002b). A political party may, therefore, exist by definition as a political party, while it is not politically active. I argue that being politically active assumes engagement as a party in relation to political issues also between elections.

As discussed above, there is also a discrepancy between theoretical discussions about political parties in general, and discussions of African political parties, where African parties often exist within what is termed hybrid regimes. I will, therefore, primarily draw from literature on African political parties, and not the more general theoretical discussions on political parties. Some aspects from the general theories are relevant, however, as the political system in most African countries is a colonial legacy, and democratisation processes are often induced through aid or peacebuilding.

This thesis focuses on behaviour and elite politicians’ perceptions of the role of the party and the actions of the party. Behaviour is a broad concept, and in relation to the discussion of opposition parties in Africa, it is connected to the extensive discussion on patronage (Rakner and van de Walle 2009; van de Walle and Butler 1999). This thesis, however, is not focused on elucidating possible clientalistic behaviour, but instead on political behaviour versus violent behaviour in relation to a specific political issue.

Here, political democratic behaviour refers specifically to the formulation of a political agenda and attempting to achieve that agenda through accepted democratic political channels, such as parliament and political negotiations. Behaviour means the actions taken to adhere to democratic rules and institutions, such as proposing bills to parliament, having active members in parliament in debates, actively participating in elections, and actively constructing opinions around political issues. It implies seeking support for political positions from the public and making political proposals in public, so that if a bill is voted down in parliament, its content is known to the public. It also means having members of parliament (MPs) active in parliamentarian workgroups, so that political work is constantly being conducted.

In relation to this, it is important to see whether the top leadership and elite levels of the party are active in parliament if we are to understand how their actions shape the role of the party. I will, therefore, specifically discuss and analyse how the leadership is behaving in relation to being a political party.

As discussed, one part of the analysis is the perceptions expressed by elite politicians in interviews. Interviews provide us with an informal narrative that complements the formal behaviour of the party. This narrative allows us to obtain a fuller understanding of how the party functions from within and whether there might be a separation of roles or hybridity, and then how that hybridity manifests. I will, therefore, analyse how elite politicians express and perceive their role as a political party and how they perceive the importance
of using democratic political channels. It is important to see not only whether they are present in parliament, but also how they perceive their functioning in that process.

This is an analysis of parties that seem to exist in relation to two roles, and therefore it is important to understand how elite politicians view their own leadership. This was discussed above in relation to being an armed group, and the same principle applies here. If the main leadership is seen as being democratic, it may imply some level of internal democracy, which is an important aspect of being viewed as a successful political party.

The framework is simplified in the table below. It embarks from the two main ideal-type categories; Armed group and Political party, which are analysed in relation to two components; Behaviour and Perceptions. Within each component, I discuss two different areas of analysis, derived from previous research. To reiterate, the framework should not be seen as a categorising tool that is mutually exclusive, but as a tool that enables to further our knowledge of hybrid parties.

**Figure 1. Analytical Framework of elite-level behaviour and perceptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Armed Group</strong></th>
<th><strong>Political Party</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviour</strong></td>
<td>Engaging in threats and armed systematic violence to coerce the opponent.</td>
<td>Engaging in political negotiations and debates in public political channels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership and elite-level responsibility and acceptance of systematic violence</td>
<td>Leadership and elite-level engagement in parliament to achieve the political goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceptions</strong></td>
<td>Perceiving and justifying violence as a necessary act to achieve a proclaimed political goal.</td>
<td>Recognising the importance of adhering to democratic political rules, and maintaining the role as a political party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perceiving the leader as a commander and military leader</td>
<td>Perceiving the leader as a democratically elected leader</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to analyse hybridity?

The framework presented above makes it possible to analyse a group to see how perceptions and behaviour fit with being a political party or an armed group. The framework separates the roles into two clearly defined entities. This is a fruitful way of analysing a group that appears to exist as two entities. It also allows us to see whether a group may perhaps be viewed primarily as a political party that on occasion uses violent means, or the opposite. Moreover, it means we can understand whether the two roles seem to alternate with each other in a cyclical manner, whether they both exist but seem to be held separate from each other, or if they both exist concurrently. A systematic analysis in which the two dichotomous roles are first separated clearly also showcases where the roles overlap and can therefore enable an understanding of how hybridity manifests.

The hybrid party concept has, as mentioned, been previously discussed within the rebel-to-party literature. It is rather unclear, however, what we actually put into the word hybrid. Berti (2013) discusses hybridity in the form of armed political organisations. The discussion revolves around armed groups that opt to also start up a political wing, such as Hamas and Hezbollah. These groups are armed groups that have deliberately created political wings to partake in political activities without giving up their armed struggle. Berti questions the idea that initiating a political wing is the first step in a linear transition and argues that these two roles can co-exist. She suggests that these groups exist with the two roles in hybrid form. Her analysis, however, is primarily focused on why an armed group starts a political wing and how moderation towards becoming political may happen. I argue that we need to increase our understanding of how possible hybridity manifests, what it looks like, and how these groups function. Groups that use both systematic violence and political means are not isolated examples but a common sight, and it is therefore vital to understand these hybrid parties better.

An easily explained hybridity is when a group fits into both categories in the framework. The aim of my thesis is, however, to go beyond that through an analysis of Renamo. This will bring new insights into the processes of how hybridity manifests and could also inform and enrich our understanding of what it means to be a hybrid. The word hybrid refers to a mix of two things or when two things are fused together. This means that the two roles should not exist next to each other but be two parts of one whole. Thus, the roles should fall under the same leadership, and elite levels of the party should have insight into and understanding of the actions of both roles. Of course, there is most likely a separation of who performs acts on the ground, but this is a reality in any political party or armed group. It is therefore vital to focus on the elite-level if we are to understand hybridity. The elite-level is therefore a starting point in using the framework.
There is today not a well-conceived definition of hybridity that shapes or guides the analysis. The framework is used to trace out when and how the roles overlap, thereby increasing our understanding of hybridity. As mentioned, due to the empirical reality, the analysis will be focused on how Renamo pursued the political goal of local self-governance using both political and violent means. In Chapter 5, I will use the framework, but I will before that discuss some key methodological issues, as well as provide some background on Renamo and why local self-governance is a contested issue.
3. Interpreting Hybridity: Methodological Choices and Discussions

I came to what I thought would be one of my first interviews with a Renamo MP. We met in Beira. At the Maputo Renamo office, they had told me I should start by meeting with this specific person, and at the moment, he was in Beira. We met in a small room in the back of the building of the Sofala Renamo Headquarters. It was filled with papers, and the furniture was ragged. The man I was meeting spoke perfect English, so there was no need to use my interpreter. We talked casually. I told him about my upcoming research project and explained that I would very much like to interview elite members of Renamo. He told me that before allowing me to do that, he needed to know whether I knew enough to tell the story of Renamo correctly.

What I thought would be me interviewing him turned out to be me being questioned for hours. I was asked to talk about the history of Mozambique, the important instances that had shaped independence, the civil war, politics, social and economic development. I was asked to talk about the international, regional, and national aspects of the conflict between Renamo and Frelimo. It was not what I had expected would happen that day, but thankfully, I had done my due diligence and studied a lot before going to Mozambique.

Throughout the interview, I had to consider the angle of my answers, talking to the opposition that has been neglected from history, but trying to maintain my own neutral research perspective. Finally, he told me that he had one comment; that I pronounced the name of Dhlakama wrong, and I needed to do it correctly! We practised together, and after that, I was in! He was happy with my answers, and I was now allowed to talk to his fellow colleagues in Renamo. He introduced me to some key Sofala politicians, and when back in Maputo, he was my gatekeeper for the Renamo MPs.

I had managed to prove myself to him, which is a key issue when conducting interviews within such a closed group as Renamo. We established respect and rapport, which made it possible for me to interview key members of Renamo during a time of conflict and turbulence, during a time when trust was generally very low. He also became one of my key informants, primarily through informal meetings where he gave me insights I could also use in other formal interviews. From that day forward, I was allowed to continue with interviews with Renamo, and I never again pronounced Dhlakama wrong. (Beira, 18 March 2015)
Interpretivist Methodology

The focus of this study is to understand Renamo as both a political party and an armed group, and to analyse how hybridity manifests through an analysis of elite-level behaviour and perceptions. I do this through an empirical analysis focused on how Renamo has acted in relation to its claim for local self-governance. The analysis has a dual focus, on the actual behaviour we can observe as well as the meaning that elite politicians ascribe to that behaviour, their perceptions. The purpose of going beyond the actual observable behaviour is that perceptions and ideas about behaviour help us answer the question of how Renamo’s hybridity manifests.

The purpose is to understand Renamo and the behaviour and perceptions of elite members from their own perspective. Behaviour could be studied objectively, but the purpose is not just to see behaviour but to understand the actors’ own perceptions of that behaviour. Starting with an interpretivist methodology is therefore well suited for this study. Interpretivism is a methodology, but also a philosophy of research that originated in the Chicago school tradition, and has long influenced the social sciences, primarily anthropology (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2013). It has a focus on context specific meanings, and meaning-making processes, of actors. Interpretivist research aims at understanding actors, or phenomena, rather than explaining an outcome.

This means that the actors’ own ideas concerning what shaped their actions are a part of the analysis, regardless of how those ideas correspond to an objective truth. I approach my empirical material by looking both at behaviour and the meaning ascribed to that behaviour by the actors themselves. The narratives told to me by Renamo’s elite politicians may not always contain factual truth, but they tell the story of how politicians justify and construct a reality that shapes their actions. This constructed reality has an impact on behaviour, in this case, the use of armed systematic violence, and it is therefore important to understand.

Interpretivist research often comes from the empirics, in that we discover a phenomenon or behaviour in the empirics that we cannot understand, or that we wish to further elaborate on. Interpretivist research, however, is often very pre-laden with theory. The reason why something appears to be a puzzle is because it often does not correspond with our previous theoretical knowledge (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). It is different in its process from inductive and deductive theory because it does not assume a linear path between empirics and theory. The logic of inquiry is rather abductive, meaning that the research is led by the empirics to search for new avenues that can enable understanding. Abductive research is also closely related to what is sometimes referred to as the hermeneutic circle. There is no given starting point, but you move in a circle of knowledge. The abductive logic of inquiry is more specific because you start engaging the field with a pre-set idea, with theories, and with
a research question, but you stay open to the fact that this might need to be altered if the empirics lead you in another direction (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012; Van Maanen, Sørensen, and Mitchell 2007; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2013).

Interpretivist research, or any research that implies spending a long period of time in the field, often means that you will approach situations that do not fit into your theoretical pre-constructed categories. This is probably particularly true in unstable and ever-changing political contexts. Theory is something that should be approached in the stages of formulating your research project, as it needs to inform what you are looking for. However, having a fixed theoretical framework prior to your fieldwork may rather inhibit than enhance your research. Zirakzadeh (2009) goes as far as to say that we should discard our theories, while Wilkinson (2013) instead proposes that we temporarily neglect them while in the field. Fieldwork should be an open process that aims at learning as much as possible about a specific phenomenon, not restricting your intake of knowledge based on theories. Local knowledge is context specific and may not fit the theoretical understandings that we started with.

To reiterate, theory should inform when articulating a research problem, it should take a more laid-back stance during fieldwork, and then it should be written back in during analysis. This is referred to as the triple hermeneutics that appears at the deskwork stage. When reading and re-reading your material, new theoretical approaches may seem more valid than those you addressed prior to the fieldwork (Yanow 2009). Theory is therefore not used as something that strictly controls and guides during field research, but rather something that helps in the interpretation and analysis of the material, to enable an analysis of the knowledge that the field has provided.

I entered the field having some ideas of theories, some preconceived ideas related to theories of democratisation, peacebuilding, and rebel-to-party transformation. During my time in the field, however, I encountered several important issues that were all part of how to understand Renamo but that did not fit my preconceived ideas. Issues such as how its reversion back to an armed group was not a complete reversal, which led to several questions about how to analyse the group as an actor. Should it, according to rebel-to-party theory, be seen as a failure? I also encountered difficulties in how to understand the group’s use of violence after an election, but it still did not fit the theoretical definition of electoral violence. So, what was Renamo?

This meant that I had to revisit theory to see how an actor such as Renamo could be understood, and when one clear theory could not enable an analysis, I had to look at different aspects of previous theory to attempt an analysis. There is not just one theory that enables an analysis meant to understand Renamo, but several that have shaped how I formulate my own theoretical framework. My case also changed dramatically in nature during my time in the field. When I arrived in February 2015, the political crisis started to
emerge, evolving into violent conflict, and ending with a ceasefire before I left in January 2017. This means that I had to adapt my interview questions, and my use of theory as I went along, as well as my methodological techniques. For instance, using a fixed and already established set of theoretically derived questions for all interviews was not a viable option when the empirical reality was moving from political instability to armed violence.

From a methodological point of view, this research project therefore encountered some challenges as well as advantages related to being in the middle of the research topic. In this chapter, I will go through these different choices, the challenges and advantages, and discuss the research design, methods and material, as well as some analytical choices. I will also address some of the core issues that are important in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of interpretative research as well as the important issue of research ethics.

Understanding how hybridity manifests
When I first started my research project, my main interest was in taking a closer look at the long-term effects of peacebuilding and rebel-to-party transformation, and Renamo seemed like an interesting case for this, considering its status as an often-mentioned success case. The 2014 general election in Mozambique then completely changed the situation, and Renamo returned to using armed violence. This happened just as I was entering the field at the beginning of 2015. I, therefore, needed to keep the scope of my research open to studying the actual situation as it unfolded. The field was changing, the level of the conflict was changing, the political situation was changing. I left Mozambique in January 2017, just when a permanent ceasefire was signed. My research strategy was constantly renegotiated during my fieldwork. Interviews were primarily informed by what was happening empirically rather than theoretically, meaning questions revolved around current events and were not derived from theory. Still, I did not enter the field with a blank slate; my theoretical understanding was present but not too strictly enforced.

My research design has therefore evolved over the course of conducting it, but clear from the beginning was that I was going to have an elite-level focus and use interviews as my main source of material. As mentioned, this research project was formed around early empirical observations of Renamo’s dual roles. It was in the elite politicians in Renamo that I could perceive this duality merging, or possibly being kept apart. The elite-level of a party is where identity is formed as well as publicly expressed. This study, therefore, maintains a continuous elite focus.

The analytical focus on behaviour and perceptions is a combination of theory and empirics. The focus of this thesis starts in my attempt to understand Renamo’s elite politicians, and more broadly to create a larger framework for how we can understand post-conflict political parties that use systematic violence as a part of their political struggle. The framework consists of the two ideal-type roles of being a democratic political party and being an active
armed group. These two categories are theoretically far from each other in their ideal types, but groups can embrace the two roles to different extents. The framework is also constructed to enable an analysis of how the roles may overlap. The framework has been discussed in detail in Chapter 2, so here I will focus on the methodological aspects, and the tools I use to perform that analysis.

To conduct an analysis based on this framework, a variety of material is used. The primary material is collected through interviews with elite Renamo politicians and through official public statements primarily expressed by Renamo’s leader Dhlakama, but also some key elite members of the party. This is complemented by material from observations of parliamentary sessions and debates, and some informal observations I have made, and experiences I have had during my long-term stay in Mozambique. The material used to enable an analysis is briefly described in the table below regarding how they relate to the framework and how they have been used.

In Chapter 4, I also conduct an analysis of the context that has led to local self-governance becoming a contested issue, and that part is based on previous research as well as first-hand text sources, such as laws and law proposals, and supported by information derived from interviews. Each material will be further elaborated on separately.

**Figure 2. Material used to analyse Behaviour and Perceptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Elite Interviews (47 interviews)</th>
<th>Public statements made by leadership (65 public statements)</th>
<th>Elite observations of Parliament (17 observations)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Material used in a second step to analyse correspondence between perceptions and behaviour.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Core material used to analyse behaviour at leadership and party level</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Core material used to analyse behaviour at the party level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceptions</strong></td>
<td>Core material to analyse elite-level perceptions of the actions of the party</td>
<td>Core material to analyse the perceptions of the leader in relation to the actions of the party</td>
<td>Material used in a second step to analyse correspondence between behaviour and perceptions (or public and internal statements).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Case of Renamo

This study is focused on understanding the case of Renamo. It is therefore a single-case study. Renamo does not represent a population of cases in the sense used within positivist research, to extract empirical generalisation. Renamo is studied to enable an understanding of a hybrid party. Interpretivist research does not aim to empirically generalise in the classic sense, and the position of the case is therefore not of the same importance. That does not mean that the case cannot produce knowledge beyond its own existence and share similarities with other cases, and it does not mean that any larger theoretical knowledge claims cannot be made (Flyvbjerg 2006; Thomas 2011a; 2011b; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2013). I will return to this issue, but first I will give some more information about the case, Renamo.

Renamo is interesting as a case for studying the long-term effects of peacebuilding. Over 20 years after signing the peace agreement, Renamo started to act like both an armed group and a political party, particularly after the general election of 2014. A detailed study of Renamo can provide knowledge that enlightens the theoretical discussion on hybridity, as well as about the long-term effects of peacebuilding, as it can highlight how old conflict issues and structures have lingered within the political system.

Renamo is also a case of an opposition party existing on the borderline between violence and politics. Many parties that have been known for combining violence and politics are government parties, and they are often theoretically understood as authoritarian or hybrid regimes. Renamo is an opposition party, and many opposition parties that choose a violent path are often viewed as pure armed groups. Renamo as a case enables us to increase our understanding of a political party that uses violent means, and how such parties can be understood and studied. My study can to certain extent inform cases of both regime parties and opposition parties in other contexts.

This is sometimes discussed as theoretical generalisability (Flyvbjerg 2006; Thomas 2011a; 2011b; Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2013), but I would rather think of it as the theoretical accumulation of knowledge. The case of Renamo, and the framework that I use, enable us to accumulate knowledge that can enrich our theoretical and empirical understanding of hybridity and hybrid parties. This framework can be used to analyse other parties that use violent actions, groups with or without a history as armed groups. It offers a possibility to analyse how we can understand groups that use both democratic and violent means. Some groups may be judged as primarily armed groups, while again others may be viewed as hybrids.

The empirical knowledge claims made in this thesis are restricted to Renamo, and to the context that existed during my study. I have, however, in all my analysis drawn from theoretical discussions; it is theory-centred, and those knowledge claims can be seen to illustrate the current theoretical discussions and accumulate theoretical knowledge.
Methodological Tools and Material

In this study, I use different methodological tools to understand Renamo as a political party and armed group and to analyse how this hybridity manifests. In this section, I will discuss the different methods used and the material that has been generated.

Ethnographic sensibility: Understanding context

Interpretivist research is based on the idea that knowledge is context specific. Meaning is constructed in relation to the cultural contextual setting in which it operates. It is therefore important to understand the context surrounding the issue under study. Adding an ethnographic component to the study can provide this knowledge to the researcher during the process and to the analysis. It also means that the reader should be given sufficient information about the context to follow the analysis and to be able to judge the interpretation.

Ethnography has its origin in anthropology where it was seen as a prerequisite for understanding, in that you have experienced the cultural setting under study. Geertz (1973) is one of the most prominent names, although he himself never used the concept ethnography. He specifically emphasises the need to understand culture if one is to perform an analysis of anything that happens within that context. Within political science, it has been used more infrequently, although Fenno argued early on that, to understand politicians, we need to observe them and closely interact with them (Fenno 1986; 1978).

Political ethnography is a term that encompasses many different levels of immersion into the field. It can mean to fully live with and take part in the activities that you study, such as in the ground-breaking work of Venkatesh (2008), *Gang Leader for a Day*, where he participates in the everyday life of a criminal gang in the project areas of Chicago for over five years, or Pachirat (2011) who seeks employment and works for a substantial time undercover in a slaughterhouse to study institutionalised violence.

Schatz (2009) takes a more modest approach, arguing that there is no real consensus as to what classifies as political ethnography. There is an idea that ethnography should always include some form of participant observation, where you are closely interlinked with the phenomenon or actors you study. Schatz (2009) suggests, however, that the parameters for what ethnography may be are a bit more blurred, and he argues that ethnography is a form of sensibility. It is a way in which you approach your research that applies both to being in the field and to analysing and writing. He is clear, however, that some form of deeper immersion into the field is required, above and beyond participant observation.

Ethnographic sensibility revolves around the idea that you need to elicit the insiders’ perspectives and meanings (Jourde 2009; Schatz 2009). Participant observations can be done without seeking deeper understanding; for instance,
the purpose could be to count the number of encounters between certain people. Having an ethnographic sensibility means interacting with your field to enable analysis. Having an ethnographic sensibility as a methodological approach does not always lead to the data you reference, but it enriches your ability to analyse material, such as interviews. The sensibility is intertwined with the research process, and Schatz (2009) argues that it is a key aspect of being able to provide an analysis that also includes context. Engaging in applying ethnographic sensibility is not merely a methodological tool, but a consciousness.

This is the form of ethnography I perform in my study. I have studied Renamo on-site for two years, during the recent years of conflict between 2015-2017. My study has therefore followed the process that is at the centre of this study closely, and for an extended period of time. While studying the perceptions and behaviours of the politicians in direct relation to these events has been important, it is also crucial that I have experiences of the same events. The actors I was researching were elite politicians in Renamo. I did not fully live within or immerse myself in the same setting as the actors I studied. Elite politicians live normal lives; they go home to their families when their day in parliament is over. I interacted with them through interviews and by observing parliament sessions, and during parliament sessions, I would also interact with them when they took breaks. At the end of the day, however, we all moved on to living our private lives. I therefore also kept a distance and did not gain a personal relationship to the people I studied, to maintain a neutral position.

In political science, this approach is sometimes referred to as a site-intensive study (Jourde 2009; Kapiszewski, MacLean, and Read 2015; Read 2006), I, however, prefer the term ethnographic sensibility because it incorporates the purpose and meaning of being in the field rather than just claiming to have been on-site. I immersed myself in life in Mozambique during the years of conflict, which enabled me to understand the cultural context. I have had an ethnographic sensibility in how I approach my field, and in how I have striven to learn the context to enable an analysis that I would not have been able to do without such knowledge.

Ethnographic research also often implies staying a long period of time in one specific rather enclosed setting. In my study, I discovered that there was a need to see several different settings if I was to gain an understanding of the whole. Local power was the key political issue; therefore, it was an issue I also needed to understand, which I felt I could not do fully by only talking to elite politicians in and around parliament in Maputo. It better served my purpose to discuss this issue with politicians in their local setting, to understand why and how this issue is pursued. Therefore, I decided to travel through all the provinces of Mozambique. I did this when parliament was in recess and the MPs were supposed to be in their constituencies. I travelled by car, meaning there were many interactions along the way, and even just seeing the differences out of the car window increased my knowledge of the situation I was
researching. It also led to close encounters with the conflict, closer than I would have hoped for, as our car was in a military convoy that was attacked by Renamo militia. This was a form of multi-sited ethnographic research, where I needed to change location to understand the underlying issues of the conflict, to increase my sensibility regarding the issue and context (Kubik 2009; Wood 2003).

The private life I lived in Mozambique taught me a great deal about the cultural, political, and social setting of Mozambique, and about the context in which the politicians also live. This context is important to understand to make an accurate analysis of the situation. These experiences were vital to increase my sensibility and therefore aided me in how to ask interview questions, as well as how to interpret and analyse material. In interpretivist research and when using an ethnographic sensibility, it is seen as vital to keep your own presence centred. The researcher is not distant and should be seen also in the end-product (Schatz 2009, Jourde 2009, Weeden 2010, Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2013).

Much of this knowledge comes to you without it being systematically acquired. It comes from normal everyday life and social encounters. It is therefore also something that is not always explicitly used when presenting your research results, but it is rather something that has informed how the research was conducted. The more I learned while in Mozambique, the more I was able to ask the right questions, or make the right historical references, or use language in a way that made people more inclined to talk to me. This form of cultural knowledge is therefore not always transferable to paper but is of utmost importance to the analysis. This provides key material for addressing the aim of this research, even when it is not always possible to reference.

I have throughout my research written field notes, and I have opted to present some of them at the beginning of each chapter to illustrate how my own experiences have been influential in my research process and my understanding of the situation. I also present them to provide the reader with an insight which could lead to better understanding the context. Contextual cultural understanding means you are able to understand the informal, the power structures that are not written down (Ashforth 2005; Schaffer 2000; Wedeen 2015; 2010; 2002). In a conflict situation this becomes even more evident, as conflict legacies are often very complicated, diffused, and unofficial (Wood 2009). These field notes hopefully also aid the reader in understanding the context.

Elite interviews

Interviews are essential in interpretivist research because they help to make sense of a certain political phenomenon by interacting with individuals who understand that issue. They are especially rewarding when one is attempting to understand micro-foundations, such as behaviour, identity, actions, perceptions, and attitudes (Kapiszewski, MacLean, and Read 2015; Mosley 2013).
To reiterate, the aim of my research is to understand how Renamo’s hybrid identity as a political party and an armed group manifest, through an analysis of both behaviour and perceptions. One aspect of this is to analyse elite politicians’ perceptions of being a political party and of being an armed group. These perceptions are expressions and ideas formulated by the actors that inform how the party functions. Interviews are therefore my main method for understanding the perceptions of elite politicians. My research is actor-centred as it tries to understand this issue from the point of view of those who are involved. I, therefore, chose to focus on elite-level politicians in Renamo, as they are the ones who are actively constructing the party’s official status.

When aiming to understand a socially constructed phenomenon, the purpose of interviews is not to collect an abundance of answers to seek a coherent truth, but to interview strategically chosen people about their understanding of, or co-construction of the phenomenon. As mentioned, this study has an elite focus, and hence my interviews are primarily performed with Renamo’s top politicians. During my fieldwork, Renamo had 89 Members of Parliament (MP). These MPs, along with some other people in high positions, formal and informal, are considered elite-level members of Renamo. I interviewed 25 of these elite politicians on multiple occasions. One of the key issues of interpretivist research is to create an interview situation that establishes enough rapport between the researcher and the interlocutor to enable honest answers. The term interlocutor is specifically used because the people who are part of the study are not seen merely as respondents but as active participants in an ongoing conversation (MacLean 2013; Mosley 2013).

I aimed to maintain contact with a number of key elite politicians throughout my study to perform several formal and informal interviews with the same person over time. I often met the same person for several interviews, between 2-3 times in general. This method of interviewing was chosen because I was studying an ongoing conflict, meaning we were all present in an ever-changing reality. It, therefore, became more rewarding for the study to perform multiple interviews with the same person. This allowed me to see change and to understand the construction of a hybrid identity as it unfolded.

The choice to maintain contact with a rather limited group of elite politicians was also one of necessity. The aim was to conduct multiple interviews with a limited group of people, but I would have preferred to have included a few more people. The benefit of researching an ongoing conflict is that you get to follow it while it is unfolding. The downside is that it often means compromise due to security issues. As the situation in Mozambique deteriorated primarily in 2016, performing the interviews became a security risk – for me as a researcher, for them as politicians and for my interpreter who was Mozambican. Those politicians I had already established trust and rapport with, it was possible to find ways to perform interviews, but approaching new people about being interviewed was associated with risk. I, therefore, had to make hard choices, and safety concerns had to prevail.
Besides the interviews with elite Renamo members, I have conducted interviews with a few members of the party MDM (Movimento Democrático de Moçambique), primarily concerning local politics and elections, to broaden my understanding of the complexities of the situation. All members of MDM whom I interviewed were also former members of Renamo, which could shed light on how Renamo may have changed, as expressed by those who were no longer part of the party. I also interviewed a few of the main peace negotiators from civil society. This was done to gain a full understanding of the situation, in addition to the picture provided by Renamo. These interviews are not used as primary material in the analysis but function as information that has enabled me to create a wider understanding and helped me ask the right questions in interviews with Renamo politicians.

I have conducted a total of 55 interviews, 47 of which are with Renamo elite politicians (see reference list of interviews). The majority of the interviews are used for understanding and analysing the perceptions expressed by elite Renamo politicians, and to certain extent it also addresses behaviour primarily in regard to knowledge of acts. Elite interviews also provide pieces of information. I found it important to let the person being interviewed tell the stories as openly as possible. This meant that interviews can sometimes also be used to corroborate information in relation to behaviour.

The location for interviews is vital in creating the right environment in which to talk about certain issues, as well as to create a sense of ease. For all interviews, I would leave it up to the person to choose a location, but I often suggested meeting at a café or similar, as my experience was that meeting in a more informal setting removes pressure and power structures from the interview situation.

I had prepared a set of questions that I wanted to address during the interviews. These continuously changed, however, over the course of the research and in relation to the person I was meeting with. The aim of the interviews was to see whether there were perceptions and narratives that corresponded, or were coherent, at the group level. Questions were phrased in relation to certain Renamo party actions or events or the interlocutor’s position as a politician in relation to the party. However, it is not always easy to control interviews, and flexibility enables better stories to be told. The interviews were conducted in private, meaning it was possible for the elite politicians to address issues in an anonymous setting. All the politicians I interviewed did say that I was allowed to quote them officially. I have nevertheless chosen to anonymise the answers, as the situation in Mozambique is not resolved, but rather ever-changing, and I do not wish to put any of the people who contributed to my research at any risk, which will be further discussed below under ethical concerns. Some very specific interviews only used for an informative purpose.
are officially referenced with a name, such as my interview with the party leader of MDM, Daviz Simango\textsuperscript{2}.

The material from the interviews has been used in the analysis throughout the process. I have traced themes and narratives in all interviews that correspond to the framework. I then use quotes to illustrate a more general narrative expressed in more interviews. Some interlocutors are quoted more often than others, the primary reason being that some interviews were conducted in English, and I, therefore, feel more certain about direct quotations. I am, however, very certain about the translated interviews and what they discuss in relation to content and themes, but I tend not to use them as extensively for quotes. This does not mean that certain interviews were more important, but it is only an illustrative choice based on language.

Interpretivist research is not built on an understanding of research being objective since it acknowledges that no researcher enters a research situation as a blank slate. Transparency is instead a key word, meaning that instead of denying power structures and biases, we should illuminate them to create more rigour in our research. In line with that are the ideas of positionality and reflexivity, which I will address below, as well as the role and possible influence of me working with an interpreter. I will also discuss the specific issues of research ethics when conducting interviews in conflict settings. However, I will first go through the other methods used to collect the material for analysis.

Public statements made by the leadership

To understand behaviour and perceptions as a public act as well as an internal expression, interviews were combined with an analysis of public statements, primarily those made by Renamo’s president Afonso Dhlakama. They are used to analyse behaviour and perceptions of the group at the leadership level. Some statements are also collected from other leadership figures in the party, such as Ivone Soares, who was head of parliament, and Antonio Muchanga, who was press secretary during the two years this study focuses on: 2015-2017. These statements do not only reflect the leader Dhlakama, but the broader perspective of leadership. To analyse both behaviour and perceptions public media statements are crucial, as they provide a picture of the official behaviour of the party as well as the official rhetoric used by the leader of the party.

I have collected statements from two different sources that both provide translated articles from Mozambique's media. One is a government-controlled database that provides English language information from the government-owned media: AIM (Agencia de Informação de Moçambique). It presents a bi-weekly translated report consisting of the most important news of that

\textsuperscript{2} Daviz Simango died in February 2021 and the current leader of MDM is Lutero Simango.
period. During election time, it also provides special reports on a more frequent basis. Each of these reports consists of approximately 15 articles on various topics. From the period between October 2014 to 12 January 2017, they published 48 reports containing about 720 articles.

I searched for official statements made by Renamo’s leadership, so the fact that it was government-controlled was not an issue in relation to content, as I did not analyse the articles for their content. There may, however, be some bias, concerning whether they chose to include Renamo statements at all and then which statements. I did realise that some news I knew had occurred seemed to be missing, meaning the government-owned source left statements made by Renamo out of their media coverage. This was primarily something I reflected on when there was not one single Renamo statement for the whole period of August 2016 to December 2016. This was a very turbulent time in Mozambique, with ongoing peace negotiations and a high number Renamo members being assassinated. I was there at that time, so I knew there were media statements from Renamo during this period. This source is therefore questionable in regard to providing a neutral image of Renamo, where they might leave out positive statements made by Renamo in favour of statements that create an image of Renamo as primarily an armed group, and where they might deliberately leave out statements made by Renamo. I therefore also chose to look at a second source for public media statements.

Club of Mozambique is a privately owned media outlet that presents a variety of information, and it includes the translation of different sources of local news into English. This source is therefore free from government influence. I selected all news articles categorised as “politics”. Their database does not go further back than December 2015. From the period December 2015 to 10 January 2017, 1360 articles were categorised as “politics”. Because they translate from different local sources, similar articles may appear more than once, but with slightly different angles. I was not interested in analysing the different perspectives, but in identifying the public statements made by Renamo. I, therefore, went through all articles manually to search for statements. If the same public statement was cited in several articles, I only used one.

As I assumed, several public statements made during this period in 2016 were cited in the Club of Mozambique that I would have missed using only the official government source, as well as a larger variety in general during the whole period. Adding a separate privately owned source for media statements has resulted in a better sample for analysis, with less bias.

The two sources together generated around 2000 articles. Many of these were of course not relevant at all, as I am only interested in public statements made by Renamo. I selected all statements that were related to political issues or about the conflict. Some statements came from longer interviews, and I have then picked out parts of the interviews that are relevant, meaning statements that revolve around Renamo’s political work or their actions in relation to the conflict. I ended up with a total of 65 public statements from the period
October 2014 (the time of the general election) to January 2017 (when the ceasefire was initiated). As mentioned, these are primarily used as material to understand the behaviour and perceptions of the party. These have been assigned numbers so I can more easily reference them in the text when they are used to explain a larger narrative. When quotes are used, I also add who is being quoted. These are public statements, so there is no need to make them anonymous. There is a full list of all statements under References.

Elite-level observations of parliament

A third source of material comes from my observations of parliament. I was present in parliament and observed plenary meetings, primarily during the first session in 2015 when the first proposal for local self-governance was discussed, and during the third session in 2016, which took place at the same time as the then newly started peace negotiations. Parliament usually had one or two open plenary meetings a week during a session, and a session lasted for 3 months. I have a total of 17 official observations of parliament plenary meetings.

Plenary meetings are the official public arena for ongoing political work; they are open to the public to observe and broadcasted live on radio, sometimes also TV. Parliament is one of the core arenas for a democratic political party. It is, therefore, a public arena where Renamo’s behaviour as a party can be observed, which was the main reason why I conducted observations. The observations also allowed me to see whether, and how, Renamo’s violent side made it into parliament.

I would observe from the designated area. Each session I observed I also recorded, and I took notes on behaviours such as applause or expressions of agreement, or outrage. During several hours observing a plenary session, plenty of issues were addressed that were not at all relevant for me. I have, therefore, gone over notes from plenary sessions to identify when something is said and expressed that is connected to the categories, and areas of analysis, in the framework. This could entail discussion of concrete issues as well as reactions to issues I would not view in advance as being related to violence or local power. In the context of this study, the material from parliament has primarily been used to illustrate Renamo’s behaviour in relation to the democratic political process. It is not used to extract individual expressions or perceptions. It is used primarily as a secondary source to illustrate behaviour and deepen our understanding of Renamo’s actions as a political party, on a concrete political arena. I, therefore, primarily refer to these observations to triangulate findings from other material.

The time spent in parliament was also key in establishing trust and rapport with Renamo politicians and in expanding my network. I interacted with the politicians during breaks, and it was often here that new connections for
interviews were brokered. It also helped me understand the political context in which Renamo is present.

Field notes and informal information
I have discussed above that this study has an ethnographic sensibility that runs through the process. However, in the form of material that emerges primarily as field notes. I have taken field notes using various standards. This sometimes involves a fast scribble of something that seems relevant or more concrete stories that are written up. My field notes are often infused with private reflections, which can be based on purely private events but still provide contextual political knowledge. Field notes and information coming from informal situations are not used as material to single-handedly explain an issue or inform an analysis, but they are used to illustrate, to provide context and to triangulate information from other material.

Each chapter starts with a field note to provide the reader with contextual information. This helps the reader gain a wider insight into the context studied, and it also informs the reader of the experiences that have informed my analysis. There are also some instances where I share informal information gained from the elite politicians I interview. It may be that I have met them in a purely informal setting, or that we also interact in an informal way during a formal interview. This information is sometimes added in the analysis when I feel it can shed light on a discussion. I believe including such reflections enriches the material if this is done with transparency.

Processing the Material: Themes and Narratives
The bulk of my material comes from elite interviews, public media statements, and elite-level observations of parliament. Processing the material has therefore been a process of in-depth reading of interview transcripts to extract themes and common narratives. It has also involved reading media material to collect public statements and categorising public statements according to their main message in relation to the framework. Observations of parliament sessions have been used for elaborating on behaviour, meaning that here as well issues related to my theoretical framework have been highlighted. Field notes have been read and re-read to see how different observations and experiences support or refute the themes extracted from the other material. As mentioned above, different material is used for different aspects of the analysis, and the process of dealing with the material has therefore differed depending on what aspect of the analysis I have been working with. It has therefore been a very iterative process, where I revisit my different material over and over.

I have, choosing the old-fashioned way, read on paper and used different colour markers for the different areas of analysis in the framework. The
theoretical framework was instrumental in sorting and categorising the material. I would look at how aspects of their behaviour and perceptions that I could find in the material could be seen to fit either the category political party or armed group. This meant that the material could be valued depending on what the core argument, or emphasis, in a certain quote was. The process of tracing themes and narratives in the material has been crucial in seeing how the framework functions, and how it can be used in the analysis. Behaviour and knowledge of acts are rather clear and can be analysed in relation to the themes in the framework, while perceptions are more lucid and multifaceted. I therefore use narrative analysis to analyse how perceptions are part of a narrative.

Analysing the material: Narrative analysis

Narrative analysis is about understanding stories and how the stories we tell, and that are told, shape and affect our political and social life (Robertson 2017). The study of narratives is used to understand societal power dynamics and to make sense of the meaning people ascribe to certain events, behaviours, or identities. The stories we tell about ourselves, our joint narratives, shape who we are and how we are seen. This study focuses on discovering how we can analyse the behaviour and perceptions of Renamo elite politicians to understand how Renamo functions as a hybrid party. Renamo as a group is shaped by the joint narrative that is used by politicians in their stories about different issues, such as how and why they pursue local power. Renamo as a group is also shaped by the narratives expressed about their opponents, or others' narratives about Renamo. This study focuses on understanding whether there are coherent narratives expressed – in interviews, media, and in parliament – that inform how Renamo's hybridity manifests. The study combines an analysis of behaviour and perceptions at the leadership and party level. Narrative analysis is used primarily to help sort the stories told when analysing perceptions. Narratives function as an interpretative frame that helps us organise and see common traits (Robertson 2017).

In narrative analysis, it is common to sort material in relation to themes that appear, or themes that are theoretically derived. In my framework, I use the term *area of analysis* rather than *theme* since I have opted for general areas of analysis derived from various previous research. It is not a single theme taken directly from a given theory. The areas of analysis I have constructed in relation to the framework are theoretically derived from the theoretical discussions of what it means to be an armed group or political party. When the elite politicians talk to me, or in their public media statements, their ideas are formed around contextually derived issues, situations, instances, ideas, feelings, and expressions. These narratives tell us something about how the hybridity is shaped in this specific situation. The narratives are contextually specific to Renamo's elite politicians. In the theoretical framework, I have
presented the overall structure of the areas of analysis. These are, as said, general, meaning within these, it is possible for me to see different narratives, and if a narrative is more prominent than others.

I combine my material so that I can see the internal narrative, expressed to me in the interviews, as well as the public narrative expressed in the media, which then has a different intended audience. In a public narrative, the focus is on the narrative, the story, and on the specific connotations expressed through specific word choices. Here, the audience is more present, meaning that connotations also become part of the analysis. In the internal narrative, the one expressed in interviews, the specific connotation of words is not as relevant, but here the focus is instead on the plot of the narrative, how things are framed, justified, and perceived in a way that constructs the story – the coherently expressed narrative.

Methodological Discussions

There are some key issues that need to be further discussed in relation to methodology. To enable a clear understanding of the research process and what might have affected the outcome, I will discuss issues of positionality and reflexivity, two important concepts within interpretivist methodology. I will also discuss my use of an interpreter and how it may have affected my research. Lastly, I will reflect on ethical considerations.

Positionality and reflexivity

Positionality is an important and somewhat disputed issue within interpretivist research. It often revolves around the simplification of being an outsider or insider and which of these positions results in the best research (Brooks 2013; MacLean 2013; Mosley 2013; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). This debate centres on the meaning of the identity of the researcher and how that affects the answers provided. The researcher’s identity also shapes the power structure in interview situations (MacLean 2013). It has been argued, however, that discussing your own identity and positionality is not relevant because identity is a fluid concept, and it is not how I perceive my identity that is important, but how it is perceived and experienced by the people whom I am interviewing (O’Connor 2004). Hence, the power structure between me and the people I interact with may vary across individuals.

I was seen as an outsider in my research setting. This judgment would often be made on very superficial grounds based on my appearance. The fact that I was white in an African setting, however, was not the most telling feature of my outsidersness, but that I was blonde. When I first arrived in Mozambique, I had coloured hair, dark brown, and this slowly changed back to my natural blonde. My interpreter then told me that once I was blond it was obvious that
I was not Mozambican. He said that, with my dark hair, I looked Portuguese, and there were many native “Portuguese” Mozambicans. It was also evident to anyone with whom I interacted more extensively that I was not Mozambican, but an outsider, as I did not speak Portuguese properly, and I was, of course, open about my origin as a Swedish native.

My Swedishness was also something that I had been advised, by a local researcher, to highlight. I was told to point out that I was Swedish so that no one would think I was American. Swedish people had a better reputation in Mozambique than Americans did. How my interlocutors interpreted me is, of course, also impacted by the fact that I am a woman, and rather young in relation to the elite members of Renamo. I was 29 years old when I first entered the field in 2015. The people I interviewed were elite politicians; they all held high positions and were generally older men with self-confidence. They were in a position of power. I, therefore, seldom experienced that I held any specific power position, rather that they did. With some, I experienced that they felt the need to take on the expert position to tell me how things work, rather than me as a researcher establishing any expert position (MacLean 2013). This worked fine for me because it often allowed them to tell me more than I asked for, so I did not mind asking my questions as if I did not know anything and needed their explanations. I used my positionality as a younger woman to make these men feel like they were informing me, which resulted in long elaborate answers. I also interviewed a few women, and this structure was then less obvious.

Being an outsider was probably also the key factor granting me the access I got within Renamo. I have talked to several local Mozambican researchers who pointed out that access would not have been granted to them due to suspicions about their neutrality. Mozambique is a highly politicised country, and the government party also has control over universities. Renamo would, therefore, never believe that Mozambican researchers were neutral but that they were influenced by Frelimo. I am Swedish, which meant that my neutrality was never questioned. Frelimo could not control or impact me, as they had no leverage over me. I did, however, for this reason, also very intentionally not align myself with Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo. That could have made my stay easier regarding visas and office space, but I chose not to because I had been told of this suspicion and that I needed to maintain political neutrality.

Being an outsider does entail contextual issues that you may not understand, and there may be examples and issues that are not addressed in interviews because of the perception that I would not understand them. Local norms and conduct, shared memories, and history are beyond my reach as an outsider. At the beginning of this chapter, there is a field note of how I was questioned by a Renamo politician because he needed to see whether I knew enough to be able to understand the context Renamo is part of. I can, of course, learn as much as possible, but there will always be a gap I cannot bridge. I
experienced that I could somehow alter this slightly by the presence of an interpreter, which I will return to below.

Positionality and identity are not things you can change; you can choose to highlight or conceal certain aspects, but you are who you are. The power dynamics in interview and research situations can be handled, however, and one key issue in that regard is to establish an ongoing research relationship through multiple interviews (MacLean 2013). The more I talked to people, the easier our conversations became; they gained respect for me, and I for them. Our positions in relation to each other – as the researcher and the researched – were distorted when it became an ongoing conversation over a long period of time. I was always clear, however, about when we were having a formal interview that could be used for quotes and when we were speaking informally. It is also a risk that you might get too close to interlocutors, which is a risk you must mitigate by aiming to keep neutrality and maintain a work distance. I never interacted with the people I interviewed in a private setting. In informal meetings it was still always clear that I held the role as researcher.

I also attended parliament sessions where I interacted with people during breaks and was simply visible in an important political setting, showing my commitment to understanding Mozambican politics. I therefore also altered my positionality as an outsider, as the politicians got used to seeing me over a long period of time. The fact that I also travelled to all provinces and met some of them in their home constituencies increased their respect for me, as well as the fact that I wanted to get to know and experience their country, their Mozambique.

Positionality is something you can reflect on before and during your research to create a good research situation. Related to this is the concept of reflexivity. Reflexivity is an ongoing process and practice, whereby you are reflexive about your research process. As mentioned before, when conducting an interview and gathering material we need to reflect on how the analysis and interview responses have been shaped by me. Reflexivity is therefore how we let readers into our process, allowing them to judge whether our interpretations and knowledge claims seem plausible (Chabal and Daloz 2006; Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). Reflexivity is therefore a process of being neutral, open and transparent, and it should be incorporated throughout the process and visible in written products. Many interpretivists therefore use the first-person pronoun "I" in their research to show the process they have used to arrive at conclusions. It is also a matter of being open when we alter our research design.

As mentioned, flexibility is a key aspect in interpretivist research, and the abductive logic of inquiry means that we alter theories and research questions when the empirics tell us to do so. This is also part of the process that should be reflected on, to indicate why this change was needed to enable an understanding of the meaning we are trying to understand. Reflexivity is also about incorporating all the social and cultural understanding we have about an
answer and reflecting on how we use it in our analysis. It may be obvious to me that a certain expression tells us something, but not to the reader if I do not also reflect on the structural context surrounding that answer. Reflexivity is an ongoing process, where the researcher stays present and transparent to enable the reader to judge the knowledge claims being presented.

One key issue that I have had to reflect more consciously on is how to judge what the elite politicians say to me. One aspect of the analysis is built on the perceptions of elite politicians; it takes an actor-centred approach. It is, therefore, often difficult to know whether what they say reflects how they feel and what they believe, or whether it has been altered for me. Perhaps they wish to present a certain image. I do not believe that understanding the nuances of this is the most important issue, in relation to my research. My aim is not to discover their hidden agenda, if, in fact, they have one. My aim is to try to understand how they construct, through behaviour and perceptions, their identity as a political party and an armed group. This is partly constructed of a narrative that they shape, and the shape of that narrative is what is important, regardless of whether certain issues are true or false. Any possible lies are as much part of their constructions as are true perceptions. These stories should therefore not be removed just because we know, or assume, they are lies. We should, however, reflect on this while writing, and as with any research based on interviews, we can evaluate whether there are more coherent narratives expressed.

Using an interpreter
For my research, it was necessary for me to use an interpreter. I did not speak Portuguese. While I learned the language to some extent throughout my stay in Mozambique, in the end, I would not claim to have mastered the language sufficiently to conduct interviews on rather complicated matters. Using an interpreter is sometimes questioned and considered compromising to your material. This is something I do not necessarily agree with. Fujii also argues that interpreters often give the research new dimensions you would not have achieved yourself (Fujii 2013; Temple and Edwards 2002). I would argue that, as a researcher, using an interpreter is like using any form of research assistant. This person is hired to perform a task based on their professional competence, and we trust that they will not alter our material. A research assistant could enter the data incorrectly when creating a dataset, just as an interpreter could translate something wrong. This is a risk we take and deal with using various measures of control.

My interpreter was a professional interpreter, with a university degree in translating and interpreting between Portuguese and English as well as Portuguese and French. He was, therefore, linguistically trained and used to simultaneous interpretation. I had no reason to doubt his professional pride in his work. Naturally, I spoke with him prior to hiring him, about his possible links
to or affiliations with any political party. He was from a middle-class family in northern Mozambique, without any clear links to either party. He even confessed to not having voted at all in the 2014 general election. I was, of course, not saying that he could not have any opinions, just that these should not be strong enough to influence any interviews. We sat down and talked over what the research was about and what I expected, and I hired him for the position based on his professional proficiency as an interpreter.

Therefore, from the outset, I have not had any reason to believe that he would intentionally affect my results. There are, of course, risks when information passes through a third party, that something might disappear in the process, or that nuances of answers could be altered. I do believe that this could happen, and one way of dealing with it in the interview situation is to sometimes approach the same question more than once, using slightly different words. I also experienced on occasions that I found a word being used to be a bit strange, causing me to wonder if it had been correctly translated. If possible, I would address this during the interview to see whether this was the word intended by the person being interviewed, or whether it was a mistake in the interpretation. If bringing it up felt obstructive, I would write it down, and my interpreter and I would discuss it afterwards. One example of such a word was how they used the word clandestine. This was often used to describe the relationship with Renamo in their early years, and it was used as a very positive word. My understanding and the connotation I ascribe to the word are negative, however, which is why I found it strange. My interpreter and I, therefore, discussed the word, its origin in Portuguese, how it has been used culturally in Mozambique, and what people mean when using it. This meant I often gained insights into the cultural meaning of words. This means that having an interpreter enriched my understanding.

My interpreter was the person in charge of making the transcripts, meaning he also had an opportunity to listen again and interpret without the stress of simultaneous interpretation. There is a risk that, on occasion, language issues will be missed when using interpretation, and this needs to be considered when analysing your material. Due to my ongoing work process with my interpreter, I feel we took many measures to limit this risk.

Using an interpreter is much more than just engaging a linguistic service (Fujii 2013; Schaffer 2000). Languages contain many different cultural nuances, and my interviews were often filled with cultural metaphors and historical anecdotes that I would never have grasped without having a local Mozambican present to explain them. He was also a key informant in helping me understand and learn about cultural and social practices that were valuable for me in the interviews. I could ask him questions about random aspects of Mozambican life that would not have been suitable to ask in an interview, but these issues became crucial for my contextual understanding. He knew how to properly address people to show respect. He, therefore, also became the person who arranged all my meetings, and he knew when to be formal and
when to be familiar. There was a woman who worked in security at the parliament, and he always greeted her as mai (meaning mother), which is used to establish trust and respect towards older women. These things opened many doors for us. Without this knowledge of the informal codes of conduct, I would probably have been viewed as rather disrespectful.

Another important issue that could have both benefits and drawbacks is how an interpreter affects positionality. Above I discussed my positionality as a researcher, but because the interpreter was equally present, his positionality also needs to be considered. His positionality altered many interview situations, where my outsidersness was bridged by his insidersness. He was a young man, around 25 years old. He came from the north of Mozambique. He was definitely an insider, but he was not seen to be Frelimo given his origins and socioeconomic background. It turned out that one of the Renamo MPs had also been his coach in basketball growing up, and this also created a context of familiarity. When we came to parliament, they always talked, which indicated to anyone who saw us that he was also somehow accepted by Renamo.

He was seen as an insider, and that could have meant that some people felt hindered by his presence, but his insidersness was also moderated by my position and the fact that he worked for me. On some occasions, the person we were to interview would ask him questions about his family, his education, and such, most likely in an attempt to get a sense of who he was. I cannot guarantee that this has not limited some people in what they have said, but my feeling during the interviews was the opposite.

The situation in the interviews changed with his presence because the person being interviewed then often felt more open to talk about local issues, which I believe would not have been addressed if I had been alone. They often included him, as a young person, in discussions of the political situation. He, however, knew his role and often just let them make their point, not interfering. Still, without him, some issues may not have been addressed. An interview situation is also a very strict situation that can make some feel uncomfortable. I experienced, however, that the mere presence of three people made that situation less formal, enabling a conversation rather than an interview. The combination of me being a clear outsider and a naturally neutral researcher and him being a local Mozambican created good interview settings. We combined and bridged the outsider/insider trade-off.

My interpreter also travelled with me when I visited the provinces. He then also became my guide to local customs, the one who talked to local people randomly on the street, and of course then included me. He was the one who knew how to deal with constant police checkpoints, and he became the person helping me to make sure I stayed safe. Interpreters often become closely interlinked into projects through their many different roles. At first, an interpreter is, of course, hired because the researcher does not speak the language, but when they are good interpreters can provide the research project with much more (Fujii 2013), which was also my experience.
Ethical considerations

There are always ethical considerations when conducting research that involves people, but they are even more important when research is conducted in a conflict setting (Fujii 2012; Kapiszewski, MacLean, and Read 2015; Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Ross 2005; Wood 2006). Here I will go through some of the issues I have encountered, and some that I wish I would have considered more while in the field. The ethical dilemmas that we face during research are different depending on the context. I experienced that mine were not particularly challenging, as I was interviewing people who already held a public position as elite politicians. It was primarily my own safety I needed to consider and adapt my research to, seeing how the conflict escalated. I would have preferred more formal interviews, but the situation only allowed me to meet with people I already had good connections with, and then that was the only alternative. Methodological choices need to be made alongside with ethical considerations. What became clear during my fieldwork is that the ethical considerations made prior were not at all sufficient for the reality. Flexibility in ethical thinking is key in conflict settings, but having a basic understanding of ethical issues helps navigate what is often a difficult situation.

Ethical considerations often start before entering the field when you are preparing an application for an ethical review board. This stage is important because it forces you to consider certain aspects prior to conducting the research, but it is often not enough (Brooks 2013; Fujii 2012; Wood 2006). I did go through the Swedish ethical review process and had my project approved.\(^3\)

Research settings do change, however, and reality often presents you with issues that an ethical review process cannot foresee.

One of the key issues that you consider in ethical reviews is consent. People who participate in your research must consent to it, through written or oral agreement. This sounds straightforward, but it can be more complicated when different power structures are at play (Fujii 2012; MacLean 2013; Wood 2009). Consent is something that needs to be discussed and requested on multiple occasions. The elite politicians whom I interviewed were all properly asked to participate, given a choice to be anonymous, or to indicate during interviews if certain parts should be anonymous. If I met them for more than one interview, I mentioned these choices again. None of my interlocutors wanted to be anonymous, as they are elite politicians and felt confident with expressing their opinions in public. Still, I have chosen not to present their names in my thesis. I have done this because the conflict in Mozambique is still not resolved and the situation is constantly changing, so a choice that may seem fine at the moment may not be fine later on. I do not want to expose them to any risk. As discussed by Reno, war and crime are often conflated, and what is considered acceptable in one instance might be a crime in another.

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\(^3\) Swedish ethical review board approved the project according to decision Dnr 2014/522
Thus, interview material may be viewed as evidence (Reno 2013; Ross 2005). Interviews in a conflict setting, therefore, need to be considered with extra caution, and I see it as my obligation to be cautious, regardless of their consent.

Another key ethical dilemma is to not put people in danger by virtue of your own presence. I handled this by always letting the person I was meeting decide where to meet, so it would be a location they felt safe in. At the height of the conflict in 2016, I was also informed by some of my key interlocutors that we could no longer have any conversations over the phone, not even to set up meetings, but that all conversations should be made through WhatsApp, because it is an encrypted medium. I naturally agreed to this arrangement. I discovered that these security measures were just as much for me as for them. They knew they were public figures for Renamo, and therefore could be targeted. If I was seen with them or heard talking to them, this could put me in danger as a Renamo supporter. At this time, there was a Mozambican academic who often spoke as a political commentator who was abducted and severely beaten after making a public statement that could be seen as pro-Renamo. They were, therefore, concerned with my safety. When I was informed by Renamo not to meet with them for a period, I followed that advice, for my own and my interpreter’s safety. This affected my research process, as I mentioned above when discussing the interviews. I had to make a trade-off between interviews and our safety.

One issue I did not contemplate enough regarding this at that time was the safety of my interpreter. As a Swedish foreigner, I was always safe in the sense that they would most likely never attack someone from the international community, owing to the high cost of such behaviour. I also always had the possibility to leave the country at any time, and I was well insured in case any real harm would have been inflicted, which I thought of when we were in a military convoy that got attacked. My interpreter did not have this advantage and would be in much greater danger than me and would not have been able to get the same kind of medical care. He might also have been less inclined to inform me of the risks because he needed the job. In retrospect, as far as I know, no harm came to him from working for me, but it is an issue that should have been considered. Performing research in ongoing conflict leads to risk-taking. I could not have performed the research I did without some risks. As mentioned, I could however had considered these issues more at the time and taken further considerations in risk mitigation.
4. The History of Renamo and the Issue of Local Power

I look out of the car window as we travel the main EN1 highway, marvelling at the excellent quality of the road. We are still in Inhambane, located in the southern region of Mozambique, and all I can see is the breathtakingly beauty of this nation. There are quaint villages dotting the roadside, with houses that may not be grand but are in decent condition. Palm trees line the road, occasionally offering a glimpse of the ocean. Several hours later, we pass the bridge over Rio Savé. This marks our entry into the central part of Mozambique and the province of Sofala. The road rapidly deteriorates from being well-maintained to nearly impassable, and I notice a shift in living standards as we enter Sofala.

I had made the decision to explore Mozambique, with the intention of visiting all its provinces and meeting with Members of Parliament in their home constituencies. I have heard numerous remarks about poverty and neglect, as well as significant disparities in Mozambique. I wish to witness it first-hand to gain a better understanding. Our journey began in Maputo, with the plan to drive all the way up to the northern province of Cabo Delgado before proceeding back south through the country.

The road we encounter in Sofala is almost impassable over long stretches; it appears that no one has undertaken repairs in quite some time. We need to stop for the night, and the only available lodging are tiny, very basic guesthouses. Toilets and running water have now become items on my wish list. On the second day, we locate a small guesthouse in Nhamapaza; it has no electricity, no water, and no toilets. The girl who runs the guesthouse offers to slaughter a chicken and prepare dinner for us. This is rural Mozambique. Up until now, my experiences have mostly been limited to Maputo, where I am accustomed to sipping coffee at a café overlooking the Bay of Maputo while using 3G internet to FaceTime with my mother.

After three days of travel, we reach Nampula, the first major city on our journey, and the first hot shower in days. On the fourth day, we arrive in Pemba, the main city in Cabo Delgado, where we plan to stay for a few days. Pemba is situated right along the coast and boasts a long, beautiful beach. So, on that evening, we watch the sunset over the Indian Ocean. The journey has only just begun, but I have already gained insight into Mozambique's remarkable diversity and stark contrasts. (Pemba, 8 May 2016)
The diversity of Mozambique assumes importance as a significant aspect that merits further exploration for those seeking to comprehend the issue of local power and why it has taken a central role in Renamo's armed struggle. While it is conceivable to strive for an understanding of Renamo's actions as an armed group and political party without delving into their historical backdrop, the analysis gains greater depth when we also grasp the origins of their arguments. It is worth noting that Renamo's present-day actions, which form the core focus of this thesis, are not formulated in isolation; rather, they are shaped by both their own historical trajectory and that of Mozambique. While providing a comprehensive account of the entire history is beyond the scope of this thesis, this chapter will delve into key issues within Mozambique's and Renamo's history. This serves as the backdrop for comprehending the context that has moulded and influenced Renamo.

Furthermore, I will examine in greater detail the main dimensions of the civil war, which continue to exert an impact on Renamo in contemporary times, as well as the group's relationship with Frelimo. Additionally, I will conduct a more thorough examination of Mozambique's democratic processes to provide insight into the context surrounding the ongoing political crisis. It is important to note that my exploration of history will be concise and primarily directed towards establishing the context relevant to Renamo. For comprehensive accounts of Mozambique and its political history, readers are referred to works such as those by Andersson (1992), Cabrita (2000), Emerson (2014), and Isaacman and Isaacman (2019).

Subsequently, I will present an analysis of how the contestation of local power emerged as a significant issue, while also addressing why this matter appears to be of paramount importance to Renamo. For this analysis, I will draw upon prior research, along with official documents. Additionally, I will incorporate excerpts from my interviews with Renamo's senior politicians, which offer valuable insights, alongside interviews conducted for purely informative purposes.

The Beginning of Renamo

Mozambique was formerly a Portuguese colony. Portugal gained control over the entire landmass in 1919, although Portuguese trading companies had been acquiring land in the region since the 1500s. What was originally referred to as Portuguese East Africa comprised a set of colonies stretching from Niassa in the north to Lourenço Marques (now Maputo) in the south. These colonies were amalgamated during Portuguese rule to form Mozambique. The small island of Ilha de Moçambique, located off Nampula, served as the capital, known as the colony of Mozambique, and later lent its name to the entire nation.
Present-day Mozambique is a vast and diverse country, encompassing an area of 801,590 square kilometres, with a population just exceeding 30 million individuals. The country boasts extensive rural regions, while the capital, Maputo, is home to an estimated population of just over 1 million residents. Mozambique is administratively divided into ten official provinces: Maputo, Gaza, Inhambane, Sofala, Manica, Zambezia, Nampula, Tete, Niassa, and Cabo Delgado. The nation is often categorised into the southern region (Maputo, Gaza, and Inhambane), central region (Sofala, Manica, Zambezia, Nampula, and Tete), and northern region (Niassa and Cabo Delgado).

The country consists of various local population groups. Some are rooted in former kingdoms, like the Gaza kingdom in the south, while others are bound
together by local kinship, culture, and language. These diverse groups are sometimes referred to as ethnicities, although most contemporary Mozambican people do not identify their group as their ethnicity; rather, it signifies a local affiliation based on kinship and language that dates back to the pre-colonial era (Andersson 1992; Cabrita 2000; Emerson 2014; Isaacman and Isaacman 2019).

Similar to many other African nations, the struggle for independence in Mozambique commenced in the mid-1960s. Mozambican insurgents initiated their quest for a liberated Mozambique from the Tanzanian border in September 1964. Portugal, however, remained resolute in maintaining control over its colonies, with Mozambique and Angola being the largest ones (Cabrita 2000; Isaacman and Isaacman 2019).

Mozambique achieved its independence on 25 June 1975. Portugal was among the last European nations to relinquish its colonies and did so reluctantly. Internal political strife in Portugal, international pressure, and local uprisings in the colonies ultimately led to independence. The liberation force in Mozambique, Frelimo (Frente de Libertaçao de Moçambique), assumed power and established a one-party political system rooted in Marxist-Leninist ideology. Frelimo advocated for the concept of a unified state in which Mozambique would be one single nation with a singular identity (Alden 2001; Igreja 2013a; Isaacman and Isaacman 2019; Machava 2011). This resulted in a state structure where local divisions were suppressed in favour of forging a modern socialist Mozambican identity. In practice, this meant that local and often traditional expressions of identity were not acknowledged (Abrahamsson and Nilsson 1995; Cabrita 2000).

Mozambique's independence had regional implications, and the subsequent years of conflict were significantly influenced by two of its neighbouring countries. Two of Mozambique’s large neighbours - South Africa and Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) - were apartheid regimes at the time and viewed the new left-wing black African government in Mozambique as a potential threat. Frelimo maintained close ties with the ANC (African National Congress) in South Africa and ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) in Zimbabwe, two other left-wing organisations fighting for freedom. The leaders of South Africa and Rhodesia considered it essential to counter the Frelimo government's interference in regional politics (Cabrita 2000).

The 16-year war: Renamo and Frelimo 1976-1992

Frelimo was founded as a coalition of four main groups, primarily representing the three southernmost provinces of Mozambique and the northern province of Cabo Delgado. After securing independence for Mozambique, Frelimo introduced a robust one-party Marxist-Leninist state system, centrally administered from Maputo. Frelimo grappled with the challenge of unifying the nation, with a substantial focus on aligning the country with Frelimo's values
and lifestyle. This involved moving towards more modern ways of life, particularly as practiced in urban areas. Traditional governance structures were abolished, along with traditional expressions of culture and religion. These policies were particularly significant for the rural population, where traditional practices held sway. Frelimo also mandated Portuguese as the sole language of instruction in schools to foster linguistic unity, as opposed to the widespread use of local languages. These policies, however, did not resonate well with the rural population, especially in provinces not traditionally aligned with Frelimo and with limited political support for Frelimo (Abrahamsson and Nilsson 1995; Cabrita 2000).

Just one year after gaining independence, in 1976, an armed group emerged in Mozambique: Renamo (Resistência Nacional Moçambicana). Initially, Renamo received significant support from the Rhodesian government during apartheid, with the aim of causing chaos and destabilising the Frelimo government. Following the fall of the Rhodesian government in 1980, apartheid-era South Africa resumed its financial support for Renamo. The circumstances surrounding the creation and funding of Renamo often led to assumptions that it lacked strong local support. While this may hold true to some extent, particularly during its inception, Renamo launched attacks against the Frelimo government from the late 1976 onwards with a dual purpose: to disrupt the Frelimo government due to foreign Rhodesian backing and to contest the one-party communist state system as an internal grievance. Initially, Renamo consisted primarily of individuals who had held positions within Frelimo and the armed struggle for independence but had been dismissed or no longer supported Frelimo's new political direction (Andersson 1992; Cabrita 2000; Emerson 2014). For this reason, Renamo always had strong local connections, alongside its foreign ties. Renamo's first leader, André Matassangiasa, had a history within Frelimo's military and political ranks, as did Renamo's long-standing prominent leader, Afonso Dhlakama, who held a military position in Frelimo during the fight for independence.

Renamo garnered support from the local population by positioning itself in opposition to the Frelimo-led government (Cabrita 2000; Emerson 2014; Manning 1998). The rural civilian population rallied around Renamo, as many were discontented with how Frelimo's policies impacted their traditional rural lifestyles, which primarily adhered to customary rules and practices, resisting the modern structures that Frelimo sought to impose (Emerson 2014; Manning 1998). Renamo consequently expanded as a group, attracting both support and recruits. However, Renamo was also known for its forced conscription and the use of child soldiers (Honwana 2011; Manning 1998). Some elite politicians I interviewed have shared stories of forced conscription in their youth, around the age of 16-17. Nevertheless, they chose to align themselves with Renamo's cause, and they remain active elite members of the party today (Interview 4a, Interview 7, Interview 11).
The civil war in Mozambique persisted from 1976 to 1992 and is often described as a brutal conflict (Alden 1996; Andersson 1992; Cabrita 2000; Emerson 2014; Finnegan 1993; Hall 1990; Igreja 2008). In Mozambique, it is referred to as the "16-year war" rather than a civil war due to varying perspectives between Frelimo and Renamo regarding the significance of foreign involvement. Frelimo is hesitant to categorise it as a civil war, as this implies internal dissatisfaction with them. During the conflict, it was commonly assumed, given Renamo's origins, that it did not have substantial support from the local population but was instead an insurgency formed by disgruntled elites and external interference. This view has been challenged by more recent researchers, who argue that Frelimo controlled the narrative and painted this picture of Renamo (Emerson 2014; Manning 2004; 1998). What we do know is that Renamo secured 44 percent of the votes in the 1994 election, indicating that it did indeed have, or had gained over the years, substantial local support.

The majority of these votes for Renamo came from the central and northern regions of Mozambique. The conflict between Renamo and Frelimo was marked by regional divisions. Frelimo held sway and enjoyed significant support in the provinces of Maputo, Gaza, and Inhambane, all situated in the southern part of the country near the capital, Maputo. Frelimo also had a strong base of support in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, where the struggle for freedom originated, and where many freedom fighters hailed from. Thus, despite the south being its primary stronghold, Frelimo also boasted a key faction in this northern province.

Renamo viewed Frelimo as representing only the country's elite, the educated and already prosperous. They argued that the struggle for freedom from Portugal had been initiated by those seeking power for themselves and who possessed the means to initiate such a struggle. The rural population, residing far from the political centres of power, was not represented by anyone during the colonial era or under Frelimo rule. Renamo filled this void and rallied rural communities (Cabrita 2000; Emerson 2014; Isaacman and Isaacman 2019). Therefore, the conflict also had rural-urban dimensions intertwined with class issues. Renamo became a vehicle for those who felt excluded in the new system and who may have hoped for change with the establishment of a free Mozambique but were left with very little.

The urban-rural divide also encompassed another dimension: the tension between modern and traditional aspects. Mozambique is, to some extent, a traditional country with many belief systems rooted in ancestry and spirits. The two principal religions are Christianity and Islam, which are influential, but traditional beliefs often coexist with these religious traditions. Traditional belief systems and forms of power are more robust among the rural population. Local areas and villages had traditionally been governed by an elder, often of historical lineage, as chiefs or sometimes known as kings. Frelimo abolished this system and instead dispatched a party representative from Maputo to oversee local regions. Due to their Marxist-Leninist ideology, Frelimo also
eliminated all forms of religion and traditional belief systems, aiming to replace them with what they perceived as a more modern communist system of governance. This was met with strong opposition and generated discontent with the new Frelimo government (Cabrita 2000; Carbone 2003; Emerson 2014; Manning 1998). Many individuals, therefore, turned to Renamo to protest these actions by Frelimo. One female senior politician I interviewed specifically cited this as her primary reason for joining Renamo, as she felt her religion had been taken away from her (Interview 36).

In contrast to many other African conflicts, the conflict in Mozambique does not exhibit strong ethnic connotations. Each region comprises various ethnic groups, but most Mozambicans do not even call it an ethnicity, rather they consider themselves as coming from a specific area or possibly a language group. Both Renamo and Frelimo encompass a wide range of different local groups. Therefore, the struggle between Frelimo and Renamo should not be viewed as an ethnic conflict.

In the late 1980s, international alliances underwent changes as left-wing Soviet support waned, and apartheid South Africa lost its footing. Mozambique's Frelimo government entered into an agreement with South Africa's apartheid government in 1984, known as the Nkomati Accord, stipulating non-interference in each other's political affairs (Isaacman 1985; Msabaha 2019). This agreement created a rift between Frelimo and the ANC, which continues to cause tension today. Mozambique was in dire economic straits at this point and faced the worst famine in its modern history. International pressure was intense, compelling Mozambique to embrace the neoliberal agenda to secure external support and debt relief, aligning with the structural adjustment programmes initiated by the IMF and the World Bank (Alden 2001; Cabrita 2000; Joseph Hanlon 2003; Pitcher 2002; Sumich 2008). This paved the way for discussions on peace and democracy.

The first president of Mozambique, Samora Machel, tragically perished in a plane crash over South African territory in 1986 while returning from a conference in Zambia. Frelimo's leadership and the Mozambican presidency passed to Joaquim Chissano, who swiftly initiated reforms within the party and the country's political system. A new constitution was established in 1990, setting the stage for multi-party politics. This was followed by a peace agreement with Renamo signed on 4 October 1992. These two pivotal documents marked the commencement of Mozambique's transition to democracy and Renamo's transformation into a political party.

Renamo’s transition into a political party
Renamo officially transitioned into a political party during the peace process in 1992. The peace agreement stipulated the allocation of funds to transform Renamo from an armed group into a political party (GPA Rome Accord 1992). At that time, Renamo was perceived to lack a robust political agenda and
public support, leading many to doubt its longevity as a political party. However, this assessment appears to have been misguided, as Renamo secured a significant share of the votes, 44 percent, in subsequent elections and has remained a strong political opposition party ever since (for comprehensive overviews of Renamo's initial transition to a political party see; Manning 2004; 2002; 1998; Söderberg Kovacs 2007; Vines 1998; 1996).

Renamo began rebranding its identity a few years before the actual peace agreement, aligning itself with the requirements of a multi-party democracy. They actively recruited educated individuals to join their ranks as politicians. This was achieved through various means, including forced recruitment of schoolteachers, and more discreet approaches to convince known members of the intellectual elite to join (Manning 1998). Some interlocutors mentioned that they remained clandestine members of Renamo until the official transformation because they did not want to be associated with an armed group (Interview 6, Interview 8a, Interview 2, Interview 5a). When Renamo formally emerged as a political party, many who held opposing ideas to the government but were averse to engaging in armed conflict officially joined Renamo. Renamo retained its name, although it is a common strategy to change as a signal of shift from an armed group to a political party. They also retained their primary emblem, but as an armed group, it featured three vertical spears; these were rotated horizontally as a symbol of renouncing armed struggle (Nilsson 1993; Vines 1996; Young 1990).

While Renamo formally became a political party and participated in the DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration) process, there is debate over whether they ever fully demobilised during the 1992 peace process. The peace agreement allowed Renamo to maintain a personal security force for its elite members. This meant that Dhlakama retained control over his own personal armed security force. In the peace agreement, this arrangement was framed as a temporary solution until the first election, with the provision that the members of this security force should then be integrated into the national police force. Renamo and Dhlakama held onto this security force even after the first election, asserting that they were never offered a proper integration of their forces. Renamo therefore argues that it fulfilled its part of the agreement, while others contend that it intentionally failed to fully disarm.

There were also indications that the reintegration of lower-level soldiers did not proceed as stipulated in the agreement. The official DDR programme initiated by the UN to integrate all rank-and-file soldiers appears to have been flawed. According to the peace agreement, a new national army, FADM (Forças Armadas de Defesa de Moçambique), was to be established, comprising equal numbers of Renamo and Frelimo soldiers. This process was never completed, and the majority of new soldiers in FADM came from the government army. The government side attributed this to Renamo's failure to present enough men for integration, while Renamo claimed it did not receive sufficient guarantees for its soldiers' safety (Vines 1998; Wiegink 2020; 2015b).
Former Renamo soldiers felt abandoned in the process and remained within Renamo's perimeters for ongoing economic support (Wiegink 2015b; 2013). Renamo soldiers were excluded from the new army, leaving Renamo responsible for their care. The official programme to reintegrate soldiers into the national military and civilian life was thus never fully realised. Renamo's composition, therefore, retained a dual nature, with an informal and hidden armed part that was not actively used. The political party Renamo existed alongside this, but there were also always armed sections. There was an official armed section, Dhlakama's personal guard, as well as an unofficial armed section of lingering soldiers (Alden 2002; 1995b; Striuli 2012; Vines 1998; Wiegink 2020; 2015b; 2015a; 2013).

Despite Renamo retaining elements of its armed history, it assumed a political party role by acting primarily as a political opposition. It has been actively engaged in Mozambique's parliament for over 30 years during peacetime. By participating in the first election, Renamo asserted its role as a political party, accepted the results, and embraced its position as an opposition party. Its participation in the initial general election was considered a success, marking a significant transformation for Renamo (Alden 2002; Cahen 2000; Lyons 2005; Manning 2004; Moran and Pitcher 2004; Vines 1998). It is often argued that opposition parties are seldom active between elections in weak democracies and that new opposition groups emerge and fade away (Levitsky and Way 2002; Lindberg 2006b; Mehler 2007; Rakner and van de Walle 2009; Uddhammar, Green, and Söderström 2011). Renamo has maintained a strong presence in Mozambique's political landscape, consistently holding a significant number of parliamentary seats and occasionally being Africa's largest opposition party (Vines 2017).

In the context of rebel-to-party literature, Renamo has frequently been considered a success story (Lyons 2005; Moran and Pitcher 2004; Söderberg Kovacs 2012; 2007; Vines 1996). Renamo was among the first groups to attempt a transition under the new peacebuilding regime led by the UN during the 1990s, when peacebuilding initiatives became closely linked to efforts to establish long-term peace through democracy. The UN facilitated Renamo's transformation, establishing a fund of 10 million dollars for this purpose. Research into Renamo and its transition into a political party aims to uncover the reasons behind its success (Manning 2007; 2004; 1998; Söderberg Kovacs 2012; 2008; 2007; Vines 1998; 1996). It is often highlighted that Renamo had a political agenda before its official transformation, and they actively sought to alter their identity to become more politically oriented. Renamo's success in attracting a diverse range of voters has also been attributed to the fact that it is not an ethnic group. Renamo has regional strongholds, and instead of representing an ethnic group, it embodies the interests of the rural population and individuals who feel marginalised by the ruling elites. Therefore, they represent an ideology rather than a specific societal group. Renamo's official wartime rhetoric centred on its struggle for democracy against Frelimo's one-party
regime, and this rhetoric and objective became integral to the group's political identity.

However, Renamo's status as a success story has been recently challenged, as its actions over the past two decades have indicated that its transition may not have been as successful as initially assumed. On occasions, Renamo has resorted to threats of violence and violent outbursts, particularly in relation to elections. The crisis that erupted after the general election of 2014 was the most severe to date, lasting for about two years before a ceasefire was established. Nonetheless, a peace agreement was not signed until 6 August 2019.

Renamo commenced its transition towards becoming a political party in 1992. It is important to remember that Renamo developed as a party within a system that had not experienced democracy before 1992. Therefore, understanding the conditions it faced to act as a democratic political actor in Mozambique's political system is crucial. The newly established democratic political system in Mozambique emerged during peacebuilding efforts, with the two primary opponents in the conflict becoming the main political rivals. Both Renamo and Frelimo have histories as armed groups, making this political system complex and infused by the legacy of conflict.

The democratic development of Mozambique: 1992-2014

The 1990s marked the beginning of democracy in Mozambique, and neither of the two main political actors, Frelimo and Renamo, had any prior experience with it. Frelimo was originally formed as an armed resistance, and needed to transition from a one-party state system, while Renamo needed to shift from an armed group into a political party (Alden 2001; 1996; Hume 1994). Violence is an integral aspect of both parties' past and how they relate to each other. Both parties have experienced that violence can be one way of achieving goals. Frelimo fought the Portuguese for independence, and Renamo fought Frelimo for democracy.

As mentioned earlier, Mozambique began its journey towards democracy with the new constitution of 1990 and the signing of the peace agreement in 1992 (Alden 1995a; Wood 1999). Mozambique has a presidential political system and a proportional parliamentary system. General elections (Eleições Gerais), including voting for the president and parliament, have been held every five years (so far in 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019). The political system is dominated by Frelimo and Renamo, which, for a long time, were the only two political parties in parliament. Frelimo, however, has consistently been the party holding the presidency and has maintained a majority of seats in parliament. Frelimo has officially retained a socialist agenda, although it has moved away from its Marxist-Leninist past. Nonetheless, there are questions about the extent of Frelimo's socialism, as it is seen as representing the capital and strong urban elites (Abrahamsson and Nilsson 1995; Cahen 1993; Sumich 2010).
In 2008, a new party, MDM (Movimento Democrático de Moçambique), was formed and entered parliament in 2009. MDM was created by former Renamo politicians and primarily revolved around their party leader, Daviz Simango, who had previously been the mayor of Beira for Renamo. When Renamo announced that it would not allow him to run for mayor in 2008, discontent was high (Interview 3, Daviz Simango). MDM emerged from this controversy, and its creation was expected to ease tensions between Frelimo and Renamo, introducing new ideas (Chichava 2010). MDM has primarily been influential in local politics, winning five municipalities in the local elections in 2013, elections that Renamo boycotted. However, in the 2018 local elections, it lost all but one of these municipalities to Renamo. While there are several other small parties, none have thus far entered parliament, which has a five percent threshold (Carbone 2003).

The first general election in 1994 was closely controlled and monitored by the UN. The election was not only significant as an election per se, but it also tested the stability of Mozambique's fragile peace and Renamo as a new political party. Observers considered it a calm and fair election with high voter turnout. Frelimo was the expected winner and secured 56 percent of the vote, compared to Renamo's 44 percent. With this election, Renamo demonstrated its popular support and its ability to function as an opposition. As previously mentioned, following this election, Renamo was often hailed as a success story of rebel-to-party transformation, and Mozambique was seen as a successful case of peacebuilding (Manning 2004; Moran and Pitcher 2004; Söderberg Kovacs 2007; Weinstein 2002).

Despite the success of the first election, all subsequent election results have been subject to questioning, with allegations of fraud being constant. Renamo has claimed that all elections were stolen by Frelimo and often resorted to violence (though usually at low levels) in the post-election period. This violence typically occurred during demonstrations and cannot be described as organised or systematic. The 2004 election was the first one to result in a change in president. Joaquin Chissano, who had been president since before the peace agreement, was replaced by Frelimo candidate Armando Guebuza. The 2009 election yielded the worst results ever for Renamo, with only 18 percent of the votes. Renamo contested the results, but due to the low numbers, it had little influence on the agenda (EISA 2010; EUEOM 2009; Nuvunga and Salih 2010).

Following the poor results for Renamo in the 2009 general election, some believed it was on a downward trajectory (Vines 2013). The government also intensified its repressive measures towards the opposition (Manning 2010). The period after the 2009 election, especially in 2012, witnessed a surge in general unrest in the country, with Renamo expressing extreme discontent with the current government. In 2012, Renamo's leader, Dhlakama, relocated to Renamo's military headquarters, claiming he feared for his life. A period of unrest unfolded in 2013, leading up to the general election in 2014. Frelimo,
or the government of Mozambique, faced accusations of multiple attacks on Renamo's military headquarters and some political offices during this period. In response, Renamo officially declared that the 1992 peace agreement was no longer in effect due to Frelimo's attacks (CrisisWatch; Freedom House). It was at this point that Renamo began remobilising its armed forces. After negotiations and several revisions to the electoral law, they agreed to participate in the 2014 general election. Although there had been issues and incidents of violence in Mozambique's electoral experience leading up to the 2014 general election, it was only after this election that Renamo returned to systematic violence in an organised manner.

Elections, as a component of democratic development, can be viewed positively in Mozambique. However, there have been clear setbacks in the process. Frelimo has maintained a strong grip on the state, and development has primarily occurred in areas deemed suitable by Frelimo. While government strongholds like the capital, Maputo, are developed and equipped with 4G internet and coffee shops on every corner, rural areas lack access to clean water and electricity. Affiliation with Frelimo is also crucial for accessing public sector jobs and standard services. Frelimo also exerts control over the media and is known to misuse the state's monopoly on violence by employing the police and military for party purposes. Although Mozambique has transitioned to democracy in principle, it still functions as a de facto one-party state system in many respects (Pereira 2009; Pitcher 2002; Virtanen 2015).

The political situation in Mozambique has been shaped by each party's legacies of violence, their relationship with each other, and Frelimo's ongoing monopoly on state structures and violence (Macamo 2017; 2016; Virtanen 2003). Kyed (2007) discusses how Frelimo has retained control over the police force and punishes Renamo not only through actions but also through discursive practices that depict Renamo as the enemy, leading to the "criminalisation of political opposition"; she refers to this as the politics of policing. Frelimo's dominance sets the stage for Renamo's existence.

This is the political context and environment in which discontent grew between Renamo and Frelimo, ultimately leading to the new conflict. The primary contention in the conflict that erupted after the 2014 election was the right to govern in six provinces in Mozambique. Understanding how this issue became the focal point of dissent is crucial for a comprehensive analysis of Renamo's behaviour and perceptions in relation to its dual role as both an armed group and a political party. This issue lies at the heart of their arguments. Therefore, I will now examine how this matter became a contested issue through a historical overview based on prior research, official documents, and interviews.
From Local Power to Decentralisation

This thesis centres on understanding Renamo as a political party and an armed group, with a focus on analysing how hybridity manifests. One aspect of this analysis pertains to the fact that Renamo has pursued the same political issue using both democratic channels and organised, systematic violence. To facilitate the discussion in the following chapter, it is crucial to grasp the significance of this issue for Renamo, as it contributes to the construction of their hybridity. Additionally, it aids in comprehending the social and historical context that shapes certain interview responses. This section, therefore, concentrates on developing an understanding of what the political issue means for Renamo and how it has evolved into becoming a contested issue. The emphasis in the following part of this chapter is on understanding Renamo's political issue of *Local Power* and why it has emerged as the core point of contention.

Following the 2014 election, Renamo declared the right to govern the provinces in which it received a majority of the votes. The claim encompassed six out of ten provinces, namely Sofala, Zambezia, Nampula, Manica, Tete, and Niassa; please see to the map on page 72. These provinces account for 70.2 percent of the population in Mozambique, signifying that most of the people would come under Renamo's rule if the claim were to be realised.

Table 1. Population statistic Mozambique: Census 2017 (INE: Instituto Nacional de Estatistica, 2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Population, 2017 census</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique total</td>
<td>27,909,798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nampula</td>
<td>5,758,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambezia</td>
<td>5,164,732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maputo</td>
<td>3,089,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tete</td>
<td>2,648,941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabo Delgado</td>
<td>2,320,261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofala</td>
<td>2,259,248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manica</td>
<td>1,968,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niassa</td>
<td>1,810,794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhambane</td>
<td>1,488,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaza</td>
<td>1,422,460</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This claim might appear rather sudden, as it was not part of any pre-election rhetoric, but the issue of local power seems to hold significant importance for Renamo. Access to local power, later reframed as decentralisation in the process, was the key demand pursued by Renamo when it returned to violence in 2014. This political objective has been actively advocated for by Renamo's elite politicians in parliament and has been their primary focus in peace negotiations. Renamo made two claims to accept peace: decentralisation and the reintegration of its soldiers into government security forces to establish a more neutral security force (Club of Mozambique 2016p). Hence, access to local power, or decentralisation, stands as Renamo's principal political issue.

The issue of local power is rather intricate in Mozambique and has undergone many twists and turns. In practice, it has been a protracted process moving toward a decentralised system. However, the terminology, local power, and the narrative surrounding it have also evolved over time. I use the term local power because it is the terminology used by Renamo politicians themselves and it is how issues of decentralisation have been articulated in Mozambique's official documents. The concept of decentralisation did not become an official part of the rhetoric until the 2018 amendment to the constitution, when the constitution section concerning the issue was rephrased from Local Power to Decentralisation, in Portuguese Poder Local to Descentralização. This change occurred during the peace negotiation. To discuss the significance of local power for Renamo, it is essential to understand the historical evolution of local power as both a practical process and a discursive process, involving the shift from the term local power to decentralisation, and how this rephrasing alters its democratic connotations.

Decentralisation is often promoted in post-war countries for instrumental reasons. It is a frequently used strategy, pursued with dual objectives as a peace mechanism and a means for development (Brinkerhoff 2005; Crawford and Hartmann 2008; Faguet, Fox, Lijphart 2007; Pöschl 2015). Decentralisation, as a theoretical concept, encompasses two main features: de-concentration of power or devolution of power. De-concentration transfers power from the central to the local, but it may remain within the same party structure, while devolution implies that local power will be allocated through elections. Decentralisation does not necessarily open more avenues of power for opposition parties, as it can be carried out through de-concentration, where state power is transferred to local levels of authority. De-concentration may even be employed to increase state control, potentially leading to tensions among groups feeling excluded from power. However, in policy circles, the concept of decentralisation often includes the idea of elections, as it is intended to enhance democratic structures. I argue that this ambiguity in the concept has shaped the process and influenced how local power became a contested issue in Mozambique.

In the 1990 constitution, there is a section outlining how political power should function at the local level, referred to as Poder Local, meaning local
power (Constitution of Mozambique 1990). This constitution established the new framework for multiparty politics in Mozambique, and it was enacted during the final stages of the conflict. The 16-year war between 1976 and 1992, fought between Frelimo and Renamo, centred around issues of democracy, primarily related to local grievances. Renamo opposed Frelimo's imposition of a one-party state system in the post-colonial era. Renamo had significant support in the country's rural central areas, where discontent with Frelimo's rule was widespread (Cabrita 2000; Manning 1998). Mozambique is a vast country with extensive rural regions, and at that time, these areas had limited contact with the capital. Renamo was not only present as an armed group but also controlled public services in many local areas. Their local and social influence grew throughout the war. During the conflict, Renamo was not only an armed group but also provided goods and services in the areas they controlled, which was brought up in one of the interviews with an elite politician in Renamo:

In the zones that Renamo controlled there were secretaries, or political delegates whose mission was to awaken and mobilise the people to the cause of Renamo. There were also Renamo administrators dealing with issues such as education, health, agriculture and such, dealing with the administrative activities of these areas. (Interview 34a Renamo, 12 April 2016)

This quote indicates that Renamo had political structures in place, including Renamo administrators. The Frelimo government implemented a strong socialist system and abolished traditional governance structures, primarily related to religion and local traditional belief systems, which alienated Frelimo from local communities. The conflict between Renamo and Frelimo had political and regional dimensions: the southern provinces and the far north aligned with Frelimo, while the central and northern areas were controlled by Renamo. Renamo never officially sought territorial partition, but since Renamo controlled certain local areas during the conflict, it has traditionally maintained popularity in those same areas in the post-conflict period. Thus, there is a regional divide and a local issue causing tension between Frelimo and Renamo.

To prevent the regional aspect of the conflict from escalating, the general peace agreement of 1992 emphasised the importance of promoting unity in a divided country, stipulating that no party should exclusively represent specific local areas and that all parties must work towards national unity: "They [political parties] shall not call into question the country's territorial integrity and national unity" (GPA Rome Accord 1992). This established a certain understanding of what local power might entail, as it strongly opposed any division of the country among political parties. Additionally, as previously mentioned, it was not called decentralisation in the constitution but local power, from the actual chapter title to the language used. These two documents, the
constitution and the peace agreement, were the cornerstones of democracy and the political system in Mozambique.

The twists and turns of local power

Regional divides were evident in the conflict between 1976-1992, indicating that access to local politics has deep roots in Mozambique. The process of constructing a new political system after the peace agreement that accommodates local politics was, therefore, of importance. However, this process appears to have been perceived as flawed by Renamo. The interpretation and implementation of the concept *Poder local*, as outlined in the 1990 constitution, have become one of the main points of contention between Frelimo and Renamo in the conflict that erupted in 2014. The question of how local power should be understood, function, and whom it would benefit is open to interpretation. In this section, I will address how this issue became contested, as this sheds light on the actions of Renamo. I will do so chronologically, examining the different twists and turns in the process using official documents, prior research, and information along with thoughts and opinions expressed in the interviews.

Decentralisation has been an ongoing and disputed process in Mozambique for over the past 30 years. It has its origins in the 1990 constitution, which was crafted with the aim of establishing a multiparty system. Democracy was to be established, and ideas of decentralisation were included, albeit only framed as *local power, Poder Local*. The primary emphasis in the formulation was that local issues should be addressed at the local level. The constitution stipulated that local municipalities, known as *autarquias locais*, should be established for this purpose (Constitution of Mozambique 1990). There was no mention of the concept of decentralisation and no explicit details about the structure of the municipalities, only the provision in the constitution to transfer power to local municipalities, *autarquias locais*. Decentralisation, or the distribution of local power in any form, was not discussed in the 1992 peace agreement, even though it had been introduced in the constitution (under the idea of *Local Power*) just two years earlier (Constitution of Mozambique 1990; GPA Rome Accord 1992).

In the lead-up to Mozambique's first multiparty election in 1994, a proposal for decentralisation was debated and approved in parliament (then only Frelimo), including extensive devolution measures. The new law granted over 200 rural and urban municipalities the status of *autarquias locais*. This law established mechanisms for local self-governance through local elections, and explicitly stated that municipal districts could be either urban or rural, *Os distritos municipais podem ser urbanos ou rurais* (Law 3/94, Government of Mozambique 1994). This new law set the first local elections to be conducted in 1996.
This law encompassed a rather comprehensive form of decentralisation, aligned with efforts to establish democracy during the peace process, and it was advocated by international actors involved in the process. However, this law faced opposition from within Frelimo, as some factions believed it posed a risk of ceding too much power to Renamo (Bornstein 2008; Maschietto 2016b). The opposing faction within Frelimo gained traction when it became evident that Renamo had a strong political constituency, especially in the central and northern areas, in the 1994 general elections.

The decentralisation law from 1994 was therefore declared unconstitutional by a Frelimo-led parliament in November 1995. A new proposal was not approved until 1997 (Law 2/97, Government of Mozambique 1997). Members of Renamo, who were also active during this period, have expressed that they perceived Frelimo's resistance as a realisation that strong decentralisation could result in a loss of power, as illustrated by the following quote:

> The government had drafted a law that was based on decentralisation of all districts, but after the election in 1994 they realised that it was too risky because a majority of districts would be ruled by Renamo [...] Renamo’s support was mainly in the rural areas, in the urban areas almost 90 percent was in support of Frelimo.  (Interview 8a Renamo, 6 March 2015)

This quote illustrates this sentiment, as interpreted by Renamo. We cannot ascertain whether this was Frelimo's motivation. However, it does provide insight into how Renamo perceived the issue.

The 1997 law outlined a significantly more limited decentralisation, which only conferred official status to urban municipalities. Law 2/97 specifies that autarquias locais can be municipalities or small settlements, municípios e as povoações, and that municipalities can only encompass the areas around cities and towns. This wording mirrors that in the constitution. It was interpreted to mean that the rural countryside could not be classified as autarquias locais. The earlier law from 1994 also included rural settlements as povoações, as this concept loosely refers to a settlement of houses, without clear limits on the number of houses or their proximity to each other. While the contentious law from 1994 had identified over 200 such towns or villages, the new law from 1997 recognised only 23 urban municipalities (Law 2/97, Government of Mozambique 1997). The number of urban municipalities has gradually increased over the years and stood at 65 for the local elections held in October 2023.

The system that emerged was, therefore, based on a form of urban decentralisation, where specific urban municipalities elect their own mayor and municipal assemblies, while the rural countryside remains under central control through provincial administrative units. All urban municipalities are situated within a province, meaning that many political matters must be negotiated with provincial authorities. All issues at the province level are overseen by the
central government, limiting the ability to act independently as a municipality. The first local elections were scheduled and held in November 1998, and subsequent elections take place at five-year intervals (Bornstein 2008; Maschietto 2016b).

This change in the law had significant implications for Renamo's access to local power and, by extension, its access to any real political power. It was the first instance within the new democratic political system where Renamo encountered Frelimo's denial of its access to power in areas where it enjoyed primary support and had held a position of power during the conflict. In my interviews, Renamo's elite politicians stated that they did not favour the decentralisation law passed in 1997 (Interview 10, Interview 23, Interview 24, Interview 26a, Interview 32a, Interview 33, Interview 35). The following quote is an example of how some elite members of Renamo experienced the law:

We were opposed, mainly because the cities chosen to be municipalities were those places where Frelimo is stronger. There were no municipalities created in areas where we think it was supposed to be. (Interview 32a Renamo, 8 April 2016)

As a party, however, Renamo did vote in favour of the law. Renamo may have supported the law because it was perceived as a step in the right direction towards creating some level of decentralisation, which could lead to improved access to power for Renamo. The scheme to replace the earlier, more comprehensive decentralisation law created tension between Frelimo and Renamo. The fact that Renamo's elite politicians emphasise their dissatisfaction with this compromise indicates that the issue was contested. It is frequently mentioned in the interviews that Frelimo cheated them out of genuine decentralisation and real power, leaving Renamo with no choice but to accept the 1997 law.

This form of urban decentralisation, however, did not result in any substantial devolution of power but rather allowed a centralised state to maintain control while appearing to address demands for decentralisation. This measure increased local power on paper but strengthened the government's control over the rural countryside, areas that had previously been beyond Frelimo's reach or under Renamo's control. During the conflict, Frelimo had effectively lost control over large parts of rural Mozambique. Through this law, they legally regained control over rural Mozambique. The law explicitly stipulates that the state retains control over rural areas, with only selected urban areas having voting rights.

The idea of granting certain urban centres the right to self-govern, while denying rural areas the same privilege, was argued on the basis of their economic capacity for self-sustainability. However, this constructed a distinction between urban and rural areas, granting greater rights to those living in urban
areas. The rural population in Mozambique had already experienced inadequate representation by the central government, which led to conflict-related grievances. This exclusive focus on urban areas was thus seen as controversial and potentially divisive. This issue was not only a general grievance with the government but also tied to party politics, as Renamo had strong ties to the rural population, as discussed above (Buur 2009; Igreja 2013b; 2013a; Reaud and Weimer 2014).

Renamo boycotted the first local elections held in 1998, expressing dissatisfaction with the limited number of municipalities and the absence of partisan influence in the electoral bodies. The 1998 local elections saw very low turnout, at around 15 percent (Reaud and Weimer 2014). In 2003, Renamo formed a coalition known as Renamo UE (União Eleitoral) with several smaller parties for the local elections. This strategic move aimed to gain more leverage against Frelimo. Renamo UE secured the majority in a few municipalities, including Beira, the second-largest city in Mozambique and the primary city in Sofala, Renamo's stronghold.

In 2000, a parallel process took place in which the Frelimo government sought to establish a system of local governance by legitimising traditional authorities or village leaders. This marked a change in their approach to local authorities, initiated by President Joaquin Chissano. This project aimed to deconcentrate power to local levels without introducing political competition. It could be interpreted as a strategy to appease Renamo, or rather its constituency. As mentioned earlier, during the early years of Frelimo rule after independence in 1975, Frelimo had dismantled traditional authority and village leadership, replacing them with a centralised system of governance. This was a key reason for Renamo's strong support in rural areas (Manning 2003; 1998). The status of traditional authorities was also addressed in the general peace agreement, which stated that the government would respect and not undermine traditional structures and authorities, allowing them to be replaced only in cases required by local traditions (GPA Rome Accord 1992). The process of granting authority to traditional leaders to interact with official authorities at the provincial level began with a law passed in 2000 (Law 15/2000, Government of Mozambique 2000).

Traditional leaders mainly came from kinship groups that had historically held leadership roles, although status could also be acquired. The acquired group included former Frelimo secretaries or Renamo leaders who had governed during the conflict. The criteria for recognising someone as a traditional leader were arbitrary and context dependent, with village meetings convened to establish the authority of those claiming this role (see Buur and Kyed, 2006; Kyed and Buur, 2006 for an in-depth analysis of traditional authority in Mozambique). This initiative could have been seen as enabling a bottom-up approach to local power and bringing power closer to the population.

However, Kyed and Buur (2006) argue that, in the case of Mozambique, this approach instead allowed the Frelimo government to tighten its control
over rural areas. The government used wartime traditional narratives and asserted that traditional leaders were being brought into the family, signifying their alignment with Frelimo. While the category of traditional leader theoretically accommodated various leaders, no former Renamo leaders were granted traditional leader status. In Frelimo strongholds like Cabo Delgado, many former Frelimo secretaries received authorisation, while in Renamo strongholds such as Sofala, the title was reserved for those who could claim a kinship-based traditional leadership role, based on a lineage that extended far back in history (Buur and Kyed 2006).

This initiative to create local power can thus be viewed as a move that further solidified Frelimo's control over the rural population. In practice, it led to Frelimo reasserting central control over areas it had not accessed during its period of one-party communist rule. This process unfolded concurrently with the establishment of urban municipalities. From Renamo's perspective, however, this process increasingly cut off its access to power, as Frelimo tightened its political grip over rural areas.

Renamo participated in the 2008 local elections, but this process was also marked by internal struggles. Key members of Renamo, including the Mayor of Beira, left the party just before the elections, as discussed earlier. This resulted in the formation of a new splinter party, MDM. Consequently, Renamo lost control of Beira, its primary source of local political power. By this point, the overall political situation in Mozambique had started deteriorating. Manning (2010) contends that Mozambique was beginning to regress towards a de facto one-party state system. Since the peace agreement, Mozambique's democratic system had been fragile. The early years of democracy had shown promise, with President Chissano, who ruled from 1994 to 2004, being considered a relatively fair president, even by Renamo. However, in 2005, the presidency transitioned to Guebuza, and his rule is perceived as a return to repressive measures. Informal discussions with Renamo's politicians revealed that Chissano was viewed with some esteem even by them, while sentiments about Guebuza were considerably more negative. Guebuza's presidency lasted until the 2014 general election.

It can be argued that the process of creating decentralisation and introducing local elections did not improve Renamo's access to local power. Instead, it was a highly disputed process with several setbacks, resulting in Renamo losing power in areas it had previously controlled. The adopted laws institutionalised a form of decentralisation that reinforced Frelimo's control of power.

This sets the stage for the general election in 2014, which became the breaking point that prompted Renamo to return to systematic violence. Their stated aim to resume violence was to gain access to local power, not just at the municipal level but at the provincial level. To reiterate, the general election in 2014 marked progress for Renamo: it secured 36 percent of the votes, compared to 18 percent in 2009. However, Renamo was dissatisfied and claimed
that Frelimo had manipulated the election and stolen the victory. Renamo announced that it would accept the national-level election result only if it were allowed to govern in the provinces where it had secured the majority of votes. This included the provinces of Sofala, Manica, Zambezia, Nampula, Tete, and Niassa, leaving only the four provinces of Maputo, Gaza, Inhambane, and Cabo Delgado. Shortly after the election, in February 2015, Renamo leader Dhlakama made it clear that if Frelimo did not abide to this claim, Renamo would take control of these provinces by force. This underscores the critical importance of local power and the fact that two decades of political progress had not resolved the underlying tensions.

New peace negotiations commenced in August 2016, leading to a ceasefire just before Christmas 2016. Renamo had come to realise that to gain access to local power, changes needed to be made to the constitution. Renamo's primary objective in these negotiations was to amend the constitution to establish a more robust decentralisation law. The negotiations were protracted and experienced interruptions due to Dhlakama's passing in May 2018. On 12 June 2018, an amendment to the constitution was passed in Mozambique's parliament, enabling a more substantial form of decentralisation (Law 1/2018, Government of Mozambique 2018). The wording in the constitution has now changed from Poder local to Descentralização, and the new law stipulates that provincial governors should be elected. This means that a province can now be won and governed by any political party, and this was implemented with the 2019 general election, meaning Renamo was successful in changing the law to establish a more substantial form of decentralisation.

Why is local power still a contested political issue?

The discussion above suggests that the historical process of establishing various levels of local self-governance structures in Mozambique has been very turbulent, and it has not led to the changes sought by Renamo. Local divisions, both social and political, were also significant issues that were part of Renamo's struggle as an armed group during the conflict between 1976-1992. Within the literature on rebel-to-party transitions, it has been argued that the success of parties can be assessed based on how effectively they adapt to pure political features. This entails moving away from their armed past in terms of ideology and focusing on their political activities (Ishiyama 2019; Ishiyama and Batta 2011; Sindre 2019; Sindre 2016b). Sindre (2019) examines how well parties transition to peacetime politics or whether they continue to emphasise conflict-related cleavages. If conflict-related issues remain prominent, it becomes challenging to bring about change. Local division and access to local power were pivotal aspects of the conflict and have remained central political issues for Renamo during its tenure as a political party. The process initiated since the signing of the peace agreement in 1992 has also been highly contentious, with tension persisting around these issues and between Renamo and Frelimo.
It would be unjustifiable to assume that issues integral to the conflict should automatically be abandoned in the construction of a new political system, especially when these issues are rooted in ideology and politics. It is reasonable for such issues to continue to feature prominently in the political ideology of the new party, necessitating their consideration within the new system.

In the preceding section, we can observe the twists and turns in the establishment of some form of decentralised political system in Mozambique – a process ongoing since the signing of the peace agreement in 1992. The question of local identity and local politics has remained a focal point. When examining the historical process of enacting new laws to establish different forms of local power in Mozambique, a consistent distinction between urban and rural areas becomes evident, with Renamo not achieving any increased access to power. A limited number of urban centres in Mozambique have been granted the right to self-governance, while rural areas have come under stronger government control. Renamo has perceived this as a means of further excluding it as a political actor.

The withdrawal of the first comprehensive decentralisation law in 1994 led to resentment on Renamo’s part when it was subsequently replaced with a significantly more limited law on urban decentralisation. This was followed by initiatives that, on paper, granted local power to traditional rural authorities, but there are indications that this measure also effectively increased Frelimo’s control (Buur and Kyed 2006). The process surrounding local power has deepened the significance of this critical conflict issue for Renamo rather than addressing it constructively. The process has been challenging, but why is local power so crucial? What are the key issues?

Decentralisation has been viewed as the solution to Renamo’s long-standing exclusion from power. Mozambique has had a highly centralised political system, leaving Renamo without access to power. Renamo’s elite politicians frame this as a deliberate measure by Frelimo. In Renamo’s eyes, access to local power would alleviate this grievance by empowering the party and serve as a tool to prevent Frelimo from abusing its power.

For Renamo, local power is also linked to concepts of long-term social exclusion rooted in local divisions. Mozambique exhibits strong regional disparities, as well as urban-rural divides, giving rise to class distinctions aligned with social and political affiliations. Consequently, decentralisation is perceived as a solution to end the exclusion of the social group represented by Renamo.

Resource allocation has long favoured regions supporting Frelimo, and with the recent discovery of natural resources⁴, it may be even more crucial to enhance access to local power. Renamo’s elite politicians emphasise how the

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⁴ Large fields of natural gas were discovered outside the shore of Cabo Delgado in 2010, and a process to harvest the gas is ongoing. It has, however, been a long process marred with conflict, both over financial rights as well as an Islamic insurgency that halted the project.
centralised political system controlled by Frelimo results in Renamo areas being left out of development initiatives. This indicates that one of the main contentious issues related to local power is access to local resource allocation, also illustrated by the creation and management of *The 7 Million Fund*. This initiative commenced in 2006 to provide funding to the newly established 128 local rural districts. These districts are not self-governing municipalities but form part of the centralised system. It was recognised that poverty needed to be tackled at the local level, and President Guebuza, who assumed office in 2005, made this a key component of his efforts to combat poverty and enhance local capacity (Maschietto 2016a). Initially, it was a government-granted fund with minimal instructions. However, it soon became problematic as a significant portion of the funding ended up in the hands of district representatives for personal gain. In 2009, it was restructured into a fund intended to support national and local initiatives for small-scale funding for farmers and small business entrepreneurs in the districts. Local councils in each district were tasked with determining the recipients of funds and the projects deserving of support.

These local councils (LCs) are meant to comprise representatives from various strata of society, from the village level to district representatives. Lower-level LC members elect those at higher levels, but the process of election, as well as the identity of those they represent, remains unclear. Maschietto (2016) highlights the contentious nature of this process, as the method of electing the lowest-level representatives at the village level and their actual constituents are ambiguous. Consequently, LCs have become highly politicised. Moreover, there are no regulations preventing LCs from allocating funds to their own members, resulting in *The 7 Million Fund* often benefiting individuals other than its intended recipients.

For Renamo, *The 7 Million Fund* has emerged as a focal point of disagreement, seen as a mechanism that restricts access to funds based on party affiliation. In interviews with local Renamo politicians in Beira, this issue was consistently raised as a source of tension and as a reason for the ongoing neglect of development in Beira and Sofala (Interview 6, Interview 5a, Interview 7, Interview 12, Interview 35), as indicated by the following quote:

> Every district must have *The 7 Million Fund* for the people, but only a person who can present a Frelimo membership card gets to use it. They give money among the Frelimo comrades so I cannot say how that money has been spent. (Interview 7 Renamo, 20 March 2015)

The above quote reflects a sentiment that suggests no funds from *The 7 Million Fund* have ever benefited a Renamo member or a Renamo-affiliated region. For Renamo, this serves as another illustration of how the Mozambican system ostensibly caters to the rural local population but, in practice, primarily benefits Frelimo supporters. This concern was also raised by Renamo in
parliament during discussions on the new budget in the initial parliamentary session in 2015. Renamo voted against the budget proposal, with one of their key arguments being the insufficient allocation of funds for rural development (Observation 3).

Furthermore, some critics have contended that the allocation of funds from The 7 Million Fund increases during election years which could indicate vote-buying by Frelimo (Maschietto 2016b; 2016a; Orre and Forquilha 2012). There exists inconsistency in the interpretation of The 7 Million Fund's outcomes, with the central government declaring it a success, while local officials adopt a more nuanced yet often positive stance. Official data and statistics are scarce, but the prevailing narrative often revolves around the empowerment of government officials rather than concrete, successful outcomes (Maschietto 2016b; 2016a; Orre and Forquilha 2012). As demonstrated in the above quote, the Renamo elite politicians whom I interviewed hold a distinct perception of The 7 Million Fund's allocation, viewing it as a politicised initiative designed to further marginalise their influence in rural areas.

These viewpoints represent two polarised perspectives, and the objective truth remains elusive. Nevertheless, Renamo's claim for increased local power at the provincial level, granting them authority over districts, must be assessed in this context. They had endured several years of perceived neglect in terms of funding and resource access, believing that Frelimo had misused state resources to exert control over the rural population that had previously aligned with Renamo. The existence of The 7 Million Fund, along with its alleged politicisation, has heightened the tension between Frelimo and Renamo regarding the issue of local power (Orre and Forquilha 2012).

Renamo politicians perceive that there are areas deliberately overlooked by the government where their support base resides. Nevertheless, it is plausible that residents in these areas support the opposition due to neglect, thereby creating a vicious cycle. The quote below illustrates this experienced frustration with the recurring perception that rural areas are consistently neglected:

Everything is at the national level, we forget about the local, where the votes are actually coming from. (Interview 26a Renamo, 15 May 2016)

This sentiment forms the cornerstone of Renamo's core ideology. It champions the cause of rural, neglected, and marginalised populations. However, when the strong demand for local self-governance emerged after the 2014 general election defeat, accompanied by threats of violence, it might have seemed abrupt, as Renamo had not actively pursued a political agenda for decentralisation as part of its pre-election campaign. Nonetheless, the previous analysis demonstrates that the issue of decentralisation has been a recurring theme throughout Renamo's history, both as an armed group during the war 1976-1992, and as a political party.
In theory, decentralisation can encompass both the de-concentration of power and the devolution of power, with only the latter enabling multiparty competition for local governance. In Mozambique, both aspects of decentralisation have been incorporated into the process, resulting in a bifurcated system. The Mozambican central government has retained and largely increased its control over rural areas through de-concentration of power measures (Bornstein 2000; Kloeck-Jenson 2000; Linder 2010; Machohe 2011; Maschietto 2016b; Reaud and Weimer 2014; West and Kloeck-Jenson 1999). Conversely, devolution of power has been limited to a select few urban centres that have gained status as *autarqias municipais*, or municipalities.

A significant body of research has been conducted on the impacts of decentralisation in Mozambique, with primary focus on the relationship between local and central authorities (Bornstein 2008; 2000; Macamo and Neubert 2004; Maschietto 2016a; 2016b; Orre and Forquilha 2012; Reaud and Weimer 2014), as well as its effects on development and democratisation (Kloeck-Jenson 2000; Linder 2010; Machohe 2011; Weimer 2012; Weinstein 2002).

A common conclusion drawn from this research is that Mozambique has undergone a decentralisation process controlled by a powerful central state, resulting in a system where Frelimo has intentionally restricted opposition access to power. Through various informal means, primarily traditional authority, Frelimo has enhanced its own influence (Bunk 2018; Buur and Kyed 2006; Igreja 2013a; Kyed and Buur 2006; West and Kloeck-Jenson 1999). However, previous research often lacks an examination of how Renamo perceives this process. While the exclusion of the opposition has been acknowledged, the implications of this exclusion for Renamo and for peace and stability have not been fully explored.

Local power is a crucial political issue for Renamo. It was a significant factor in the initial conflict from 1976 to 1992 and remains the central issue in the new conflict. This underscores the contested nature of this issue and its influence on Renamo's current actions, both as a political party and an armed group.

What is particularly intriguing about Renamo's conduct concerning the issue of local power during the conflict following the 2014 general election is its adoption of a dual strategy. Renamo actively pursued local power through parliamentary channels and sought to amend official laws and the constitution. It presented proposals in parliament and worked diligently within the political system to secure change. When the initial bill was rejected on April 30, 2015, it triggered a violent response. Nevertheless, it also signalled a change in Renamo's strategy as its MPs began working towards amending the constitution. Simultaneously, systematic violence remained a part of the strategy to create leverage and compel Frelimo to engage in negotiations. This will be explored in detail in the subsequent chapter—how Renamo pursued the political issue of local power after 2014, both as an armed group and as a political party, and in chapter 6 I will discuss how Renamo functions as a hybrid party.
5. Renamo’s Elite-level Behaviour and Perceptions

The military convoy had come to a halt; it was just after we had passed Ripembe. This happened regularly on the 100 km drive between Muxungwe and Rio Savé on the main highway, the EN1, in the Sofala district. Since the fighting between Renamo and government forces had intensified, the government did not allow traffic on certain stretches of the main road without military protection. Therefore, military convoys left twice a day, and all cars had to travel together.

We were all tired, just leaning back in our seats, waiting for the convoy to start off again. The day before, we had just missed the last convoy for the afternoon and had been forced to stay overnight and wait for the morning convoy. The small "border town" that had grown due to the military convoy did not really offer any proper accommodation. We had found one of the few recently built guesthouses, but that still meant very basic living. During the wait for the morning convoy to leave, however, we did hear that there had been attacks the day before, making us feel fortunate we had actually missed it. It was time for the last long stretch home after a three-week field trip around the country, during which I had interviewed MPs in their home constituencies.

We were waiting for the convoy to start moving again, but then I suddenly heard a strange pounding noise: "douff, douff, douff." It was the sound of automatic guns firing back and forth. I could not discern where the sound came from or how close it was. I simply laid down as far as I could in the backseat. It was all eerily quiet, except for the gunfire, as if we were in a vacuum. The national army military trucks started speeding past us, including a large tank. The next thing I heard was the sound of very heavy weaponry, and the ground was shaking.

Almost simultaneously, the convoy started moving again, probably to keep civilian cars away from the action. I stayed put, lying in the backseat until we stopped again at the provincial border crossing between Sofala and Inhambane at Rio Savé. We heard in the conversations around us that the attack had been about four to five cars behind us, with no civilians injured, only military personnel. I was immensely relieved to travel over the bridge at Rio Savé and be back in the south, where the conflict had never reached. (Maputo, 20 May 2016)
The fighting between Renamo and government forces increased substantially during the first half of 2016. Renamo then moved from threats to action and began targeted armed attacks along the main road, the EN1, which stretches throughout Mozambique from south to north. It was one of these attacks that I ended up in the middle of during a road trip in 2016, as the field note above describes. These attacks were organised and can be seen as an outright use of armed systematic violence.

The attacks made by Renamo and counterattacks by government forces were limited to certain areas, primarily in the central part of Mozambique, in Sofala and Manica, and some reported attacks in Tete, primarily targeting cargo trains. Renamo principally attacked buses that were assumed to transport government soldiers, and those attacks led to injuries and casualties within the military forces, but with limited civilian casualties. Renamo had employed this new, more severe tactic because it still had not gained any political success in its claim for local self-governance.

In the previous chapter, I discussed the historical prelude to the meaning of local power that ultimately led to this new political crisis. I will, therefore, now analyse in more detail how Renamo aimed to pursue this issue, how it pursued the issue as a democratic political party and as an armed group. I will use the framework presented in detail in Chapter 2, on page 43. I will analyse Renamo’s behaviour and perceptions in relation to either acting in line with an Armed Group or a Political Party. The analysis follows the framework to enable a deeper understanding of a group that seems to exist as both. This helps us describe Renamo in relation to the dichotomous roles of an armed group and a political party, which means it also enables us to understand how these two roles interact. This starting point in the analysis allows us to see the nuances in the roles and when and how they overlap and, therefore, how hybridity manifests.

This chapter is a systematic analysis based on the theoretical framework. Each category, Armed group and Political party, will be presented and analysed separately. I start with how Renamo’s behaviour and perceptions correspond to being an armed group and then move to how they correspond to being a political party. Behaviour and perceptions are analysed in relation to the identified areas of analysis that I derived from previous research and presented in the framework. To make it clear, the chapter sub-headings are directly derived from the framework. To analyse the two roles separately also means we can easily see how and when they might interact, and in the next chapter, I will conduct an analysis specifically focused intersection of the roles, focusing on Renamo as a hybrid party.
Armed Group: Behaviour of Elite Politicians

In the analysis of what it means to behave as an armed group, I scrutinise two overarching areas of analysis. The first is the use of threats and armed systematic violence to coerce the opponent; the second concerns whether and how the leadership and elite-level politicians are taking official responsibility for systematic violent acts, thus whether systematic violence is connected to the party’s official strategy and permeates the political elite. I view the second as connected to behaviour as it revolves around knowledge of actions. This is an indicator of initiating the use of systematic violence to promote violent strategies and to maintain violent behaviour. Knowledge differs from the component focused on perceptions in that perceptions focus on how one perceives an issue, while here under behaviour, I focus on actual knowledge of actions.

Engaging in threats and armed systematic violence

The paramount behaviour that defines an armed group is the use of organised armed systematic violence to pursue a political cause. This means that violent actions should be organised by the group and serve the purpose of coercing the opponent. This analysis is therefore based on understanding Renamo’s actual behaviour in relation to using systematic violence, including both concrete supported threats of violence and the actual use of systematic violence by Renamo during the period from the general election in 2014 to the ceasefire in January 2017.

Threats were primarily used in the earlier stages of the conflict, which is often the case. This creates leverage and is an attempt to coerce without using violent means. Threats in themselves could be seen as too weak to judge whether a group is acting as an armed group. As discussed in the theory section, historical use of armed violence does have an impact, as it supports the reality of threats. Renamo’s history as an armed group that fought a 16-year-long war gives the threats more leverage than if they had been made by a group without a violent history.

Threats were primarily elaborated by Renamo leader Afonso Dhlakama in public media. As mentioned in Chapter 4, during the first months of 2015, Renamo was proposing a bill to parliament about the right to have local self-governance. While this was happening, Dhlakama often associated it with an underlying, or sometimes outright, threat that if parliament did not pass the law, Renamo would take control of these provinces by force, as the quotes below illustrate:

If they (the Frelimo leadership) don’t give orders directly to the Frelimo parliamentary group to facilitate the bill, there will be consequences. Afonso Dhlakama, 24 February 2015 (Public Statement 3)
I, Dhlakama, shall form a government by force, even if I have to use a Plan B to reach power without Frelimo’s approval. *Afonso Dhlakama, 4 April 2015* (Public Statement 4)

These statements were made at the end of February and the beginning of April 2015. The vote for Renamo’s bill was scheduled for April 30, 2015. Here, Dhlakama clearly uses threats to coerce the opponent into making concessions. He emphasises words such as *force* and *consequences*, indicating that he is willing to use violent actions, but at this stage, he leaves it at threats. Threats can be seen as empty, or they can have leverage. In the case of Dhlakama and Renamo, their armed group history colours the understanding of these threats. Dhlakama is known as a military leader who fought a 16-year-long civil war, and it is known at this point that Renamo still has close ties to its old soldiers. In 2012, Dhlakama also started living at a Renamo military base in the Santujiira forest in the Gorongosa mountains, rather than his private home in Beira, both located in Sofala. His threats can, therefore, be seen as having substance. The threats are also made at a strategic point in time, trying to leverage Frelimo into voting to appease Renamo. If Frelimo does not vote as Renamo wants, Renamo will have more leverage to move from threats to actual use of systematic violence. Renamo can lean on the rhetoric that it gave Frelimo a chance.

During 2015, the main use of violence by Renamo is through threats. Either as above, where Dhlakama makes clear statements including threats, or through information about Renamo troops moving strategically within Mozambique so that it can take control of the six provinces it has claimed. This information is difficult to corroborate, but Renamo deliberately informs the media of troop advancements (*AIM 2015f*). In September and October 2015, negotiations were underway, and Dhlakama was supposed to leave the military base to come to Beira for discussions. Instead of negotiations, however, he was attacked on three occasions by what Renamo assumed to be government forces, and at least one attack was confirmed to have been carried out by government special police forces (*AIM 2015i; 2015k*). These events halted any attempts at negotiation, and Renamo started preparing for actual warfare. This is also evident in public statements made by Renamo leader Dhlakama immediately after the attack on him:

> I want peace, I don’t want war. I always say in my speeches I don’t want war, but if they come to attack me, since I have the right to life, I have to defend myself. *Afonso Dhlakama, 14 September 2015* (Public Statement 10)

> If I wanted, Mozambique would already be burning. *Afonso Dhlakama, 4 October 2015* (Public statement 11)
We shall take over without bloodshed, but if they want to send tanks and armoured cars to react, then Renamo will destroy everything. Afonso Dhlakama, 16 December 2015 (Public statement 15)

We can see here that threats are a common strategy used by Renamo during this stage of the conflict, and they become more clearly connected to violence as the conflict progresses. These latter quotes from the end of 2015 include messages of destruction, while the former from the beginning of 2015 used vague words such as consequences. These threats are articulated by Renamo’s leader Dhlakama in the public press. As a form of violence, threats create a psychologically tense situation, but due to Renamo’s history, the threats have clear implications in that they are viewed as physical violence used to create leverage over your opponent. Threats were, as mentioned, primarily articulated by Dhlakama but represented Renamo as a group.

Renamo started changing its tactics to include armed systematic violence, primarily attacking buses assumed to be transporting military personnel along the main EN1 highway. There is ambiguous information about the number of attacks, and which are to be blamed on government forces or on Renamo. One investigation, performed by a neutral organisation, published in June 2016 estimated 107 Renamo attacks from October 2015 to June 2016, leading to 40 people’s deaths and 79 seriously injured (Club of Mozambique, 2016). The information may not be 100 percent correct, but there is no doubt that Renamo used armed systematic violence. It used soldiers with heavy guns to ambush cars and buses to disrupt normal life, with a purpose to create leverage using systematic violence. Renamo’s use of systematic violence was also something I have first-hand experience of, as the field note in the beginning of the chapter notes. The number of civilian deaths was still low, but the acts themselves were enough to create fear. Renamo’s history as an armed group again plays an active role in how these events affect both the civilian public and Frelimo as opponents.

By August 2016, a new round of negotiations was, therefore, started, an EU-led initiative, which had been one of Renamo’s demands to agree to negotiations. Outright clashes, therefore, dwindled. Right before Christmas 2016, a ceasefire was reached between Renamo and Frelimo.

From the onset of 2015, in the aftermath of the 2014 general elections held in October 2014, Renamo used behaviour that is indicative of an armed group. It made a claim for a political issue and actively used threats to create leverage in achieving this. It also carried out armed systematic violence, using violent actions against a civilian population to force the opponent to adhere to its demands. The statements by Dhlakama presented in this section indicate Renamo’s wish to portray an image that it has sufficient force to pursue its demand solely using systematic violence, which is hard to judge, but the statements do show that Renamo has enough force to actively use violence in a way that would cause great distress and fear.
The violent threats carried out are clearly connected to Dhlakama; hence, the violent actions could still be judged as being part of a separate wing within Renamo or not sanctioned by Renamo as a party at all. In the next sections, I will, therefore, discuss how these actions were acknowledged by the leadership and elite-level politicians to establish whether this can be analysed as behaviour that is part of Renamo’s official party structure.

Leadership and elite-level responsibility and acceptance

To understand whether the systematic violence used by Renamo could be seen as officially part of Renamo’s strategies as a political party, I will now discuss the role of its leader Dhlakama and whether he takes official responsibility for the violent acts. As discussed in Chapter 2, we need to distinguish between violence by Renamo as a party and violence loosely connected to Renamo, such as violence that could be carried out by a separate wing of Renamo, and, for instance, violent political demonstrations that are not sanctioned by the party. It is also important to understand how a leader who is, in his own words, a democratic opposition leader, positions himself in relation to the violent actions perpetrated by his party. If he were to condemn acts of systematic violence and distance himself from the violent acts of the party, this could indicate that the party is seeking to separate itself from the violent elements of the group. I will also look at whether this behaviour is sanctioned at an elite-level among the politicians.

Dhlakama used a clear rhetoric of threats in the early stages of the conflict, as has been discussed above. It is also evident in his public statements that he wishes to construct an image that lays the ground for the ability to move from threats to systematic violence. Dhlakama seems to connect violent actions on the part of Renamo to this being the will of the people. This was before the main acts of violence began, which can be seen as an attempt to securitise the situation, to justify future acts of violence. The quote below is from Dhlakama’s speech at the Renamo party congress in June 2015:

Can we continue to persuade the people to hold back and wait patiently for solutions? Or should we accompany the sovereign people in the actions they want to undertake? Afonso Dhlakama, 10 June 2015 (Public statement 65)

In this quote, Dhlakama publicly suggests that it is not the party, but the people of Mozambique who demand change; party leaders only follow the will of the people, responding to the people’s demand for action, which is something Renamo comes back to in public statements (Public statement 51, Public statement 53). Here, Dhlakama is instead building up momentum to create a strategy of violence. The quote below is even clearer when Dhlakama aims to remove all responsibility from himself; he does not want war, but the people need it:
The best days have come for the people of Mozambique. I do not want war, and I do not want to hear about war, but I am not afraid of war. *Afonso Dhlakama, 14 January 2016* (Public statement 22)

At this stage, Renamo has not started using armed systematic violence, and Dhlakama therefore has no actions to take responsibility for. However, at this stage, he is already setting the scene for future actions and shows that he is not going to refrain from using violent actions. We can also see a progression over time; the first quote from June 2015 is vaguer and with no clear references to war, while the word *war* is repeatedly used in the quote in January 2016.

When the conflict shortly after that escalated, Dhlakama took a clearer stand and was not shy about indicating that he was the leader of the Renamo troops and that he had ordered the armed violent attacks, as is illustrated in the quotes below:

> There was no member of the public among the victims. Thirty-nine FADM died. It is possible that one or another member of the public dies, we are not making holy war – it is possible that one (civilian) gets caught up, we have to admit that, yes. But saying that Renamo is attacking civilians – no, because that would be a serious problem. Renamo only survives thanks to the support of the population. *Afonso Dhlakama, 15 March 2016* (Public statement 36)

> They (government troops) started firing from afar and … then we let them come close. When they got very close, we massacred them. *Afonso Dhlakama, 1 June 2016* (Statement 44)

From these quotes, we can see that Dhlakama is very clear about Renamo’s actions against government troops and does not show any remorse for engaging in that level of violence. At the same time, however, he is distancing himself from acts that lead to civilian casualties. He uses the word *massacre* when it comes to attacking government troops while claiming that Renamo would never attack civilians. We can acknowledge this tension in his statements about taking official responsibility for violent actions against the military without hesitation but at the same time wanting to maintain the support of the civilian population. Here, it may be worth mentioning that Mozambique’s armed forces often consist of young men and women who partake due to compulsory military service, thus not only professional soldiers.

In his public statements, he often paints a dual image of himself as in charge of Renamo’s violent acts, but also that violence is a reaction. This is very pronounced in the quote below, and this could be interpreted as meaning that he also aims to construct an image of himself as a victim:

> It is Frelimo that has moved military contingents more than 1500 kilometres to hunt Dhlakama. *Afonso Dhlakama, 21 June 2016* (Public statement 47)
This becomes even more noticeable in the fact that he refers to himself in the third person, to hunt Dhlakama, creating an image of himself as a victim.

When a ceasefire was finally signed, he also personally guaranteed that Renamo fighters would not attack:

> From the bottom of my heart, I guarantee that Renamo fighters will not attack the positions of the defence and security forces. Afonso Dhlakama, 3 January 2017 (Public statement 19)

This quote indicates that he believes he has strong control of the Renamo soldiers. They act only on his command. Dhlakama was the leader of Renamo, the one who spoke officially for the party. Considering that party structure in many African parties relies on strong leadership that may not represent the whole image of the party, it is fruitful for the analysis to widen our view. It is worth considering if the party beyond Dhlakama took responsibility for violence, both through the press secretary and through the party’s leader of parliament.

The press secretary for Renamo officially acknowledges the existence of Renamo’s soldiers, as we can see in this quote:

> Renamo is not recruiting anyone, and does not need to. What is happening is that Renamo is currently, in different parts of the country, receiving its former guerrillas who were outside their bases for integration as well as deserters from the Armed Forces for the Defence of Mozambique (FADM). Antonio Muchanga, 20 January 2016 (Public statement 24)

This is too weak to imply that the party acknowledges the acts of the soldiers, but the fact that it officially recognises them indicates that these soldiers are seen as an official part of the party.

There were often acts of systematic violence mentioned in parliament, but primarily when each side accused the other and not that either one took any official responsibility for violent acts. Parliament is a core feature of a democratic political system, and it could be seen as controversial to claim official responsibility for violence within the chambers of parliament.

In October 2016, Mozambique’s Prime Minister, Carlos Agostinho do Rosario, was summoned to parliament to respond to Renamo’s allegations that the government controls death squads meant to eliminate the opposition (Observation 13, 14). This had also been discussed on several occasions in the press by Renamo (Public statement 55, Public statement 63, Public statement 25, Public statement 62, Public statement 59). Ivone Suáres, Renamo’s head of parliament, highlights these aspects in the press prior to the discussions in parliament (Public statement 27, Public statement 42), but then also follows that up with a statement indicating that it is, therefore, necessary for Renamo to continue its armed struggle:
If we are persecuted clearly we must be prepared to defend ourselves. And in a confrontational situation, no one who stands there waiting to be attacked by his opponent. Of course we are in a self-defence situation and we have to prevent our adversary from gaining ground and killing us all. Ivone Soares, 29 September 2016 (Public statement 60)

Her statements are not as clear as when Dhlakama takes responsibility for violent acts, but they clearly indicate that Renamo’s violent acts are also acknowledged by the core political leadership within Renamo.

The top leadership within Renamo has provided clear evidence that they oversee Renamo’s use of systematic violence. Dhlakama has made several clear statements indicating that he is the one who gives the orders to use organised systematic violence. It can therefore not be concluded that the acts of violence are merely incidents of political violence. I argue that Renamo’s use of systematic violence is acknowledged by and can be seen as an integrated part of the party leadership.

To take the analysis further, I would also like to explore if other elite members of Renamo had knowledge, to see how entrenched knowledge of violent actions is within the party. This chapter begins with a short story of when I ended up in a military convoy that got attacked by Renamo soldiers. This was in May 2016, and the attacks by Renamo soldiers along the EN1 had at that time been going on for a few months. This, of course, made me hesitant about traveling throughout Mozambique by car. I did, however, find it more rewarding to discover the different provinces of Mozambique by car rather than flying, as driving allows more experiences, both wanted and unwanted. While planning the trip, I therefore contacted one of my good contacts in Renamo, an MP, to ask about the dangers related to Renamo’s attacks. He provided me with insights concerning who was being targeted in the convoys; I was told to drive a small non-significant car, keep a distance between our car and any buses, especially Nagy buses (a specific bus company). Moreover, in the convoy, we should try to hold a position up-front because attacks more often occurred towards the middle and rear of the convoy where there was less military presence.

The fact that he provided me with these insights indicates that he was rather well-informed about the actions of Renamo’s soldiers. He did say, however, that he himself did not know when an attack was going to happen, so he could not warn me, but he still seemed well-informed about the attacks and their structure. However, this could also have been advice based on hearsay, so this incident on its own is not evidence enough.

In formal interviews, the narrative I observed concerning acceptance and knowledge of systematic violence and Renamo’s armed forces was often related to a general acceptance of Renamo’s violent actions, meaning that they as politicians were only following the people. Renamo’s elite politicians construct a threat image that justifies their actions, stating that their people are
being threatened. They claim they believe they have the right to resort to vio-
 lent measures after the 2014 general election, relating this right to public opin-
 ion. They often legitimise their violent actions in relation to the voters. Violent
 behaviour is connected to the fact that Renamo’s constituency, even the peo-
 ple of Mozambique as a whole, are not happy and are asking for change. Renamo
 must then respect and respond to that request, as the quotes below illustrate (Inter-
 view 5a, Interview 6, Interview 8a, Interview 10, Interview 12, Interview 16a, Interview 28a, Interview 30a, Interview 34a, Interview 36a):

 People want a war that takes Frelimo off the map. (Interview 5b Renamo, 30
 April 2015)

 People already agree, accept, and approve of Renamo’s armed forces. (Inter-
 view 16a Renamo, 13 October 2015)

 These statements expressed in interviews talk about the Renamo’s soldiers as
 a fact and an accepted part of Renamo, accepted by politicians and, as they
 claim, by the people. In the early stages, in 2015, it is more often in relation
 to the people, which could be seen as an attempt to justify future action and to
 construct momentum. In 2016, when systematic violence had already com-
 menced, the tone slightly shifted. The soldiers are discussed as a more natural
 feature in the structure of Renamo, as the first quote below illustrates, but the
 elite politicians I interviewed also wish to distance their part of Renamo from
 the soldiers' part of Renamo. The second quote below reiterates this:

 The problems have been the same and nothing is ever resolved. But Renamo
 is growing and the people are tired now, the Renamo soldiers are tired now.
 (Interview 34a Renamo, 12 April 2016)

 Renamo is very careful in not mixing up the military and civilian part of the
 party. Dhlakama is the one with access to both, he is the leader of both. (Inter-
 view 5c Renamo, 10 June 2016)

 The elite politicians talk about the armed section of Renamo, and Renamo’s
 soldiers, as a reality that they do not see as controversial. This behaviour in-
 dicates that the use of systematic violence is an accepted part of their political
 life. This aspect is something they acknowledge and accept, but it is also often
 mentioned that they themselves, as politicians, are not close to the military
 activities and are not part of that structure, as the second quote above illus-
 trates. They seem to want to separate themselves while at the same time indi-
 cating that they fully accept it. The elite politicians attribute many of the vio-
 lent characteristics to their leader, while maintaining their position as politi-
 cians (Interview 5a, Interview 8b, Interview 22, Interview 24, Interview 25b,
 Interview 29, Interview 31b, Interview 32b, Interview 36b).
However, at a private dinner with three high-level Renamo politicians, they spoke very openly about their desire for action, stating that internal members of Renamo were getting tired of Dhlakama’s hesitancy towards war. The politicians pushed for the party to move towards a more violent identity, a sentiment that was also repeated by one of them in our official interview:

We are all wondering why we are not at war with Frelimo, the majority wants war, but Dhlakama is holding it back. (Interview 5b Renamo, 30 April 2015)

In the analysis of elite politicians, there is limited support to claim that they are involved in actual violent behaviour, except for Dhlakama. The elite politicians do not carry out any of the violent actions or claim any official responsibility for these actions, to my knowledge. There seems to be some degree of separation within Renamo around actual violent conduct, which was to be expected. Due to the elite-level focus I instead also focus on knowledge of systematic violence. The elite politicians I have interviewed, however, do show knowledge, recognition, and acceptance of violent actions. They openly discuss Renamo’s soldiers as an integral and necessary aspect of the group. They may not display violent behaviour themselves, but they also do not in any way condemn the violence conducted by the party. The violent acts of Renamo are not conducted by a separate wing that is kept distant from the political leadership. This is also clearly spelled out in one of the interviews with an elite-level politician:

We don’t have two Renamo, only one. (Interview 32b Renamo, 18 October 2016)

**Armed Group: Perceptions of Elite Politicians**

Following the framework, the second component I will analyse is perceptions related to being an armed group. Behaviour refers to what we do and know, while a focus on perceptions can help us elucidate the bigger picture, to also include more subtle expressions, opinions, ideas, and informal structures. Violent actions may exist, but how these are perceived and justified by elite politicians also matter if we are to understand them fully. I will therefore start by analysing perceptions and justifications that portray violence as a necessary act to achieve proclaimed political goals, in this specific case, access to local power and decentralisation. Secondly, I will analyse perceptions of the party leadership and whether elite politicians perceive the leader as a commander and military leader. It is important to understand the structures surrounding (a possible) internal democracy and discovering how elite politicians view the leadership provides this insight.
Perceiving and justifying violence as a necessary act

Renamo’s elite politicians express very clear perceptions of the need to use alternative means to achieve their proclaimed political goal. The question has not been posed in the same way in all interviews, but it has revolved around how they view Renamo’s use of systematic violence to achieve local self-governance. There has been a clear narrative of necessity to act this way, and this is related to specific grievances that somehow justified these actions. These grievances primarily revolve around a narrative of democracy including the general political system, use of violence by the government, and electoral fraud.

A political system should function to enable marginalised groups and political parties to access the public scene and express grievances in an orderly political fashion; thus, it should also function to facilitate the transformation from rebel-to-party, as well as to consolidate democracy in post-conflict settings. However, if the political system is questioned and gives reasons for dissent, this may be used to justify the use of systematic violence and to construct an image of threats that justify violence. Renamo made a political claim for control over certain local provinces, which is a political goal that could be achieved within a democratic political system. As the quotes below illustrate, the elite politicians in Renamo state that the system is not enough, and violence is therefore seen as a valid option:

Today we have kind of a democracy, but we have not yet reached that point (Interview 16a Renamo, 13 October 2015)

We tried through politics, through elections, and through parliament, but they always reject us. (Interview 16b Renamo, 29 March 2016)

The quotes indicate that they believe their position as a political party has not been given a fair chance within the system, due to the actions of their opponent. Renamo’s politicians use ideas and expressions that justify their actions; they claim they have no other alternative, given Frelimo’s abuse of the political system, as illustrated in the quote below:

Frelimo has never accepted the democratic game, and that is why they have manipulated the elections. [...] People may think we started complaining now or last year, but in fact this has been the usual complaint. (Interview 25a Renamo, 10 May 2016)

These quotes are indicative of a general narrative expressed in the interviews that Frelimo misuses its government position. Renamo politicians state that the parameters of democracy are not being followed by the government. The interlocutors construct the idea that they have been targeted and constantly mistreated within the democratic system. There is frustration among the
Renamo politicians that the political system keeps failing them, that their voices are not heard, and their complaints are never properly dealt with (Interview 5a and c, Interview 6, Interview 8a and b, Interview 10, Interview 12, Interview 16a and b, Interview 22, Interview 24, Interview 25a, Interview 26a and b, Interview 28a, Interview 30a, Interview 31b, Interview 33b, Interview 34a, Interview 35, Interview 36a).

This is used by Renamo’s politicians to construct the idea that Renamo members are victims within the democratic system and the idea that the system keeps failing them. These are issues that Renamo also often comes back to in its public rhetoric. The idea is that the political system is being abused by the government, hence by Frelimo, and that this is used to prevent Renamo from functioning as a political party. These public quotes illustrate the image that Renamo’s elite members are trying to portray:

Simply attaching Renamo’s name to any criminal matter is bad faith and merely seeks to justify the failure of the police to tackle crime. *Antonio Muchanga, 9 March 2016* (Public statement 35)

We will not sit back and forget about the excesses and unconstitutionality practised by the government of Frelimo. *Ivone Soares, 21 April 2016* (Public statement 38)

It is disgusting to watch the Frelimo bench prevent MPs fulfilling their mandate to supervise the government. *Ivone Soares, 21 April 2016* (Public statement 39)

The key issue in these quotes is the misconduct of the government and that Renamo is a victim that is being restricted by the actions of the government. For Renamo’s elite politicians, this has created long-standing grievance as well as mistrust in the overall political system and the government. The general sentiment is that if the government does not follow the rules of democracy, then why should we? This is also the rhetoric used by Dhlakama in the media, as illustrated by the quotes below:

Frelimo is a small party which almost does not exist. It is a party of soldiers, of policemen, of thieves, of traitors, of assassins. *Afonso Dhlakama, 16 December 2015* (Public statement 14)

It will be to negotiate what? They didn’t approve any proposal and ridiculed the process. Patience has its limits, they violate all agreements. *Afonso Dhlakama, 6 January 2016* (Public statement 21)

He emphasises that Frelimo should not be seen as a legitimate actor, aiming to create leverage for Renamo’s actions. He goes as far as name-calling. The misconduct of the government has also been specifically raised in parliament after the revelation of the debt crisis, which I will elaborate on later in this
chapter. Renamo made strong and clear accusations towards Frelimo for allowing this to happen, stating that Frelimo was robbing the country and abusing state resources as private goods (Observation 12, 13). These images do not always specifically relate to the conflict but can be argued to be part of a more coherent narrative in which Renamo deconstructs the legitimacy of Frelimo, thus of its opponent.

Justifications for using systematic violence to pursue their political goal are strongly connected to the idea of a failed and abused democratic political system. This is expressed coherently by Renamo’s elite politicians, indicating that the party sees no other avenues for political leverage than systematic violence and actively justifies its actions in relation to political grievance. Renamo politicians state that the political system is being misused by the government in a way that prevents Renamo from acting as a political party, making other non-democratic means the only option. This should then also be considered in relation to the historical use of violence in Mozambique, where violence has been seen to lead to success in relation to changes in government system, going back to the end of colonialism.

Renamo’s elite politicians also express a coherent narrative of justifying their use of systematic violence as a response to their opponents' use of violence, and not only their opponents' abuse of the political system. The use of armed systematic violence by Renamo as a party needs to be understood in the context of how violence is perceived within the political system, primarily meaning how party members view the violence being perpetrated by the government, and how this constructs their need for security. The quotes below illustrate how Renamo’s elite politicians view violence as a tool used by the government, which makes it impossible for them not to use violence as well:

Frelimo show their power with guns, so we have to defend. (Interview 7 Renamo, 20 March 2015)

They [the police] went to Dhlakama’s house hoping he would fire at them, so they could kill him. They are trying to kill Dhlakama and the opposition in Mozambique. (Interview 16c Renamo, 11 October 2016)

The government’s behaviour is still the same as it used to be before the peace agreement, using armed forces to repress Renamo members and using police to arrest Renamo members. (Interview 8b Renamo, 13 October 2015)

Here, the Renamo politicians suggest that the idea of using violence as a political means does not come from them but from the government. It is evident in their answers that this is not seen as new behaviour on the part of Frelimo, but a constant feature that has lingered in the political system (Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 8a, Interview 10, Interview 16a and c, Interview 25b, Interview 28b, Interview 32a, Interview 34a). The narrative of state abuse is rather consistent over time in interviews.
In expressing their perceptions, they very clearly frame themselves as victims. The quotes below indicate that they see violence as justified and as a necessary means of protection in the context:

We are forced to do this because they are chasing us, they are hunting our president, they are going after him to kill him. (Interview 32a Renamo, 8 April 2016)

We are under a bloodthirsty regime that likes to kill. (Interview 36a Renamo, 9 May 2016)

These quotes are indicative of a narrative expressed consistently in interviews and primarily in interviews held after October 2015, following the attacks on Dhlakama and an upsurge in violent acts by the government. They reiterate words such as being hunted and targeted, creating a threat image based on their own victimisation.

The surge of violence that revolved around access to local governance began in the 2014 general election. This is also an aspect that Renamo politicians return to as a common narrative that constructs the idea that violence is justified. Elections and electoral fraud constitute a key discursive practice for their use of violence, and they express the need for violent actions due to electoral fraud. Constructing this idea that their opponent is primarily responsible for misbehaving in the elections seems to be done when justifying Renamo's violent response, often starting an answer about Renamo's actions by highlighting Frelimo's abuse of elections. As we can see in the quotes below, Renamo uses electoral fraud perpetrated by the opponent to frame its own actions:

If they won all these elections since 1994 it is because of rigging them, if the elections had been free and fair Dhlakama would have won all the elections. They have this person who is a serious threat to them and the best way for them to rest for good is to kill him. (Interview 8b Renamo, 13 October 2015)

Frelimo has never won this country; they take it by force. (Interview 7 Renamo, 20 March 2015)

These statements by some of Renamo’s elite politicians are indicative of an overall narrative: election fraud was a concept present in all interviews to some extent, some however more clearly related to Renamo’s violent response. When discussing why the party has chosen to act outside the political system, using violence, electoral fraud and cheating are key narratives (Interview 4a, Interview 6, Interview 8b and c, Interview 10, Interview 16b, Interview 23, Interview 27a, Interview 28b, Interview 30a, Interview 32a, Interview 33b, Interview 34a). The quotes below are clear examples of this:
They cheat in everything, the elections are a fraud, parliament is a fraud, the government is a fraud, Mozambique itself is a fraud. There is no point in continuing to live with these scams. (Interview 16c Renamo, 11 October 2016)

This is not a government, this is a group of thieves, group of gangsters, who took power by force. They came to power by cheating. (Interview 16a Renamo, 13 October 2015)

The two latter quotes are from an elite member of Renamo, who holds a high position in parliament. It is evident that he is very keen on delimiting the entire democratic system and claiming that Frelimo is responsible for destroying democracy in Mozambique. He uses very harsh language in describing Frelimo, calling its members gangsters and thieves, and describing the entire political system as a scam. One of the interviews took place shortly after some of the main attacks against Renamo president Dhlakama in September and October 2015, which could have influenced his response. Regardless, this language is being used by an elite member of Renamo, with a high-ranking position in parliament, to officially describe the political setting in Mozambique and how he views the opponent. This is done at the height of the conflict to enable a violent response by Renamo while aiming to claim that it is politically and democratically legitimate. This indicates that Renamo aims to frame Frelimo's actions of stealing and cheating in elections within a larger narrative of democracy. A narrative that claims that Frelimo is abusing democracy, and therefore Renamo's violent response is not undemocratic.

This narrative expressed in the interviews is also a public narrative often repeated in the media by Renamo politicians (Public Statement 1, Public Statement 2, Public Statement 5, Public Statement 33, Public Statement 34). These quotes in public media by key MPs indicate that this narrative is part of the core political discussion:

Everybody knows that the October elections were marked by serious irregularities, blatant disorganisation and acts of fraud which directly influenced the results. Viana Magalhes, Renamo MP, 18 November 2014 (Public statement 1)

Since 1994 (the date of the first multi-party elections) Renamo has been prevented from governing, and Mozambicans have not been governed by the people they chose”. José Manteigas, Renamo MP, 6 May 2015 (Public statement 5)

It is also a public narrative used in parliament in the early stages in 2015, immediately following the inauguration of the newly formed parliament (Observation 1, 2, 3, 7).

As an idea, responding with armed systematic violence is constructed by Renamo in relation to Frelimo stealing elections. Renamo refers to election fraud and force or violence on the part of Frelimo. This is how Renamo's elite
politicians use elections and a narrative of Frelimo's election abuse to promote violence. Elections are a constant feature in the perceptions expressed by Renamo's elite politicians. Violence perpetrated by Renamo and Renamo's armed wing is justified in relation to elections. It is not the case, however, that Renamo used violence in direct relation to the actual conduct of elections. The electoral arena is not used to perform violence, but it is used to frame and justify violence.

Renamo's elite politicians use very clear expressions and justifications for violence as a necessary means of achieving a political goal. The abuse of the political system, the use of violence by the government, and continuous electoral fraud are narratives expressed as justifications for violence carried out to achieve local self-governance. The system and the opponent will not allow this to happen, which is why they express the need for armed systematic violence. The perceptions expressed by the elite politicians construct the overall idea that violence is a necessary strategy used by Renamo as a political party.

Perceiving the leader as a commander and military leader
For the full transformation from rebel-to-party to be seen as successful, the need to leave the past behind is often pointed out. The party should change its stripes, meaning it should pursue a political cause and ideology that is not conflict-related (Curtis and Sindre 2019; Ishiyama 2019; Sindre 2019; Sindre 2016b). An important aspect often mentioned is also the internal structure of the party and the role of the leader. Zeeuw (2008) emphasises the benefit of changing leadership to create internal democracy as well as an external political outlook. The leadership may change, but it is nevertheless important to understand how the leader of a group is perceived by its members, as a democratic leader or as a military leader, a commander. This is also vital in the understanding of how hybridity manifests since the leader seems to be what might connect the two roles.

In the case of Renamo, discussing leadership becomes very important and highly centred around one key figure, and that is their long-standing leader Afonso Dhlakama. He resumed the role as head of the armed group Renamo in 1979 and remained its leader until he passed away in May 2018. It is therefore clear from the outset that, in this specific case, there has been no change in leadership due to the rebel-to-party transformation.

In conversations with the elite members of Renamo about their leader, it was often pointed out that he held dual roles within the party. As the quotes below show, it was said that he was the leader of both the political and the armed wing of Renamo:

It does not matter if you are a civilian, a military or a politician in parliament, we only have one leader, and it is president Dhlakama. (Interview 32b Renamo, 18 October 2016)
Renamo is very careful in not mixing up the military and civilian part of the party. Dhlakama is the one with access to both, he is the leader of both. (Interview 5c Renamo, 10 June 2016)

Dhlakama was the head of the party, the one officially in charge of political aspects. Dhlakama was, however, never present in parliament during all his years as leader of the party, and he spent his last years as leader, from 2012 until his death in May 2018, living and operating from Renamo’s military headquarters, Santujira in the Gorongosa mountains. Despite Renamo’s official transformation to a political party, and with that Dhlakama’s transformation to a party leader, he never left his position as a leader of Renamo’s armed forces. As mentioned in chapter 4, he retained a private armed security force, which he had provisions for in the 1992 peace agreement (GPA Rome Accord, 1992), meaning that Renamo was still structured around the same armed organisation as in the past, with Dhlakama as leader. As analysed above, Dhlakama admitted that he commands the armed wing of Renamo, and this was also reiterated by the elite politicians, as the quote below shows:

They have central command, president Dhlakama is still in command of Renamo’s military forces. (Interview 8b Renamo, 13 October 2015)

This indicates that the leadership of Renamo is perceived by its elite members as clearly connected to their past as an armed group. It becomes evident, based on the politicians’ perceptions, that they view Dhlakama as the core component of their dual structure as a political party and an armed group. There is little to indicate that Renamo’s top leadership ever fully transformed into a political party, and it was therefore easy for Renamo to re-mobilise after the 2014 general election. Dhlakama already had an armed force under his command, a military base, and an old network of soldiers to recruit from.

Systematic violence as an accepted strategy is also constructed in relation to the threats against Dhlakama, as these are viewed as threats against Renamo. In September and October 2015, Dhlakama was targeted in three assassination attempts, the last being when Dhlakama agreed to return to Beira, the second largest city in Mozambique and located in Sofala, to meet a team of negotiators. The last instance was a clear attack by government special police forces, and government forces have also been implicated in the other attacks (AIM, 2019b, 2016, 2015c). These actual physical attacks had an impact on how Renamo constructed the threat images concerning their need for personal security (Interview 5b, Interview 8b, Interview 22, Interview 24, Interview 25b, Interview 29, Interview 31b, Interview 32b, Interview 35, Interview 36b). The quotes below indicate how they construct an idea that Dhlakama is a hunted victim:

They have tried more than twice now to kill our leader. (Interview 16a Renamo, 13 October 2015)
We are forced to do this because they are chasing, they are hunting our president. They are going after him to kill him, and the first human instinct is to protect yourself. (Interview 32a Renamo, 8 April 2016)

There is no doubt at this point that the government ambushed president Dhlakama on 25 September [2015], and they really wanted to kill because the weapons were heavy weapons, not to kill birds but to assassinate people. (Interview 8b Renamo, 13 October 2015)

They connect Dhlakama to the very basic existence of Renamo, and an attack on Dhlakama is seen as an attack on Renamo. These events have been crucial in constructing the need to establish security by using your own security forces and resuming violent acts to gain political leverage. The main leadership in Renamo at this time, meaning Dhlakama, is considered to be related to the armed section of Renamo, and Renamo’s past as an armed group. This is also evident in the fact that Dhlakama was not present in parliament and resided and operated from Renamo’s military base. This category in the analysis puts emphasis on Renamo’s role as an armed group. We will see below how the group’s behaviour and perceptions as a political party may alter this image.

Political Party: Behaviour of Elite Politicians

Renamo transformed from an armed group to a political party in 1992 and has remained a rather strong opposition party since then, ranging between 18 to 44 percent of the votes. They have often been labelled a success case in the rebel-to-party literature (Manning 2004; Moran and Pitcher 2004; Söderberg Kovacs 2012), and Renamo has been one of the strongest opposition parties in Africa (Vines 2013). They officially transformed in 1992 and participated in their first election in 1994. They lost that election but gained 44 percent of the votes, which is a large share. The outcome of the election was expected, and they took on the role as the opposition. This move is what primarily marked them as a success. They appeared to accept the democratic process. As discussed in chapter 4 Mozambique is often classified as a hybrid regime. Renamo’s actions as a party need to be viewed in relation to the contextual reality in which they exist.

After their transformation, they have participated in all general elections held every fifth year and remained a large opposition party with substantial representation in parliament. Being a political party, however, is more than participating in elections, so in this section, I will discuss the second category in the framework and analyse Renamo’s behaviour and perceptions in relation to being a democratic political party. I often use only the term political party, but I will remind the reader that the framework refers to fulfilling the ideas of being a democratic political party. This is not to be able to judge whether they
are democratic or not but to be able to see the full nuances of how they behave as a political party.

First, I will look at Renamo’s behaviour as a political party to discover how it has acted in relation to its main political issue, that of achieving local self-governance. This revolves around the two areas of analysis presented in the framework: engaging in political negotiations and debates in public political channels, and leadership and elite-level engagement in parliament to achieve a political goal. Second, I analyse the perceptions expressed by elite politicians to discover how they understand themselves as a political party. This analysis focuses on two areas of analysis: recognising the importance of adhering to democratic political rules and maintaining the role as a political party and perceiving the leader of the party as a democratically elected leader.

Engaging in political negotiations and debates

The political life of Renamo can be described in relation to everything from its activities in Parliament to its presence in local communities. It is a political party with active politicians on several levels. This analysis focuses on understanding the party in relation to its claim for local self-governance, and it is focused on elite politicians. The analysis will, therefore, leave out lower-level political activities and politicians from the analysis.

One aspect of political work for the elite politicians is however to be active representatives of their constituencies. I encountered the same Renamo politicians in the national parliament and in their local constituencies, as they are active in transferring what is happening in parliament to the local areas and gaining input from the local areas. In Pemba, I sat in on a meeting where the MP for Cabo Delgado met with local politicians to answer questions. In Tete, we took a short walk around the Moatize central area together with the MP for Moatize, where he also stopped and interacted with people along the way. In Beira, I visited both the local office for Sofala and the local office for Beira. The politicians in the Sofala office spoke about their responsibility to represent and listen to the whole region of Sofala, in low-key discussions with me about the role of the office. The parliament sessions are scheduled with breaks, and the MPs are encouraged to travel back to their local areas during these periods. Renamo’s elite politicians are active in different levels of political work that stretches from parliament to these smaller, but very important, events.

In the next section, I will specifically discuss the parliamentary work of the elite politicians. Here I will focus more on the public and how Renamo worked to reach the public. The above exemplifies political work done by the elite politicians on an individual level. But what kind of political agenda did Renamo pursue in the public at the party level and how did they go about it?

Dhlakama is the main representative of Renamo as a party on the public scene. He left the public political scene in 2012, as discussed previously. His
main outlet for political work has, therefore, been the media. He was active in setting the tone for a public debate around local self-governance as a democratic necessity for Mozambique. The quotes below indicate that he understands what democracy means, and he portrays that as Renamo’s main goal:

Unfortunately, Frelimo did not accept Renamo’s political project, and we continue to fight for multi-party democracy, the rule of law, strong institutions, free and transparent elections, and courts that work. The defence and security forces such as the police, military, do not belong to parties; we fight for economic development and employment for youth. For there to be national unity, and not only in words, people from different regions of the country must feel like brothers, and that there is development, and especially peace – this is Renamo’s political project. Afonso Dhlakama, 9 August 2016 (Public Statement 57)

We will govern our provinces with our policies. We do not want to divide the country, we just want to transfer the powers of Frelimo governors to Renamo. Afonso Dhlakama, 8 August 2016 (Public Statement 54)

The goal is undoubtedly to continue to fight for democracy. Afonso Dhlakama, 15 February 2016 (Public Statement 29)

He enters a public debate in the media, emphasising the democratic and political aspects of the claim for local power. He uses words such as governance, power, and democracy, clearly associated with political party behaviour. It suggests that he wants to assert his role as the leader of a democratic political party. He addresses the commonly expressed critique that Renamo seeks to divide the country, which would be seen as an act against the unified democratic country of Mozambique. He instead talks of the transfer of power, which could be seen as a rather political act, as he specifically refers to the role of governors. Still, he often uses the concept that Renamo fights for these political goals, being vague about what this fight entails. Fighting for a political cause can be done both democratically and non-democratically by a political party. It is still clear that the issues revolve around democratic ideas. The behaviour of Dhlakama in these public debates indicates his desire to act like a political leader of a democratic party.

The media do address Renamo’s use of violence, and in relation to that, Dhlakama frames it using words of democracy. Violence is a necessary act to resolve issues of governance, thus connecting violence with a justified democratic idea. The quote below illustrates that he sees no end to conflict without a solution to governance:

We cannot end the conflict and the military hostilities and restore peace, while we do not resolve the problem of governance. Afonso Dhlakama, 10 October 2016 (Public Statement 61)
This rhetoric can, of course, be questioned. The mere addition of democratic words does not make someone a democratic political leader. It is, however, an indication of how Renamo politicians themselves wish to portray an image of who they are. It is a behaviour that indicates the willingness to be a political party or at least to primarily be seen as a political party.

It has previously been mentioned that Renamo has a divide between Dhlakama as a political leader and parliament. Dhlakama has never, during his years as leader, held a seat in parliament. Parliament is one of the key areas for public debate, and the person who holds the seat as head of parliament is closely connected to the political side of the party. During the time of this study, Ivone Soares was head of parliament for Renamo. What she expresses herself in the media indicates behaviour that influences the political side of Renamo.

What is evident from her media engagement is that she refers to Renamo as the saviour of democracy in relation to the actions of Frelimo. In the quote below, she is discussing the election, and her behaviour is to portray Frelimo as rejecting democracy and Renamo as the victim:

Frelimo is rejecting the will of the people of central and northern Mozambique who voted for Renamo and Afonso Dhlakama. *Ivone Soares, 6 May 2015 (Public Statement 6)*

During 2016, it was discovered that the former Frelimo government, during the period 2009-2014, had deliberately hidden a two-billion-USD debt from the IMF and World Bank. This money had been transferred into different subsidiary businesses and projects with no results to show, and the main trial is still in process. This was discovered during the already ongoing crisis between Renamo and Frelimo, and it was, of course, an issue that enticed Renamo, and an issue that they started to connect to their claim that power needs to be removed from the hands of Frelimo. This issue was widely used in Renamo’s public debates, by Ivone Soares, as a political party:

We will not sit back and forget about the excesses and unconstitutionality practised by the government of Frelimo. [...] Renamo will continue to demand transparency and compliance with the dictates of the constitution. *Ivone Soares, 21 April 2016 (Public Statement 38)*

It is disgusting to watch the Frelimo bench prevent MPs fulfilling their mandate to supervise the government. *Ivone Soares, 21 April 2016 (Public Statement 39)*

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5 In December 2022 were some convictions reached, including high influential members of Frelimo. The main trial against Manual Chang, former Minister of Economy and Finance, is however not completed (as of October 2023).
Ivone Soares engages the public debate by emphasising the unconstitutionality of Frelimo, indicating that Renamo is the party abiding by and protecting the democratic constitution of Mozambique. This behaviour on the part of Renamo leadership indicates that the group aims to act like a democratic opposition party. Leaders are addressing political issues that are important to democracy, and they are keen to establish a public debate around these issues. This is a main goal of an opposition party, and when the head of parliament addresses these issues in public media, it indicates a behaviour that involves seeking wider acknowledgment of these issues. This behaviour can be seen as acts of a democratic political party.

The issue of the public debt was also something Renamo was very active in discussing in parliament. They demanded that special sessions should be dedicated to the issue, and that government representatives should be questioned by parliament to answer for this undemocratic act (Observations 11, 12, 14, 16). Renamo’s elite politicians pointed out already in 2015 that they believed something was wrong around the state-owned company Ematum and demanded it be further investigated. This was the main company later implicated in the debt scandal. This was an issue discussed with me in detail in private in 2015 and mentioned in discussions related to the budget in parliament (Observation 2). At this point, there was no evidence, but their vigilance in pushing the issue could have been what led to the hidden debt finally being officially discovered in 2016. This last part is speculation, but Renamo’s elite politicians are active in driving issues of democratic political interest in parliament and the public media, meaning that they act and behave like a democratic political party, both at the leadership and the party level.

Leadership and elite-level engagement in parliament

One of the most important aspects of behaving like a democratic political party is being active in the official political channels and using them to pursue political issues. The elite politicians are the ones primarily involved when issues revolve around substantial changes to governance structures, laws, and the constitution. Here, parliament is the primary arena. I have interviewed politicians and had discussions about their experiences with parliament and how they have pursued the issue of local self-governance. I have also spent time observing parliament sessions to see how parliament is used by Renamo’s elite politicians. Being able to observe their behaviour in parliament has added an extra dimension to the richness of the interviews. Renamo’s claim for local self-governance has been through parliament in different stages and with different framings, ending in a decentralisation law passed in 2019.

Renamo’s claim for local self-governance came as a response to what it perceived as an unjust election result in the 2014 general election. As elaborated on in Chapter 4, however, this issue does have a long-standing political history for Renamo. What was added at this point was that Renamo wanted to
rule in the provinces where it obtained the majority of votes. This claim can be seen as rather democratic, as it adheres to the vote count. Still, the political system in Mozambique did not allow for governance at the provincial level. The claim is therefore problematic.

Renamo did, however, intend to address this issue through a bill to parliament. Renamo wanted this to be solved hastily, so the bill was written in line with their claim; it, therefore, only includes the six provinces, out of ten, that they have claimed belong to them, according to election results. Through talks between Dhlakama and President Nyusi, it was decided that Renamo should present this claim as a bill to parliament, adhering to the democratic rules.

On 30 April 2015, it was time for the Mozambique parliament to vote on Renamo’s proposal, which would lead to them gaining local provincial power in six out of ten provinces. This is the first step in Renamo’s attempt to politically solve the crisis that erupted after the 2014 general election. Renamo had quite hastily produced a bill to parliament, and the vote had been postponed on multiple occasions.

The bill that Renamo submitted did not address decentralisation as a concept and made no changes to the overall political system. It solely aimed at resolving the current crisis by stating that Renamo would gain power in the provinces where they achieved a majority of votes in the 2014 general election (Renamo Bancada Parlamentar 2015). The proposal was argued to go against the constitution, and it was therefore generally assumed that the proposal would be rejected by Frelimo. The statements by the different party representatives were heated in the debate that day, with Renamo emphasising its right to these provinces and that it would have them, while Frelimo focused on how this claim was unsolicited and unconstitutional. Frelimo, with a majority in parliament, rejected Renamo’s proposal (Observation 7).

The proposal for local self-governance was at this stage voted down in parliament. However, the fact that Renamo attempted to gain access to local self-governance by abiding by the democratic process indicates that it saw it as important to behave as a political party. Renamo’s MPs created a bill that could be presented to parliament within a very short timeline. That bill was drafted by the elite party members. I was allowed to see some earlier drafts from one of my MP contacts and can hence understand that Renamo’s elite-level politicians made a clear effort to adhere to democratic rules, both in relation to parliamentary procedures and maintaining some level of internal democracy within the party. Despite the outcome of the vote and the fact that this then led to increased levels of violence, it is evident that, amongst the elite politicians in Renamo, there is an established behaviour that follows democratic standards for what it means to be a political party.

The proposed bill (Renamo Bancada Parlamentar 2015), however, had flaws in how it was framed and written. It did not address decentralisation as a concept, and it did not even contain a solution for local self-governance that included all ten of Mozambique's provinces. There was no provision for direct
elections; it was simply stated that whoever won the majority in that province, based on votes in the general election, should have the right to appoint the governor. This indicates that Renamo is still struggling with democratic content, but there is a willingness to continue to act and behave like a democratic political party. Here, we can see that Renamo is behaving like a democratic political party when it comes to elite-level engagement in parliament to pursue its main political issue.

The bill was rejected based on the notion that it did not adhere to the constitution of Mozambique. This was a debated issue. At this point, however, Renamo did listen to that and slightly altered its political claim. Renamo’s official rhetoric was always that the party would govern where it won, but now Renamo politicians began centering their political negotiations and their actions as a party around changing the constitution. When the peace negotiations started in August 2016, Renamo entered with two main claims, reintegration of their soldiers and changing the constitution to enable elections at the provincial level (Public Statement 48). This behaviour also indicates that there is a desire within Renamo to behave like a democratic political party. The constitution is the most binding political document of a democracy, and Renamo politicians seem to agree that their claim does not fit into the existing constitution. They then attempt to change the constitution. They do this using the leverage of violence, which was discussed above. The controversial nature of this duality in behaviour will be further discussed below in Chapter 6 when I address how Renamo as a hybrid party.

The procedure to change the constitution became an intertwined process with peace negotiations, hence it mostly took place outside parliament in the starting phase. A special committee was constructed consisting of relevant party members who were to come up with a new draft of the constitution and later a decentralisation law. Renamo was, of course, an active part of this committee because it was created as part of the peace negotiation strategy, and it was created because this was one of Renamo’s demands for putting down its armed struggle. This is political work done to reform the current political system, but the actual structure of this work has not been a process that started within the democratic political system, and it is, therefore, difficult to judge this as purely political behaviour.

These negotiations were primarily led by Renamo’s elite politicians and not their leader Dhlakama. This could indicate the political importance. As already mentioned, Dhlakama left the official political scene in 2012 to operate from Renamo’s military headquarters. Dhlakama has been connected to the military aspect of the party, and it could, therefore, be seen as a positive sign that the elite politicians control the political process without him. This could create legitimacy for the process and the new constitution that came out of it. It is, however, problematic that Dhlakama held this position within the party.
Renamo has had very clear role division concerning what Dhlakama is and who is number two in the party. This is a rhetoric they use themselves, referring to someone as the number two. The number two person has held a much clearer political role, often as head of the bench in parliament. The fact that Dhlakama has never held a seat in parliament and never participated in debates in parliament is a clear weakness in relation to Renamo behaving as a democratic political party, and a clear weakness in how to understand the group’s behaviour in relation to achieving its political goal. If the main leader of the party does not address the issue through parliament, which is seen as the most important arena for democratic politics, this sends a signal concerning how Renamo functions as a political party. This indicates that parliament is not seen as an important enough outlet for debate and political life by the main leader of the party, which has grave implications for how Renamo’s behaviour is to be viewed, despite the behaviour of the other elite politicians.

Political Party: Perceptions of Elite Politicians

The behaviour of Renamo’s elite politicians and its leader, Dhlakama, indicates that they are to some extent behaving like a democratic political party. Behaviour is one component of the analysis, but how the party and its role are perceived by its own elite members is the second component to analyse. Perceptions include views of the party, as well as ideas and opinions concerning the role of the party. This will widen our understanding of Renamo, and it can later help provide the nuances for our further understanding of hybridity. I will therefore take a closer look at perceptions surrounding the importance of adhering to democratic political channels and maintaining a role as a political party, as well as perceptions surrounding how the elite politicians view their leader – as a democratic party leader or not.

The importance of adhering to democratic political channels

The crisis under study started in the 2014 general election with Renamo accusing its opponent Frelimo of widespread electoral fraud. Elections are the cornerstone of democracies, and it is a most important democratic political channel. The interviews with Renamo’s elite politicians, therefore, always contained questions about the elections and their experience with elections in Mozambique. From this, it is evident that elections play an important role in how Renamo sees itself as a political party. Renamo’s elite politicians emphasise that they are winners of the elections, keepers of democracy in relation to elections, and that their opponent is an abuser of democracy. They form a narrative of who they are as a party that is very closely tied to ideas of democracy and how they perceive their role in elections.
In the interviews with Renamo’s elite politicians, I would often start with an open question, asking them to reflect on the 2014 general election and what happened after it. This resulted in different answers, but what was evident as a first reaction was a coherent narrative that constructed Renamo as the winners of the election, and all previous elections. This was later followed by accusations of fraud, but this narrative was centred around the politicians’ perception that most of the population had voted for them or would have voted for them if possible (Interview 7, Interview 8c, Interview 25a, Interview 26a, Interview 16b, Interview 28b, Interview 31, Interview 34b). The quotes below illustrate this repeated idea:

Frelimo has never won this country; they take it by force. (Interview 7 Renamo, 20 March 2015)

If they won all these elections since 1994 it is because of rigging them, if the elections had been free and fair Dhlakama would have won all the elections. (Interview 8b Renamo, 13 October 2015)

The repeated core idea is that Renamo does not cheat, but Frelimo does. This aims to frame Renamo’s politicians as the keepers of democracy. It is hard to know whether they truly believe that they would have won, considering that in the 2014 general election, Renamo officially received only 36 percent of the votes and was therefore not close to a victory, or whether constructing a story of Renamo as more victorious is part of the narrative. Regardless of what they believe to be true, the narrative constructs an image that Renamo wishes to be seen as victorious. This legitimises the group’s actions in the post-election period and grounds these actions in the idea that it is the will of the people, and therefore, it is democratic.

This is also a narrative that can be heard in parliament during the first session after the 2014 general election, which lasted from February 2015 to May 2015. It is then expressed with less clarity, but the sentiment is that the people want Renamo and therefore Renamo will respond to them, with an emphasis on the people, O Povo. Renamo’s head of parliament Ivone Soares brings this sentiment into the beginning of her addresses to parliament on various issues (Observation 1, 2, 3, 9). Renamo’s politicians rarely refer to their voters or their constituency, but they always address the people. It is, of course, relevant for political parties to create an agenda that means working for the people in general and not just a chosen group. For Renamo, however, the idea of the people seems to be part of the narrative of being victorious. The quotes below illustrate the idea that the people want Renamo and that all the people love Renamo:

People love Renamo, even small children love Renamo. Renamo have no discrimination so people like Renamo (Interview 12 Renamo, 20 March 2015)
At the national level, 90 percent of the people did not agree when Nyusi was announced as president. The people were not happy. (Interview 16a Renamo, 13 October 2015)

This means that even if the numbers are not in their favour in elections, they are still the victorious ones. The second quote is a direct reference to the elections, that 90 percent of the people were not happy when Nyusi was announced president, and it uses the concept *the people* to widen the idea beyond Renamo. If 90 percent were unhappy, that refers to them wanting Renamo. This number has no factual base but is rather used as an exaggeration to construct an idea of the meaning of Renamo, and the group being victorious. The first quote is also indicative of a narrative often used by Renamo’s politicians. That the people love Renamo and want Renamo, and that Renamo is for everyone, while Frelimo is only for some selected groups (Interview 7, Interview 8c, Interview 16b, Interview 25a, Interview 27a, Interview 33a, Interview 36b). This populist approach is interesting in how they build up an idea of what Renamo is as a political party.

Renamo is victorious in the minds of the people in Mozambique, which is also a public narrative expressed and reiterated in the media by Dhlakama:

The whole world knows that Nyusi did not win the elections, yet he governs. *Afonso Dhlakama, 22 August 2016* (Public Statement 58)

The narrative of a victorious Renamo extends beyond the actual elections, given that Renamo has lost them all, to being an idea about being victorious in the sense of being loved and wanted by the people, despite losing actual elections. This narrative is repeated in the interviews, but it is also stated in public by the most prominent voice of the party, its long-standing leader Dhlakama. The head of parliament, Ivone Soares, also uses the sentiment of Renamo’s alleged victory in parliament, indicating how well-established this idea is for Renamo. The party is in parliament as the opposition, meaning it has officially accepted its loss, but nonetheless refers to being victorious among the people. This narrative is important to how Renamo’s elite politicians view themselves as a political party. They are portraying a story of having been chosen by the people, democratically elected and of respecting the democratic political channel constituted by elections.

Renamo’s elite politicians also return to the idea that they are the victims; they were cheated of their electoral victory, thus their violent response is valid. In an interview with one of the elite politicians, the conversation even got a bit heated when I asked about his views on Renamo’s use of systematic violence. He got mad and said that “If I start beating you here, even being in my office, you will defend yourself” (Interview 34a). The idea he wants to convey is that violence can be acceptable and even warranted in certain circumstances.
If violence is a reaction to someone else’s abuse, then it is justified. This is built on the *he started it*-argument.

This is closely related to how Renamo creates a narrative of being a political party that fights for democracy. Whether or not this is done within the political channels is sometimes vague, but the idea of democracy is constantly present in the narrative, and I, therefore, find it important for understanding how Renamo politicians perceive themselves as belonging to a political party. They view themselves as the group that brought democracy to Mozambique, and this is a very important aspect of their narrative of themselves as a democratic political party. The quotes below show how they relate democracy to their actions and non-democratic actions to their opponent:

Frelimo wants Mozambique to be a socialist/communist system, but Renamo wants democracy. (Interview 32b Renamo, 18 October 2016)

We fought for democracy; we definitely want the existence of many parties. (Interview 6 Renamo, 19 March 2015)

The others do not want pluralism of parties, that is why they kill someone who speaks freely. (Interview 36a Renamo, 2 May 2015)

We are not in favour of taking power by force, or by fraudulent elections. (Interview 25b Renamo, 9 October 2016)

The elite politicians are aware that a violent response by a political party is seen as undemocratic, but if it is considered in relation to the opponent’s undemocratic actions, they seem to conclude that this evens things out. One politician specifically expressed that the use of violence was unfortunate, as it is not part of being a democratic party; still, sometimes the situation calls for it (Interview 32b).

Elections are seen as a key democratic political channel, so if actions can be traced back to election misconduct on the part of the opponent, Renamo’s violent response is constructed as being within democratic boundaries, or even as a defence of democracy. The narrative they want to construct revolves around them being legitimate democratic winners and that they only fight to maintain democracy. These are coherently expressed perceptions that shape the narrative of their belonging to a political party, which is also reiterated in public by Dhlakama:

Unfortunately, Frelimo did not accept Renamo’s political project, and we continue to fight for multi-party democracy. *Afonso Dhlakama, 9 August 2016* (Public statement 57)

The goal is undoubtedly to continue to fight for democracy. *Afonso Dhlakama, 15 February 2016* (Public statement 29)
A second strong narrative in Renamo’s elite politicians’ perceptions of themselves as a party is related to governance. Perceptions of governance and how it is conducted are, of course, important aspects of being a democratic political party, and the role perceived for the party. There is, however, an ambiguity in these quotes since the word fight is used without specifying the form of fighting.

An interview with one of Renamo’s elite politicians was scheduled on a Saturday, the only day he had time. He had requested to meet at a local restaurant in Moatize, in the province of Tete. Moatize is a big district, but the centre is located very close to Tete city. This is where we met. We walked around a bit in the vicinity, and he pointed to some different areas around us, schools and communities, indicating that they have no access to water. We are only about 30 minutes from Tete city, and here there is no access to water, and if we go further out into the countryside, it becomes a real issue because of the distances that must be travelled to collect water. An important contextual issue here is what separates Tete city from Moatize is the mighty Zambezi River, and there is still a lack of water because there is no political incentive to provide clean water. The day before this interview, I visited Cahorra Bassa, about an hour from Tete City, one of Africa’s largest hydroelectric power plants situated on the Zambezi. Water exists in abundance, but for some, it is still a scarce commodity. The politician I interviewed emphasised that, in the capital, there is no incentive to care for the local people, and especially not those without social ties to Frelimo (Interview 26a).

This story forms part of a narrative that Renamo’s elite politicians often express; that governance is lacking, and that they would fill that role if the system for local governance were altered. As discussed in Chapter 4, the conflict years, between 1976-1992, created a local division based on social belonging between Renamo and Frelimo. In interviews with Renamo’s elite politicians, it was reiterated that the idea of local power is connected to experienced social exclusion. In questions concerning what it would mean if Renamo could rule the areas it had claimed, it was often mentioned that social exclusion would end (Interview 2, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 8a and b, Interview 10, Interview 12, Interview 16c, Interview 23, Interview 24, Interview 26b, Interview 28, Interview 29, Interview 32a, Interview 33a, Interview 34). This is mentioned in many interviews and illustrated by the quotes below:

They (the people) feel excluded. It all started with Frelimo’s actions of discrimination due to the fact that the president of Renamo is from the central area. He is from Sofala, and social exclusion started from that. (Interview 6 Renamo, 19 March 2015)

Sofala was the start of the revolution, and our people are now suffering for that. (Interview 7 Renamo, 20 March 2015)
The sentiment I could derive from the interviews was that the people connected to Renamo, and the areas connected to Renamo, had been excluded and neglected by the government for a long time. Renamo’s elite politicians connect this to the idea of class. Renamo supporters and people living in the central and north regions are seen as second-hand citizens. For a long time, most investments in for instance higher education were provided for the capital only:

> Not long ago, you could not see any university outside of Maputo, nor a five-star hotel, or even a major hospital outside of Maputo, so everything was in Maputo. Mozambique was only known from a Maputo perspective. (Interview 8b Renamo, 13 October 2015)

University education is accessible today in several of the provincial capitals as well, but they are still far behind in providing the same level of education that is offered in Maputo. This creates class cleavages, and Frelimo has become a party that is seen to represent the urban educated elites. Renamo, therefore, wants to be seen as the opposite, working for the rural population and the marginalised.

This narrative of exclusion is an important aspect of the role Renamo ascribes itself as a political party. Renamo politicians construct the idea that they exist as a party for the weak and excluded. This narrative constructs a political party with a justified political cause. This was also the idea expressed by the politician in Moatize when he pointed out the local differences between areas, and how some areas seem to be excluded from development. Moatize is an area where Renamo has had a strong constituency, while Tete city has been under Frelimo governance.

Renamo politicians experience that they have no access to power and therefore conclude that their constituency is also being cheated. People who vote for them should be governed by them. It is not only Renamo as a party that is being denied access to power, but the people who are being denied their right to be governed by the individuals they voted for. This is illustrated in the quotes below, and it was also a narrative expressed by Renamo in parliament during the sessions leading up to the vote on Renamo’s bill on 30 April 2015 (Observation 4, 5, 6)

> People want to be governed by the ones they voted for. (Interview 7 Renamo, 20 March 2015)

> Who is governing the rural areas? It is not Frelimo; they do not go there! Renamo is already controlling these six provinces in terms of presence. (Interview 24 Renamo, 13 April 2016)

This is primarily something that is brought up when I interview politicians in their local constituencies. The politicians express some level of tiredness
about never being able to do anything for their voters. They discuss the different local problems and that these could be addressed if Renamo were in power in their province, but now they can only stand by and watch (Interview 25a, Interview 26a, Interview 33a, Interview 35 Interview 36a). This is also expressed in public by Renamo’s head of parliament, Ivone Soares:

Frelimo is rejecting the will of the people of central and northern Mozambique who voted for Renamo and Afonso Dhlakama. Ivone Soares, 6 May 2015 (Public statement 6)

Renamo’s elite politicians believe that, today, there is inconsistency in the distribution of power in Mozambique and that this could be solved by changing the system of local governance. Governance is an important narrative for how Renamo politicians perceive their role as a political party. They focus on the lack of governance on the part of their opponent and on how Renamo could change this and work for the benefit of the people.

Perceiving the leader as a democratically elected leader

Internal democracy and the role of the leader in rebel-to-party transformation are two aspects that have been highlighted in previous research (Zaks 2017; Zeeuw 2013; 2008). Leaders can be facilitators of change, or their military past may mean that their role is closely linked to that past, and perhaps they instead should be seen as warlord democrats (Themnér 2017). It is viewed as an important step in rebel-to-party transformation to alter the image of the party and to adhere to democratic structures, both externally and internally. A former warlord leader may also become a spoiler in the process of functioning as a political party. In relation to this, when understanding whether a rebel-to-party group should be analysed and understood as a political party, it is important to see how the elite members perceive their leader. I have already discussed above how Renamo politicians perceive their leader in relation to being an armed group, and I will now look at whether they also perceive their leader as a democratically elected leader who represents the party. This means that the leadership is both seen as part of the public democratic election and accepted internally.

As already discussed above, elections are important in the narrative of how Renamo’s elite politicians perceive themselves as belonging to a political party. They have constructed a narrative of being election winners, which legitimises their democratic role. It became clear to me during the interviews that they often discuss Renamo, as a party, and Dhlakama as being synonymous. I would ask about Renamo, and the response would be about Dhlakama. It is therefore, in the case of Renamo, sometimes difficult to differentiate in the analysis between the party and the leadership level, making it difficult to see this aspect specifically in relation to leadership in the analysis of Renamo.
As mentioned, one very clear narrative is that the elite politicians see Renamo as election winners, and this is sometimes specified in relation to Dhlakama. The presidential election is separate from the parliamentary election, though they are held at the same time. Some mentioned both Renamo and Dhlakama, others focused just on Dhlakama, but I am still reluctant to claim that their answers concerned only Dhlakama, given how they often spoke of them as inseparable, as the quote below is an example of:

Dhlakama and Renamo have never lost. (Interview 36a Renamo, 9 May 2016)

If the elections were transparent, free and fair, president Dhlakama would have won all the elections since 1994. (Interview 8b Renamo, 2015-10-13)

It is still evident that they perceive Dhlakama and Renamo as having been democratically elected by the people (Interview 7, Interview 8c, Interview 25a, Interview 26a, Interview 16b, Interview 28b, Interview 31, Interview 34b). Still, it may be hard to separate the narratives, that is, whether it is the leader or the party that has been democratically elected.

I will instead focus here on the internal perceptions of Dhlakama as a party leader, and on how elite politicians view the internal democracy, and whether the leader is their elected political leader. This will aid in our overall understanding of Renamo as a political party. Dhlakama, as the leader of Renamo, had a specific role due to his longstanding past in Renamo. He became leader of the armed group Renamo in 1979, at only 23 years of age. He remained the leader of Renamo until his death in May 2018. He was never really challenged for his role as leader of the party. In one interview with an elite politician who joined Renamo after the transformation, it is pointed out that, due to Dhlakama’s history and the party’s history, there are today elite politicians who will only see Dhlakama as their commander in chief, and not as a party leader that can be questioned (Interview 8a). The same person, however, goes on to say that others, such as himself, do not have this relationship with their leader and therefore see him as any political leader. This indicates that there could be discrepancies in how the role of the leader is perceived based on one’s personal history as a member or not a member of the old armed group.

The majority of interviews pointing out that the leader is a democratic political leader are also with members who joined later, while in interviews with former soldiers, characteristics connected to the leader often revolve more around him as a person, and not as a political leader, though there are some overlaps (Interview 16a and b, Interview 34b, Interview 6, Interview 7, Interview 12, Interview 30a). This is an interesting divide.

Here, however, I will present some of the perceptions expressed about Dhlakama that indicate that there still seems to be a narrative around him as a political leader of Renamo, demonstrating that, to some extent, Renamo fits the category of being a political party.
To begin with, it is important to point out that during the specific years under study and the years of the conflict, Dhlakama was not publicly present. He lived in hiding on a Renamo military base, where he had no close connection to the political side of the party. This impacts how his role is perceived and talked about. Despite this, it is often pointed out that Dhlakama is still the brain behind all political aspects of Renamo as a party, and he is perceived as a political leader within the party (Interview 32a, Interview 24, Interview 7, Interview 25a and b, Interview 8a and c, Interview 36b, Interview 33b, Interview 31a, Interview 5a and c, Interview 6, Interview 34a, Interview 26b). The quotes below illustrate how Dhlakama is still seen as the main political figure in the party:

Everything we do requires confirmation with our president. We have our ways to communicate, even in this situation. Everyone in the party knows who the boss is. It is Dhlakama! (Interview 32a, 8 April 2016)

All of Renamo’s ideas are Dhlakama’s ideas. (Interview 24, 13 April 2016)

Until today President Dhlakama always lectured us about politics. (Interview 7, 20 March 2015)

He is the mirror of the party, he is the guarantor of our internal and external plan, and he is our guide who has led the party wisely. (Interview 25a, 10 May 2016)

These quotations indicate a narrative that connects Dhlakama as a leader to ideas of politics, and to him being the one who oversees the political side of Renamo’s actions, despite not being present in public for the bulk of the political work. It also shows that there is great trust in him as a political leader. In all my interviews with Renamo’s elite politicians, they have clearly shown a high level of trust in and respect for their leader, and for many of them, this is expressed with worship, which does not necessarily mean he is democratic. There is a narrative of him as a political leader, but it is not coherent and not based on democratic ideas. This analysis indicates that his role is ambiguous.

As mentioned, Dhlakama passed away in May 2018 of natural causes. The leadership in Renamo changed after that, which has also most likely led to changes in how it can be viewed as a democratic political party. Renamo members experienced a change in leadership for the first time in their history as a party, and the new leader was elected to the position. My analysis, however, is limited to understanding Renamo during a time when it seems to have existed as a political party and an armed group at the same time, specifically focusing on the period from the general election in October 2014 to the ceasefire in January 2017. An analysis of the party today under a new leader could, of course, lead to new discussion, given that the identity of a political party is
fluid and undergoing constant evolution. I will discuss this aspect again in the conclusions.

To conclude this section, there are indications that the elite politicians see the Renamo leadership as a democratic political leader, but this narrative is not the strongest one, and conflicting ideas are expressed by the elite politicians. Renamo functions as a political party with a political leader that is seen to ideologically inform the actions of the party. There are, however, ambiguous opinions on how the relationship between the leader and the elite politicians’ functions, where some seem more prone to think of Dhlakama as a commander rather than an elected leader.

This chapter started with an analysis of Renamo as an armed group, and there are clear indications that we could view it as such. However, the analysis then moved on to looking at Renamo as a political party and how Renamo is active as a political party within democratic political channels. This detailed analysis and description of the two roles, the ideal-type categories in the framework, make it possible to see how hybridity manifests, and the next chapter will focus on this discussion. In chapter 6, I will specifically analyse and describe how hybridity manifests and is maintained through certain processes.
It is 9 October 2015, and I have just arrived at Maputo airport. It has been a long flight, and I am very tired. I stand in line for the immigration checkpoint. I notice that the man operating the desk seems to be very preoccupied with the television, as are many people around me. The immigration officer barely glances at my passport and visa and stamps me in. I ask him what is going on, has something specific happened. He informs me that there has been yet another attack on Renamo’s president, Dhlakama, and this time it was very clearly the Mozambique police force. I realised that I had landed right in the middle of a new escalation in the conflict between Renamo and Frelimo.

This was the third attack on Dhlakama to occur in only a few weeks’ time. The last attack on the 2nd of September has also gained some kind of mythical proportions, as it is said that Dhlakama escaped the attack by transforming into a bird who flew away, a partridge, which is the symbol of Renamo. This has been “confirmed” by witnesses as well as reiterated by traditional leaders, increasing the already strong mystique surrounding Dhlakama. This new attack is therefore of so much interest that the immigration officer could not care less about who I am or if my visa is valid. I move past security and head into Maputo, and all you hear about is the attack. This time Dhlakama was attacked in his house in Beira, to which he had travelled for upcoming talks with neutral negotiators. The PRM (Polícia da República de Moçambique) attacked his house claiming they wanted to collect illegally held weapons.

I arrive at the place where I am staying feeling tired, but now also very eager to see what this research trip will bring. I immediately text one of my key informants in Renamo and ask if he could meet me the next day and fill me in on what is happening and how Renamo is reacting to it. This new event opens a new phase in the conflict between Renamo and Frelimo that has, up until recently, been primarily verbal. The two previous attacks had been denied by the government, but this one is hard to deny since the people performing it had an official police decree. Up until this point, Renamo had claimed that they would rule the provinces they won, but they had not actually made their threats into reality. I am feeling anxious about what is to come on a personal level but also interested to see the coming events unfold in front of me from a research perspective. Researching an ongoing conflict is filled with twists and turns. I wonder how this will change Renamo. (Maputo, 9 October 2015)
In the previous chapter, I analysed Renamo’s elite-level behaviour and perceptions in relation to pursuing the issue of local self-governance. This was done with the help of the framework presented in chapter 2. This has allowed me to describe Renamo both as a political party and as an armed group. What becomes evident through that systematic description is that Renamo acts both as a political party and an armed group at the same time, which was also an assumption and empirical observation that this research project started from, that Renamo in some way holds two roles, indicating some form of hybrid. The field note above hinted at these changes in Renamo and that their identity is not a fixed object under study. The main aim of this thesis has therefore been to describe how these two roles manifest in a hybrid identity.

The theoretical discussion around rebel-to-party transformation has started to acknowledge that some groups never fully make the transformation, however, asking whether a linear perception of transformation may be too narrow and limit our understanding of groups that exist as hybrids (Berti 2016; 2013; Wittig 2016; Zaks 2017). The discussion of hybrid parties is lively, nevertheless limited, and it has not fully explored how hybridity manifests in more detail. The previous chapter enabled us to understand Renamo’s behaviour and perceptions in its pursuit of local self-governance, using both political and violent means, which leads to further questions. In this chapter, I will therefore focus specifically on how the two roles of Renamo are intertwined with each other and how this contributes to our understanding of how Renamo’s hybridity manifests. I will start by summarising my understanding of Renamo as both a political party and an armed group in relation to the framework and the analysis pursued in the previous chapter. I will remind the reader that the ideal-type categories are not used as mutually exclusive, and not as a tool to define, but to facilitate the understanding of how hybridity manifests. Subsequently, I will discuss certain processes that are fundamental in how Renamo’s hybrid identity manifests, and in addition, I will discuss how this hybridity is maintained. This chapter builds on the systematic analysis carried out in the previous chapter, adding insights to the growing understanding of hybrid parties within the rebel-to-party literature.

**Renamo as an Armed Group**

Through the analysis in the previous chapter, it became evident that Renamo had resumed violent actions that are controlled by the leader of the party and that are perceived by elite politicians as a necessary aspect of the party’s work. Renamo’s public behaviour indicates that it has been acting as an armed group since the political crisis in Mozambique erupted after the 2014 general election.

Early on, Renamo’s politicians made a claim that they would, by any means possible, achieve local self-governance over six provinces in Mozambique,
where almost two thirds of the population reside. At first, this goal was not spelled out concerning how it was to be pursued, but there was a clear use of threats to leverage it. Threats of organised systematic violence expressed by any political leader should be seen as problematic but making them does not in itself mean that a group should be seen as an armed group. Here, Renamo’s past as an armed group plays an important role in how we analyse it specifically. The threats expressed by the leader Dhlakama have leverage owing to the memory of the group’s previous actions as a pure, and very violent, armed group during the long civil war. It is important to consider the context in relation to how a behaviour may indicate being an armed group. Making public threats may be seen as more or less severe in relation to contextual realities. In the case of Renamo, I would argue that the threats made indicate that its behaviour is in line with that of an armed group. If Renamo’s actions had never moved beyond threats, however, I would not say that it could be categorised as an armed group. Solely using threats entails using a contextual memory of themselves to gain leverage in elite negotiations, but this is not enough to consider Renamo as an armed group.

When threats are used in the aftermath of an election to create ideas about what might happen if they are not appeased, this could be seen as electoral violence. It is important to remember that the boundaries between different definitions of forms of violence may be blurred, because different levels of violence connected to political parties are not uncommon. It is at the moment when the group starts pursuing actual organised systematic violence that its behaviour shows it should be seen as an armed group.

Performing organised armed systematic violence, including attacks on civilian targets, is a behaviour that clearly pushes Renamo out of the sphere of acting as a political party, especially because it often returns to claiming an aim of being a democratic political party. When Renamo shifted from expressing threats to implementing them and actively using organised systematic violence, its status as a political party must be questioned. Renamo was actively using an organised armed force controlled by the party leader, then referred to as the commander. Soldiers were remobilised from Renamo’s old days as an armed group, and newly recruited, and these soldiers acted under the command of Dhlakama. These actions mean, I would argue, that Renamo is behaving as an armed group.

In the case of Renamo, the role of Dhlakama is analytically interesting. One of the categories in the framework specifically addresses leadership, and how the party leadership claims responsibility for the use of systematic violence. If the official party leadership is also linked to, and responsible for, the organised use of systematic violence, this would indicate the chain of command and the organisational structure of the party. The quotes presented in the previous chapter make it clear that Dhlakama takes responsibility for the violent actions of Renamo and that he sees himself as a commander of armed forces. He points out that he holds the command and that he decides when and how an
attack will occur. He makes these statements in the public press, meaning he wants it to be publicly clear that he has this power.

A second area of analysis in the framework, also connected to organisational structure and chain of command, is how the leadership is perceived by the elite politicians – whether they view their leader as a commander or as an elected political leader. The analysis shows that their view of their leader is not coherent. In the interviews, the elite politicians often mention knowing that Dhlakama is in command of Renamo’s soldiers, but not that they see him as their commander. There is a discrepancy here, however, between members of the party who also served with Dhlakama in the first conflict, between 1976-1992, and those who joined after the war ended in 1992. The elite politicians who themselves have an armed background seem more inclined to view Dhlakama as a commander rather than a political leader.

The role of the leader, and in this case the rather specific role of Dhlakama, is important to understand in relation to how Renamo acts as an armed group. As mentioned, however, Renamo claims themselves to be a democratic political party, and in the framework recognition of democratic ideas and standards are important in how we see them as a political party. Knowing how the behaviour of the party is perceived and understood by the elite politicians also enables us to get a broader picture of Renamo. Specifically, it is interesting to see how elite politicians perceive the use of systematic violence by the party, whether they feel it is justified or condemned, or whether they distance themselves from it or accept it. From the interviews, it is evident that the elite politicians have knowledge of the attacks, that they see the use of systematic violence as necessary, and that they justify the use of violence to defend democracy. This is an indication that the armed group identity of the party is pervasive at the elite level.

Regarding both the behaviour and perceptions of the leadership and the elite politicians, there are instances that correspond to being an armed group.

Renamo as a Political Party

The fact that Renamo could be viewed as an armed group, according to the analysis above, calls into question the idea that they are a political party. Renamo’s official status since 1992 has been as a political party, and they have participated in several elections and received a large share of the votes, making them a strong opposition party in Mozambique. At times, they have been referred to as the strongest opposition party in Africa (Vines 2013). Renamo’s resumption of armed systematic violence, of course, casts doubt on their identity as a political party, and primarily on their own proclamation of being democratic. According to the linear perception of rebel-to-party transformation, this would indicate a failed transformation and that Renamo should no longer be viewed as a political party.
However, the analysis in the previous chapter does indicate that, despite using systematic violence, the group also maintained an active political party profile. In the analysis of what it means to be a political party, issues related to democracy are important, as mentioned in the framework. This is not to judge whether they are democratic but to understand the full width of the role they have as a political party.

To summarise, due to Renamo’s election defeat and the crisis that this generated in 2014, Renamo made a claim for local self-governance. This is a political issue of ideological importance to Renamo, as discussed in Chapter 4. This was the main political issue, and how it was framed changed character, from a claim for local self-governance to a decentralisation law. It was regardless an issue that Renamo aimed to pursue using democratic political channels. In March 2015, Renamo’s politicians submitted a bill to parliament aimed at discussing the issue of local self-governance in a democratic setting and allowing for a parliamentary vote to achieve that goal. It can be argued that the bill was flawed and largely undermined basic democratic structures and procedures. It can therefore be questioned whether this behaviour should be viewed as Renamo acting as a political party, with an aim at being democratic.

In the interviews, it was pointed out by some of Renamo’s MPs that they themselves saw the weaknesses but regarded it as a first step in resolving the ongoing crisis. The behaviour of pursuing the goal by submitting a bill to parliament is to some extent an indication of a desire to adhere to the democratic political process and an indication of some level of respect for the parliamentary process. During the assigned plenary sessions, some Renamo MPs were active in arguing for their bill. This behaviour indicates that the elite politicians in Renamo aimed at functioning as a democratic political party. The content of the bill must also be viewed in relation to the context. Mozambique is not a perfectly functioning democracy, and the bill was produced within a very short time frame.

This bill was voted down by Frelimo, who held the majority in parliament. The main argument Frelimo gave was that the bill did not correspond to the constitution. Renamo then embarked on changing its first claim for local self-governance to adjust to the arguments made by Frelimo and other experts, particularly that it required constitutional reform. Their demand remained, that they would rule in the provinces where they had received a majority of votes. Now, however, it was framed in relation to a reform of the Mozambique constitution to allow for more substantial decentralisation, implemented through democratic elections.

This made their new demand far more democratic in content, though the process was moved to the peace negotiation table behind closed doors, and not in parliament, meaning the third parliamentary party MDM was left out of the discussion. The issue was brought back to parliament once the new constitution and Decentralisation Act had been finalised. Changing the constitution to enable decentralisation at a provincial level through elections became
Renamo’s main goal when peace negotiations started. This then shifted the political issue away from open formal political channels, meaning it was pursued through a less democratic process and not by Renamo as a party in parliament, but by selected members from only Frelimo and Renamo who took part in the negotiations, and a specially assigned working group to re-draft the constitution. Renamo’s elite behaviour as a political party is therefore controversial during this period. They make efforts to maintain their role in parliament and they address the issue of local self-governance through parliament at first, but they also resort to closed limited elite negotiations brought about by their use of armed systematic violence. They change their first claim when listening to arguments that it is not democratic enough, meaning they are willing to learn and adapt to a more democratic content, and indicating that they recognise democracy as important, and that they are willing to adapt and conform based on political arguments. However, in parallel they continue to use organised armed violence, which means that they do not live up to the fundamental democratic principle of solving conflict with peaceful means.

When it comes to the organisational structure of the party and the role of the leader, Dhlakama, it is evident that Renamo has clear shortcomings in its role as a democratic political party. Dhlakama is not a leader connected to the political side of the party. He represents the party officially in the media and other public debates, but not within the most important democratic political arenas, such as parliament. This also becomes even more controversial due to his long history as a military leader for Renamo. The memory and image of Dhlakama is connected to him as a military leader and not as a political leader. He was an undisputed and revered leader in Renamo from 1979 until his death in 2018, but I would argue that he has not behaved like a democratic leader of a political party. He would have needed to be far more present in everyday political life to be seen as a pure political leader. He was also often referred to in the public press as 'Dhlakama, former rebel leader' and not as head of the opposition. This could of course have been a media strategy used to frame and limit him, but he also did little to change this perception by being more politically visible or by questioning such depictions of him in the media.

During the years covered in this study, meaning the years of the violent crisis, he also lived and worked only from Renamo’s military headquarters, which is also where he died. His behaviour during this crisis therefore emphasised even more his role and behaviour as a military commander and not as a democratic leader of a political opposition party. He did, however, often express that Renamo fought for and believed in democracy, and how that was the group’s aim. Democracy was clearly part of his rhetoric, but less so in his actions.

Perceptions within the party also vary concerning how Dhlakama was viewed, some indicate that he was perceived as a political leader, while others seem to view him as a commander. As already mentioned, this was one of the few instances where I could see a difference in perceptions between newer
members of Renamo and those who had also served as soldiers during the civil war. The new members expressed that he was a political leader to them, that he could be questioned and that he was elected by the members, while the former soldiers viewed him as a military leader and commander. This discrepancy indicates that, under Dhlakama’s rule, the structure of the party was still not fully political, which indicates how Renamo functions as a political party during these years.

In newly formed parties, and in former armed group parties, ideology can be weak or not as pronounced in relation to the role of the party. The perceptions of the elite politicians in relation to Renamo’s role and aim as a party can therefore enlighten us as to how it functions as a political party. The elite politicians I interviewed justified the party’s use of violence, as discussed above. They did, however, also seem to have clear ideas about the political aim of the party, returning to the issues of insufficient governance, exclusionary politics by the regime, and abuse of the political system by their opponent. They had clear perceptions that the role of Renamo was to be an opposition party that fights for the people, and for democracy. They used narratives that indicate that they are aiming to function as a political party with an awareness of ideologically driven political issues. Their main claim for increased local governance and for decentralisation is an ideologically driven issue based on electoral results.

In relation to this, I would argue that Renamo behaves largely as a political party, and their perceptions indicate that they are ideologically driven as a political party. Renamo aims to adhere to democratic political channels, and they largely use democratic rhetoric and arguments. The role of Dhlakama affects our perception of them in the categorisation of Renamo as a political party, but in relation to the elite politicians, both behaviour and perceptions can be more evidently categorised as aiming to be democratic political party.

Hybridity: How it Manifests and is Maintained

The concluding summary above indicates that Renamo could be viewed as a political party, but that it is also an armed group. Using the framework to understand Renamo’s behaviour and perceptions in relation to how it pursued the goal of local self-governance shows that it is both as an armed group and a political party. The framework also clarifies how, thus enabling a deeper analysis. Renamo is a complex actor to understand, one that cannot easily be classified as having only one of the two roles. Renamo somehow acts with dual roles, which was already established in the introduction. The main aim was therefore to see how. Here, the framework helps us analyse in more detail how it has acted and how its elite politicians perceive such actions. The collected material enables an analysis that can help us understand the complexity and dual nature of Renamo further.
The starting point of this research rests on the assumption that Renamo is a political party that also started using organised systematic violence and re-organising its past armed forces. When a political party shifts to using organised systematic violence, it may be easy to assume that this means its role as a political party diminishes as a result. This assumption, however, is being questioned more and more, as perpetrating violent acts does not necessarily mean the political work is diminished.

However, the previous discussion of hybrid parties is rather limited in explaining what being a hybrid entails and how it manifests. The core definition of hybridity is that two aspects we usually see as separate are closely co-existing or have been fused together, meaning that they form two parts of one whole. These two roles are issues we would usually view as separate entities that do not, or should not, co-exist. Being a democratic political party and an armed group are two such entities. We see them as two endpoints on a continuum, because violent actions do not correspond with democratic politics. It could be argued that as soon as Renamo started using systematic violence, it was delegitimised as a democratic political party. Nonetheless, I think that it is important to see the nuances in the group’s behaviour and look more closely at the complexity informing its actions. Therefore, my aim here is to elaborate on that hybrid identity through my analysis of Renamo. Through Renamo, we can advance the discussion of what hybridity is and illustrate how it manifests.

While we already knew that Renamo exhibited signs of a hybrid party, this investigation strengthens that view. Renamo’s actions can consistently be found on both sides of the framework. Renamo’s behaviour and perceptions indicate that it is acting as an armed group and a political party at the same time. The question of how such a hybridity manifests and how that hybrid identity is maintained are however more complex issues, and I will discuss them below.

During the period from the general election in 2014 until the ceasefire in January 2017, which is the scope of this research, Renamo should be seen as a hybrid party. The research I have conducted using elite interviews, elite observations of parliament sessions, and public statements by Renamo’s leadership indicates that these two roles co-exist to an extent that I would term as constituting a hybrid form. The aim of this thesis has been to elaborate on how hybridity manifests. However, while engaging in the analysis, certain aspects have also appeared out of the material that enriches ongoing discussions on hybrid parties beyond the original scope. Below I will discuss how hybridity manifests through certain processes, but also shed light on how some processes are key in how Renamo’s hybridity is maintained. I argue that Renamo’s hybridity manifests through processes of contemporaneity in behaviour, elite-level legitimisation, and one key political issue, and in addition that the hybridity is maintained through narratives of democracy and a charismatic leader. I will also highlight that certain aspects of the analysis could contribute to a definition of a hybrid (armed political) party.
Contemporaneity between politics and systematic violence

From public statements and interviews, we can follow Renamo’s behaviour and perceptions during this period and see that it simultaneously behaves as an armed group and a political party, primarily using parliamentary politics. There is no separation in time between the two roles; they exist concurrently. Contemporaneity in time between the two roles is a process that fuses the hybridity and enables it to function. Previous research discusses hybrid parties as cyclical or as two roles one actively chooses depending on situation (Berti 2013, Wittig 2016). One actor can play two roles, but that does not automatically mean that the actor functions as a hybrid. I argue that when two roles are fused in time, we can talk of it as a proper hybrid. The hybrid appears relatively stable, as the two roles are always co-joined. I would, therefore, also argue that contemporaneity is an important part of how we define hybrid parties. Without contemporaneity, could we argue for a fusion of the two roles?

To illustrate that argument in relation to Renamo, in the early stages of the conflict, reference to violent actions and threats of violence are often perpetuated in public statements in relation to the political process, connecting these two parts very clearly. We can revisit some quotes to look specifically at time:

“If they (the Frelimo leadership) don’t give orders directly to the Frelimo parliamentary group to facilitate the bill, there will be consequences”. Afonso Dhlakama, 24 February 2015 (Public Statement 3)

Here, it is evident in the same sentence how references to political structures are combined with veiled threats of consequences. The contemporaneity is very striking here. However, at this stage in the conflict, early 2015, the threats were still rather hidden and weak. The parliamentary process is brought up, but with the caveat that if that fails, violent means will be necessary. Renamo’s behaviour shifts between acting as an armed group, using both threats of violence and later actual acts of systematic violence, and being a political party that prepares and submits a bill to parliament.

In the early months of 2016, the use of armed systematic violence was initiated by Renamo, as discussed in detail in chapter 5. Within the span of a few months, we can see both public statements indicating and justifying the use of violence and quotes amplifying Renamo’s political role. This is exemplified in the quotes below:

“We will rule in March, and no one will prevent it. The game is finished, and we will no longer retreat. I swear by the soul of my mother.” Afonso Dhlakama, 6 January 2016 (Public Statement 20)

The goal is undoubtedly to continue to fight for democracy. Afonso Dhlakama, 15 February 2016 (Public Statement 29)
Dhlakama makes it clear that Renamo will not retreat, a word closely connected to the idea of violent struggle. He also combines democracy with fighting, making it vague what form of fight he refers to, but that could also be part of the strategy – to combine democracy with fighting in a way that makes it sound legitimate. Ivone Soares, as the head of Renamo’s parliamentary group, also indicates the role Renamo’s MPs play in parliament and as safeguards of democratic procedures. Here we can see an example of a short time frame where the two roles of Renamo are concurrently existing. At this time, the parliament was in session, and there were daily attacks reported between Renamo and government troops. This indicates that neither of these two roles, concerning what Renamo was, had been halted or that one seemed to be more pronounced than the other.

Looking specifically at time, I argue that contemporaneity in behaviour is key to understanding how hybridity manifests. Renamo’s behaviour as a political party and armed group indicates that these dual roles are co-existing and being used simultaneously. This means that we cannot see this as a cyclical change in roles, which has been suggested in previous theoretical discussions of hybridity (Berti, 2013). There is no separation between the roles in time, which I see as imperative in how hybridity manifests. If the roles are separated in time, it would indicate that the different roles are approached and used separately by the party. The roles are then not connected and cannot be argued to be fused together, indicating a hybrid. The concurrent use of the two roles is part of how hybridity manifests. As mentioned, previous research on hybrid parties has not provided clear definitions for what hybridity entails. Two roles can, in a wide definition, imply hybridity. However, I would argue that proximity and contemporaneity in time is fundamental in how hybridity manifests and therefore fundamental for a definition of proper hybrid parties.

Elite-level legitimisation

An issue that I argue to be of utmost importance in how hybridity manifests is in the perceptions of elite politicians. As mentioned, the reason for focusing on elites is that this is where I assume we can get a full understanding of whether and how the two roles are related to each other. The elite politicians in Renamo whom I interviewed are all active politicians, and almost all of them at the highest level as MPs. This means that they clearly represent the political side of Renamo. How these actors are also entrenched in the violent actions helps us understand how the two sides of Renamo are intertwined.

I cannot argue that these elite politicians are part of pursuing the party’s violent behaviour, but they show in interviews that they accept the violent
actions of the party and often even justify the use of systematic violence, stating that they consider perpetuated acts of war necessary. They spoke very openly about Renamo’s soldiers, seeing them as an integrated part of what Renamo is. Sometimes they even expressed wanting further acts of violence, indicating that the current strategy of low-level violence was too weak. This justification of violence and the use of soldiers was a very strong and concurrent narrative that was also the same regardless of the politician’s status within the party as a former member of the armed group or not. Moreover, younger new politicians, some born during peacetime, adhered to this narrative of systematic violence as an integral part of what Renamo is. The fact that elite politicians who represent Renamo’s political identity are aware of the violent acts, concur with them and justify them indicates that the armed side of Renamo is highly integrated into the identity of what Renamo is.

The elite politicians I interviewed were at the same time often eloquent in discussing the issue of local power and decentralisation as a political issue that revolves around democracy. They were ideologically aware and discussed why this was something they strived for using narratives of governance, social exclusion, and democratic elections. It was also evident in my observations of parliament plenary sessions that they were active in discussions of this political issue. The same elite politicians who were supporters of organised systematic violence also to some extent recognised principles of democracy. As mentioned, the elite-level is where we could assume a separation of the two roles, where elite politicians would distance themselves from violent acts. This is, however, not the case in Renamo. Renamo’s elite politicians and their perceptions of the role of the party regarding both systematic violence and democratic politics are how the two roles become completely intertwined, a hybrid. This form of elite-level reasoning between violence and politics, and legitimisation of violent acts through political democratic discourse, ties the two elements together and strengthens the hybrid features. Renamo’s hybridity becomes even more pronounced due to how elite-level politicians’ reason and legitimise violent acts. The same people who are evoking political ideas are also linking politics to violence. Elite-level legitimisation of violence indicates that the violent role of Renamo permeates into the political sphere. Hybridity manifests through this elite-level legitimisation. Elite-level legitimisation becomes a glue that holds the roles within the hybrid closely linked.

The elite politicians are aware of the violent acts and refer to Renamo as having an armed wing. They are, however, not involved in the chain of command that controls the violent acts. The analysis made it clear that the two sides of Renamo fuse completely in the role of Dhlakama. He is their official party leader, and thereby, he is the head of the opposition. He is also clearly showing that he commands Renamo’s armed wing (as Renamo itself refers to its soldiers) and that he is the one ordering attacks. The elite politicians acknowledge that Dhlakama holds two positions in the party, one as the commander of soldiers and one as the leader of the party. This is one of those
aspects where the hybridity seems to become pronounced. It could be argued that Renamo has a pyramid structure, where Dhlakama holds the two sides together. As already discussed, however, Renamo’s violent acts do permeate the elite-levels of the party, meaning they go beyond Dhlakama. The fact that Dhlakama, as the leader of the party, clearly takes responsibility for systematic violence and is also referred to as a commander indicates that the use of systematic violence lies directly under the control of the party and not as a separate entity.

However, it is in the awareness and in the legitimisation process by the elite politicians that the hybridity manifests. The roles become linked by actions at the elite level, and elite-level legitimisation is therefore pivotal in how this hybridity manifests and is maintained. If the elite-level did not legitimise the violent acts of the party, it would be hard to claim that violent actions are an integral part of the party. The elite-level is also an important aspect in the understanding of what hybridity is and how we should define it. A hybrid party should only be viewed as such if the elite-level engages in both roles. Hence, I would also argue that this can contribute to a more precise definition of hybrid parties.

One key political issue

From the onset of the conflict that began after the 2014 general election, it was clear that Renamo was pursuing a political agenda and employing violent threats and later violent acts as leverage for the same agenda. Renamo was generally dissatisfied with the electoral outcome and chose to address this through a claim for local self-governance in the six provinces where they held a majority of the votes. The idea of local self-governance has been a longstanding grievance of Renamo and holds historical significance, as discussed in Chapter 4. It is an ideological political goal, but the means to achieve it became an intertwined strategy, with violence playing an active role. This key political issue has been utilised by Renamo in both its capacity as a political party and as an armed group. Their struggle in both arenas has centred around this singular political issue. This is therefore important in understanding how Renamo’s hybridity manifests.

As mentioned, it is common to assume that armed groups form around political issues and strive for political goals. What makes one key political issue a pivotal feature in how hybridity manifest is how it is utilised. Firstly, Renamo’s hybridity is centred around one specific ideological political issue, and secondly, a constrained political demand limits the extent of violent actions, allowing the hybridity to be maintained. I will elaborate on both aspects below.

Renamo’s elite politicians frequently return to the issue of the group being excluded both as a party and in terms of how it represents the people. They argue that Frelimo’s policies have come to benefit only certain groups in society. I conclude in Chapter 4 that, for Renamo, local power revolves around
issues of exclusion, primarily on a social dimension. Renamo also feels deprived of access to power through a protracted process of decentralisation that has generated more friction between Renamo and Frelimo, rather than enhancing Renamo's access to power. Consequently, from the perspective of Renamo politicians, local power leads to inclusion on multiple levels. Given that they perceive this as a contested issue, and a process they believe has exacerbated exclusion, it is not surprising that they lack trust in the existing political system's ability to meet their demands. Violence then becomes the option that Renamo resorts to because their long-term experience of exclusion suggests that, without the use of violence, the group will have no leverage to achieve its core ideological claims.

Renamo’s initial claim for local self-governance in 2015 cannot be regarded as very democratic in form. They sought to govern in the provinces where they garnered a majority of votes. It is somewhat democratically formulated because it references votes, but those votes were cast in a national election that made no mention of local governance. The proposal, however, underwent a transformation in the process and evolved into a decentralisation Act that by no means guarantees Renamo access to local governments; instead, elections will decide. Decentralisation is often seen as a measure that deepens democracy and can enhance governance output (Buur 2009; Connerley, Eaton, and Smoke 2010; Crawford and Hartmann 2008; Faguet, Fox, and Pöschl 2015). It is also considered a tool in conflict resolution (Angerbrandt 2011; Bland 2007; Braathen and Hellevik 2008; Brown 2008; Crawford and Hartmann 2008).

Renamo embarked on a quest to achieve local self-governance, initially resorting to threats but later bringing the issue to parliament. The first draft had flaws and was revisited by Renamo, undergoing alterations during the peace negotiation process. Ultimately, a new decentralisation law was passed in 2019. Threats of violence and later acts of violence were employed to generate momentum, compelling the government to meet Renamo’s political demands. The first step towards a signed peace agreement was a negotiated deal to implement an amendment to the Mozambican constitution enabling decentralisation at the provincial level. One key political issue remains at the core, with political means interwoven with violent actions to achieve the same goal. This further facilitates the coexistence of Renamo’s two roles and blends them together. While two roles could coexist but aim for different objectives, the pursuit of one key political issue using both violent and political means cements the hybridity.

Renamo never progressed beyond their claim for local self-governance during these recent years of conflict, which differs from their past as only an armed group. During the conflict between 1976-1992, Renamo fought to overthrow the Frelimo government. This time, Renamo's actions are limited to engaging in violence to gain leverage in relation to a specific political issue that is important to them. They are not challenging the entire regime or engaging
in a rebellion to remove Frelimo from power. In early 2015, Renamo acknowledged Frelimo as the overall winner of the election but continued to argue that there was electoral misconduct. Hence, they opted for a solution that could be realised within the confines of a democratic political system, in this case, decentralisation. *One key political issue* and how Renamo frames their use of violence in relation to that political goal confine and limit their violent actions. A limited political issue is used to maintain political legitimacy and therefore also restricts their armed group identity. Their hybrid identity is sustained due to this limitation. Despite a few controversial statements by Dhlakama, Renamo never fully reverted to being an armed group aiming to overthrow an elected government.

*One key political issue* is an important feature in understanding hybrid parties. It may be what prevents a group from fully reverting to being an armed group, creating stability in the hybridity. I would also argue that having one key political issue at the centre for both violent and political means is a key aspect of how hybridity should be defined. A separation in causes could imply a separation of roles, while one political cause unites the two roles into a hybrid.

Narratives of democracy
In the section above, I discuss how Renamo aimed to achieve local self-governance and how that claim evolved into a proposal to change the constitution to increase laws on decentralisation. Renamo's use of violence in an organised manner to bring about political change in governance structures is intriguing. It is also noteworthy that they employed violence with an aim to enhance democratic structures in Mozambique. This symbolises Renamo's hybrid nature, where democracy, politics, and violence become closely intertwined. As discussed earlier, politics and violence have historically been closely linked, but democracy has always been perceived as the antidote to organised armed violence, albeit with some debate, as mentioned in the theory chapter. It is not the task of this thesis to evaluate Renamo or its claims in relation to democratic standards. However, it is highly relevant for the thesis's aim to demonstrate how Renamo's elite politicians use a *democratic narrative* to sustain their hybridity. The narratives of democracy are used to justify violent actions while striving to remain relevant as a political party.

Renamo's elite politicians consistently present a narrative that connect violence with democracy and an actual knowledge of democratic standards in our interviews. Renamo's acts of violence are closely tied to the goal of decentralisation, which is presented as synonymous with democracy. Renamo does not frame violent acts as contradictory to democracy but rather as a necessary means of achieving it. These two issues, which theoretically should be at opposing ends of the spectrum, are melded together by Renamo's elite politicians in *a narrative that connects violent means to democratic ends*. The
formulation of these narratives is crucial in maintaining hybridity. To be a hybrid armed political party in a context where democracy and democratic standards matter means there is a need to frame actions as democratic. As discussed in chapter 4, Mozambique has a fragile, somewhat flawed democratic system, but it is still a context where democracy matters as an idea. The idea of democracy is also closely linked to Renamo and their history of fighting for democracy in the first war. These narratives of democracy are reiterated to such an extent that they actively shape the continued functioning of a hybrid identity. I would argue that elite politicians do this to influence both the internal formation of the party and the public perception of the party.

Renamo chose to address an ideological political issue using violence, creating controversy by employing non-democratic means aiming to achieve a democratic political goal. Renamo appears keen on maintaining the appearance of a democratic political party, and therefore, according to the politicians, violence is only used for political purposes when it can be justified. They argue that they do not resort to indiscriminate systematic violence or pursue political goals beyond their democratic reach. They specify that they believe the provinces should be governed by the party that secures a majority of the votes, keeping their claim within democratic boundaries. Violence serves a clear political purpose and is limited to achieving a democratically justifiable political goal. Renamo's hybridity is constructed through this narrative, and their desire to preserve that identity also restricts their use of violence as a political tool to specific political purposes, which, for them, was gaining access to local power.

Renamo's elite politicians also consistently return to the idea of electoral fraud in our interviews. By constructing a narrative that links violence to elections, they aim for it to be perceived as a response stemming from the limitations of the political system and the actions of their opponents. If the electoral arena is not functioning properly, then combining violence and politics, and actively using systematic violence as a political tool makes sense. Renamo would argue that violence as a political tool is not just a necessary response to the actions of their opponents, but a response related to the abuse of a core feature of democracy. They frame their own actions as safeguarding democracy, regardless of the means used. Renamo frames the use of systematic violence as an active choice meant to achieve a democratic political goal that they cannot attain through political channels. Narratives of democracy are therefore employed to construct an identity in which violence is not seen as conflicting with democracy and politics. Renamo's elite politicians contend that their behaviour is justified using narratives of democracy, claiming that their political objective is to enhance democratic structures in Mozambique through decentralisation. These narratives of democracy, articulated by elite politicians, constitute one of the core processes that help them maintain their hybrid identity.
A charismatic leader: The role of Dhlakama

In the analysis of Renamo, it became evident that Dhlakama had a specific role in how hybridity is maintained. He was a very charismatic leader, and he was the same leader that Renamo had in the past during the civil war between 1976-1992. Previous research has also extensively discussed the impact of leaders on rebel-to-party transformation. From the analysis of Renamo and Dhlakama, it became clear that their hybrid identity is, to some extent, personified in their leader. A charismatic leader to whom people remain loyal, even when their actions appear contradictory, seems to be significant in maintaining a hybrid identity.

The role of Dhlakama in Renamo needs to be addressed in two ways: his own role within the party and how the elite politicians perceive him. From the analysis in chapter 5, it is evident that Dhlakama played a significant role in shaping the hybridity. He was often the one who made controversial statements connecting violence and narratives of democracy. The role of Dhlakama is also one aspect of the analysis where I have encountered somewhat contradictory perceptions. Hence, I will delve into this further.

Dhlakama occupied a very distinctive position within Renamo. He assumed leadership of Renamo in 1979, becoming the rebel leader at the young age of 23. With the transition to a political party in 1992, his official title changed to party leader. Dhlakama had an almost mythical presence within the party, and in interviews, he is often referred to as a father figure. Dhlakama often publicly referred to himself in the third person, enhancing this mythical perception of him existing beyond himself. Even among the general public in Mozambique, there was a sense of reverence towards him, or at the very least, a keen interest in who he was. When he was attacked in October 2015, the public press reported that he escaped the attack by transforming into a partridge and flying away. The partridge is the symbol of Renamo. This story was recounted by individuals who claimed to have witnessed the attack (for further analysis of this event, refer to Bertelsen, 2016). This story somehow encapsulates the essence of Dhlakama. He was the leader of Renamo during the years of this analysis, and it could be argued that the hybridity is primarily embodied in him as an individual. However, I contend that while it may be personified in him, it extends beyond him as well.

One aspect that becomes clear from the analysis of leadership behaviour is that Dhlakama was a much more prominent military leader than a political party leader. He was never present in parliament and, therefore, was not part of Renamo's official public political activities. Although he used rhetoric related to democracy in many public statements, his actions still suggested that he should be regarded more as a commander than as a political leader. During his last years as a leader, especially during the crisis under study, he also resided and governed Renamo from the group's military headquarters. Hence, it is evident that his public status is more closely tied to the role as an armed
group leader than to his position as a political leader. This would imply that under Dhlakama's leadership, Renamo should be seen more as an armed group than as a political party.

I would argue, however, that Dhlakama is still just one individual, and the behaviour and perceptions of the elite-level below him are crucial for understanding Renamo as a whole. The perceptions of the elite politicians often indicate that they view him as both a political leader and a commander, effectively personifying the hybridity in him. In the analysis of how the elite politicians view Dhlakama, it became evident that there seems to be a divide between older former soldiers and the newer, purely elite politicians. The politicians who joined Renamo after the transformation expressed more clearly that the leadership functions as it does in any party; it has an internally elected leader who answers to its members. They expressed more positive views on how the communication between the leader and the politicians functioned and regarded Dhlakama solely as their political leader.

The elite politicians who had been members of the former armed group that had served under Dhlakama as a commander were more inclined to use expressions indicating that they still viewed him as an undisputed leader, one who commands rather than facilitates and leads discussions. This could be seen as indicative of Renamo grappling with its old rebel past and certain factions of the party aligning more with one side. However, it was only in this specific aspect that the analysis revealed a difference in perceptions between the former armed group members and the newer politicians. I believe this finding is especially important in relation to understanding the role of Dhlakama and the leadership of the party. For Renamo, a change in leadership could alter how the two roles coexist.

When Dhlakama passed away in May 2018, Renamo appointed a new leader, Ossufo Momade, a former military leader from Renamo's past, but one with a stable political career since Renamo's establishment as a political party. He initially served as a local politician in Nampula, and since 1999, he has been an MP for Renamo, serving as Renamo's secretary-general between 2007 and 2013. This shift in leadership led to internal struggles in Renamo, where a group of soldiers felt neglected by the new leadership, prompting them to rebel against their own party and create a splinter group called the "Renamo military junta." This development is beyond the scope of this research project, but it could indicate that today the hybridity between the two roles is less entrenched due to a change in leadership. However, it is telling that Momade also chose to leave Maputo once elected as leader to reside in and govern from the military headquarters, Santujiira, until the peace agreement was signed, and the headquarters was dismantled. This indicates the importance Renamo leaders place on their armed forces and suggests that the duality of Renamo's identity did not change with Dhlakama's passing.

How the leader is active in relation to the two roles is crucial in sustaining hybridity. Holding both roles together as a hybrid appears to depend on a
charismatic leader who can embody both roles. Loyalty is also significant in intertwining hybridity within the ranks below the leader, as the actions of the leader need to be accepted by other elite politicians.

I believe that Renamo's hybrid identity could be deeply entrenched given how they use systematic violence and actively seek to connect it to democracy. Renamo's hybrid identity was firmly established during these years, but the identity of a political party is fluid, implying that Renamo may change its outlook if violence is no longer seen as necessary or as a valid and rewarded means of exerting pressure on the government of Mozambique. Renamo's hybrid identity is built on their efforts to make the use of systematic violence democratic, as evident in how they employ violence to achieve democratic political goals. Renamo's past use of violence during the civil war and its experience of being rewarded for using violence during this more recent crisis could lead to violence becoming an integral part of how it conducts politics. Renamo's hybrid identity may not be part of a transitional phase but rather a more permanent feature.

I will further elaborate on why this is essential to understand in relation to how it can enhance our theoretical comprehension of former armed parties and parties that employ systematic violence, but perhaps most importantly, how having a more nuanced analysis of the roles of these actors can influence policy.
Christmas is soon approaching, December 2016. I am contemplating the idea of spending the holidays in Beira. Mozambique closes for the holidays. I like the idea in general; Beira is nice. But I am dreading going out on the road. I still remember the last time I travelled on the EN1 in Sofala by car. The military convoy and the shooting we ended up in. I am scared, I do not want to experience that again. I think about flying instead, but the prices have really gone up for Christmas.

The fighting between Renamo and Frelimo has calmed down since negotiations had started between Dhlakama and Nyusi, but there are still attacks, and you still need to travel in a military convoy on several large stretches of the main roads in Mozambique. The most dangerous one still being the passage between Rio Save and Muxungue in Sofala, which is the only road to take to enter the central and northern parts of Mozambique.

I delay the decision to travel or not. This is what the military struggle does; it creates fear, it prevents the civilian population from living their lives, it keeps families apart due to the hassle and dread of travelling. Only the rich can travel since the airspace is free from fighting. Not that many have experienced the fighting first-hand, but it exists with everyone in Mozambique. My memories are too present; I can still hear the machine guns and the big tank. I remember the feeling of not knowing where the fighting came from or if I was going to die now.

Then just a few days before Christmas, Dhlakama announces that he has ordered the Renamo soldiers to lay down their arms for the Christmas holidays so that all Mozambicans and tourists can travel in safety and enjoy Christmas with their families. President Nyusi follows this initiative and orders the national army to stop the military convoys and remove themselves from Renamo territory. There is finally an official ceasefire.

We purchase our tickets for Beira with the national bus company on 22 December. It is a long journey, but it is pleasant. It is calm, with no convoys and no shootings. I am just enjoying the scenery outside the window. When we pass through the Gorongosa National Park, there is a herd of buffalo just by the road, but no military. Buffalo is all we need to fear, and then Christmas holidays are spent in peace. I hope this is also the beginning of peace for Mozambique. (Beira, 24 December 2016)
Key Contributions and Concluding Remarks

This study has focused on understanding Renamo, both as a political party and an armed group, specifically exploring the idea of hybridity. It embarked from an observation that Renamo seemed to maintain its political work and political position, while at the same time actively using systematic violence. Renamo has a history as an armed group during the civil war between 1976-1992, and after the general election in 2014, it began showing signs of revoking old structures and strategies. As the short field note above indicates, a ceasefire was agreed on just before Christmas 2016, and it was signed and sealed in January 2017. A peace agreement was, however, not signed until July 2019. During the years 2015 to 2017, Renamo seemed to combine being a political party and an armed group, and the main aim of this study has been to understand how these two roles are combined, how hybridity manifests.

This study has had an empirical focus on the years of conflict, and I had the rare possibility of collecting material as events were unfolding and violent actions carried out. The empirical contribution of this study hence holds unique value, and through using a framework focused on elite politicians’ behaviour and perceptions, I analyse how the two parts of Renamo are combined and how hybridity manifests. The elite focus in my study puts emphasis specifically on the level where hybridity is expressed. Through a thorough analysis of the elite politicians’ behaviours and perceptions, we gain insight into what constitutes the hybridity, how it manifests, and how it is maintained. This is important, not least from a policy perspective, which I will return to below. It is also important from a theoretical perspective if we wish to widen our understanding of armed political parties, to discover how they function and what role they may play in a political arena.

Within the rebel-to-party literature, it is becoming increasingly acknowledged that many parties never fully transform into well-functioning political parties but instead get stuck in the middle. This thesis adds to this discussion by offering a thorough discussion of what hybridity entails, and how we can analyse such parties.

From the framework, we can see that Renamo has behaved as an armed group in relation to the issue of local self-governance. They have used both well-leveraged threats and armed systematic violence to coerce the opponent. The perceptions expressed also indicate that the use of systematic violence is entrenched, acknowledged, and justified at the elite-level of the party. At the leadership level, we can clearly see that Dhlakama was taking full responsibility for violent acts and claiming to have full control of the armed section in Renamo. To some extent, we can also draw the conclusion that Dhlakama was still viewed as a military leader within the party, indicating that internal democratic structures have not evolved. This last aspect is, however, not uniformly agreed upon but depends on the background of the person being asked. Elite
politicians with a history as soldiers in Renamo show higher indications of this.

Despite showing evidence of being an armed group, Renamo also behaved as a political party aiming to be democratic in relation to the issue of local self-governance. They prepared, presented, and debated a bill in parliament. When it was voted down, they took in criticism and reformulated a new political proposal that included alterations to the constitution. This amendment was passed in parliament and following that came a decentralisation bill that parliament also passed. The two latter processes are interconnected as a peace negotiation initiative, but Renamo participated in this political process aiming to strengthen the democratic structure in Mozambique. Dhlakama, however, was a weak political leader with a low political presence. Renamo's role as a political party that upheld certain levels of democratic standards, such as active parliamentary work, still indicates that we cannot rule them out as a political party. The two roles become intertwined and serve as two parts of a whole. As a hybrid party, Renamo remains active as a political party within democratic institutions, meaning it does not lose its role within the political structure. Violent actions have, however, become an integrated part of politics, meaning we need to further understand why systematic violence is seen as necessary. Discussing these types of political armed actors as hybrid parties enables us to see the full spectrum of what they are and to understand their actions within a context.

The analysis shows how the two roles are combined and hence how hybridity manifests. As discussed in the previous chapter, I argue that the two roles of Renamo are so closely intertwined that we can clearly view them as a hybrid, and that this hybridity manifests through certain processes that primarily revolve around contemporaneity in behaviour, elite-level legitimisation, and one key political issue, and that this hybridity in addition is maintained through the help of narratives of democracy and a charismatic leader. How the roles are combined can aid us in understanding how entrenched a hybrid identity is. These processes can also shed light on our general understanding of hybridity, and I will here shortly revisit these processes in relation to how they contribute to our general understanding of hybrid parties.

First, contemporaneity between political and violent behaviour is an important feature in how the two roles are fused together. When the two roles coexist concurrently, it indicates that they are related to an extent that it would mean they exist in hybrid. The second process I emphasise is the fusion of the two roles on an elite-level, and that the elite-level is active in legitimising the coexistence of the two roles. The fact that the roles are fused especially at the elite-level makes the hybridity more pronounced. The way in which they are fused at the elite-level, through legitimisation, enables the hybridity to be maintained, as elite-level legitimisation also functions to create acceptance towards violent behaviour outside of the party. Looking at elite-level legitimisation, therefore, helps us understand how strong a hybrid identity might be,
and if there are elite groups within the party that may hold more modest approaches towards the use of violence. Third, one key political issue is at the core of Renamo's hybrid identity. One rather limited political goal is pursued with both political and violent actions. To centre the hybrid identity in one political issue connects the two roles in an attempt to validate the use of both violent and political means. Connected to this, the fourth process is how Renamo uses narratives of democracy to maintain their hybridity. They engage in rhetoric where they connect violent actions to democracy. These narratives are used by Renamo with an aim to widen the concept of democracy to legitimise violent acts. The last aspect is the role of a charismatic leader. From the analysis of Renamo, we can see the importance of a charismatic leader to hold the hybridity together. To keep two roles of one party in check, you need strong leadership and loyalty.

Within the field of rebel-to-party transformation, there is a growing notion of the need to understand and further analyse groups that never fully transform. Wittig (2016) critiques the underlying assumption that war and democratic politics are mutually exclusive, and hence the ideal-type division of being either a political party or an armed group. Through an analysis of Burundi, she highlights how politics and violent actions become connected due to historical and contextual traits that join violent struggle to political struggle. Political actors become hybrid versions between parties and armed groups where the two strategies are used due to the need. Her analysis highlights the need to understand the trajectory of how violence and politics are combined. However, she never really elucidates what she means by hybridity or how it manifests in detail. Berti (2013) was one of the first scholars to approach the idea of hybrid parties within the rebel-to-party literature, and she discusses how hybrid parties’ function in a cyclical manner, where they move between political struggle, hybridity, armed struggle, and back to hybridity, where the roles are strategically chosen or alternated. She proposes that certain policy actions can target groups in this cycle with an attempt to break it. One of her main conclusions in relation to that is the need to understand how closely linked the two roles are; if the two roles, armed group and political party, are mutually reinforcing or if they are in internal struggle with each other. However, also Berti’s work lacks a clear definition of what hybridity actually is. The framework and analysis presented in this thesis, with a focus on how hybridity manifests, can aid in understanding how the roles are linked, and through the analysis of Renamo, I argue we gain insights that could inform a definition.

From the analysis in the previous chapter, there are two main theoretical contributions to the understanding of hybrid parties. First, as mentioned, in previous research, there is no consensus on a definition of hybridity, and it is often vague how it is analysed. Through my analysis, there are, however, certain aspects that appear important for our general understanding of hybrid armed political parties. These aspects could, therefore, inform a definition of what a hybrid party is, which is a key contribution to the current discussion of
hybrid parties. Second, the framework was designed to see how hybridity manifests, but the empirical analysis also highlights that some of the processes discovered through this analysis are pivotal in how hybridity is maintained, how a hybrid identity becomes entrenched in the structure of being a political party. I will shortly discuss these two contributions before moving on to more general conclusions, contributions, and discussions.

The definition of a Hybrid Party

This thesis starts with the assumption that Renamo has two roles, indicating some form of a hybrid party. This assumption is based on a very loose definition of hybridity since there is no real theoretical consensus. The aim has, therefore, not been to test if Renamo fits into a pre-set definition of a hybrid party. Regardless, through my detailed description of Renamo and how its hybridity manifests, there are certain aspects that appear that I see as key in how we should define a hybrid party. As discussed, previous theoretical discussions within the rebel-to-party literature have viewed hybridity rather loosely, never really offering any parameters or substance for a definition. I will here discuss how my findings based on Renamo could inform a definition of hybrid parties.

The first process I discuss in relation to Renamo is contemporaneity in time between violent and political behaviour. I would argue that a core aspect of a definition of hybridity should be that the two roles are used concurrently. The two roles are not opted for in different settings or during different times, such as one role only being used during elections. The two roles are actively used concurrently. This contemporaneity is what indicates that a group should be viewed as a hybrid party, rather than a political party that sometimes uses systematic violence or an armed group that holds political ideologies. The definition of hybrid parties needs to be more demanding, and contemporaneity in time is one such aspect that helps us understand how interlinked the roles are. If the roles are used in alternation, it would indicate that they are not fused but rather chosen due to strategic reasons. The definition of hybrid parties should, therefore, contain contemporaneity in time between the two roles.

A second aspect from my analysis that I see informs a definition is that the two roles of the party are fused at the elite-level. I have discussed in chapter 6 how elite-level legitimisation is used by Renamo to enable its hybridity to function. When elite-level politicians legitimise acts of violence, they hold the hybridity together, almost like a glue. The two roles of being a political party and an armed group could coexist but not be fused. They could occur simultaneously and share the same purpose but have separate organisational structures. The definition of hybridity should include that the two parts are organisationally conjoined. I, therefore, argue that a hybrid armed political party is formed when the elite-level is fused. If elite-level politicians show knowledge, acceptance, and legitimisation of violent acts, while also actively working
within democratic parameters, it indicates that the hybrid identity is well-established and ingrained. In a definition of hybrid parties, it should, therefore, be included that the hybrid identity is upheld by the elite level.

One last thing I have seen in my analysis of Renamo that I argue should inform a general definition of hybrid parties is how they work on one key political issue using both roles. The fact that a hybrid identity is formed around the same political issue should also be part of how we define hybrid parties. Two roles can be used simultaneously and by the same actors, but with different purposes. This would indicate a separation in the two roles, and that the roles are strategic. A hybrid party implies a proper fusion of the two roles, meaning that the two roles are used for the same political issue. That systematic violence and political work are pursued for the same cause, using the same arguments, is another indicator of hybridity. That both roles are used for the same goal should also be a feature in the definition of hybrid parties.

These are issues I can derive from the analysis of Renamo that I argue should inform the definition of hybrid parties. From this analysis, I would, therefore, suggest a definition: A hybrid armed political party uses both political and violent means in contemporaneity, where the same central elite-level actors are involved, and one key political issue is pursued using both violent and political means.

The discussions above may lead to questioning whether there are degrees of hybrid parties and degrees of hybridity, and the answer to that, I believe, is yes. I would emphasise the need to remember that these parties are context specific, and hence they will not share all similar features. Through an analysis of other cases, we might add to this understanding of how to define hybrid parties. With that said, I do believe that these issues could enhance our understanding and our ability to analyse hybrid parties, and further the discussion of hybrid parties.

How hybridity is maintained

Through the analysis of how hybridity manifests for Renamo, two processes stand out as being related to how hybridity is maintained. These processes do not inform a general definition of hybrid parties but are specific to Renamo. However, they tell us something about how a hybrid identity lasts and is sustained over time. Renamo's hybrid identity is actively maintained through narratives of democracy and through the role of Dhlakama, a charismatic leader.

Democracy as a narrative is actively constructed by Renamo and contributes to the stability of the hybridity. It seems to be important for Renamo to maintain political legitimacy through appeals to democracy, which is then also used to validate the more violent side of the hybrid. Renamo uses a narrative of democracy and a narrative of being the true leaders, the chosen ones. This populist approach using narratives of democracy is an important process in how their hybridity is maintained. I argue that Renamo uses ideas of
democracy, such as elections, electoral fraud, and injustices, to iterate narratives of democracy to legitimise violent actions. It is important to understand how democracy as an idea is used and how the meaning of democracy is deliberately stretched or altered through different narratives by Renamo to justify actions that would, in a traditional sense, lie outside the scope of democracy. How democracy as a narrative is used can, therefore, be important for how we generally understand and approach hybrid parties, even in settings other than Mozambique.

In the analysis of Dhlakama, it was evident that elite politicians held him in very high regard. Their loyalty was very strong. This meant that his actions were not questioned, and his ideas were not questioned. I would argue that this trust in the leader was pivotal in how hybridity gained momentum and became entrenched. Dhlakama personified the hybridity of Renamo, and the identity of the party became closely connected to him, and his actions had a massive impact on the party. In the analysis of Renamo, we can see that Dhlakama was closely connected to the two roles. Dhlakama also held a very specific role as a leader where he was the leader for 39 years, between 1979 and 2018. He was a charismatic person that held somewhat mythical proportions. The role of Dhlakama was certainly peculiar to Renamo, but it suggests something of importance concerning leadership. A charismatic leader, with strong loyalty from elite-level politicians, can have an influence on how the hybrid is maintained. It can be both a positive and negative force: if such a leader also engages in hybridity, it can help sustain the hybridity, and if such a leader does not support such hybridity, it may undermine it. Regardless, it is important to understand the role of the leader when analysing hybrid parties.

This section has discussed some of the main conclusions and key theoretical contributions of this thesis, presenting a more informed definition of hybrid parties and discussing how hybridity is maintained. I will now focus more on the implications of the status, hybrid party. Why does it matter to call a party a hybrid? The analysis of Renamo also indicated that its hybridity is built around certain policy issues. This evoked some discussions that go beyond the scope of this thesis, but that shed some light on discussions that may need further theoretical attention. I will, however, start with a short reflection on Renamo’s path after the ceasefire.

Concluding remarks: What now for Renamo

Through this study, we can see that during the years after the 2014 general election, Renamo could be viewed as a hybrid party. It is officially armed and uses systematic violence while at the same time remaining an active political party. But is this a constant feature or will their transformation towards a full political party continue? This is, of course, a question that only the future holds the answer to, but there are certain reflections that can be made. First, we can briefly reflect on Renamo's actual progression since the ceasefire in
January 2017, and second, some reflections can be made on the theoretical idea that political-violent hybridity is a fluid yet rather constant feature of political life.

The core part of this study follows Renamo's elite politicians during the years of armed conflict from early 2015 until the official ceasefire in January 2017. It aims to understand Renamo as a hybrid political party and armed group. The ceasefire in January 2017 did enable Renamo to assume a role again primarily as an opposition party. In this section, I will briefly touch upon some of the changes Renamo has undergone and how these changes may affect its use of violence as politics in the future.

The signing of the ceasefire was the beginning of a long round of direct negotiations between Mozambique's president Nyusi and Renamo leader Dhlakama. The negotiations resulted in an agreement to change the constitution to include a more widespread form of decentralisation at the province level, and an agreement for complete demobilisation of Renamo's soldiers, primarily into Mozambique's police and military forces. It has been important for Renamo that its soldiers not merely return to civilian life but remain active in the different security forces to leverage what they perceive as Frelimo's dominance. The negotiations were in the final stages in the spring of 2018 when Dhlakama suddenly passed away on May 3, 2018. This unexpected event has led to several changes within Renamo's internal structures that influence their future path. As discussed in previous chapters, Dhlakama held a very specific role in Renamo and was to some extent key in the formation of its hybrid identity. The hybrid structure extends beyond him, but he largely personified it.

Renamo elected a new leader, and the election process seems to have functioned well, where there were several contenders for the post and an election to decide on one of them during a party congress. The newly elected leader, Ossufo Momade, is a person with a clear political past in Renamo. He, like all contenders for the post, also has a military history, as this was a requirement stipulated by Renamo to stand for election. There seemed to be a division in Renamo, with some members wanting the brother of Dhlakama to be elected president, even though he had no prior political career or experience. This would have kept Renamo closer to the structure they used to have, with a Dhlakama as president and someone with close ties to the armed section. Momade instead represents a more political Renamo. He did, however, move to the military base once elected and has been clear to emphasise the importance of the armed faction.

This change in leadership led to a flux of politicians moving in and out of the party. As mentioned, back in 2008, a splinter party was formed from the ranks of Renamo, MDM, and with Momade as the new leader, some prominent political figures from MDM now moved back to Renamo, for instance, the very popular mayor of Quelimane in Nampula, Manuel de Araujo, which could be very important for Renamo's local support base. Other Renamo
politicians, however, left Renamo because they felt disgruntled or excluded after Momade took over as the leader of Renamo. This turbulence can be problematic, as it causes insecurity and re-negotiations of the official identity of the party on an elite-level. However, I see this shift in leadership as a generally positive turn for Renamo in its future role as a political party. It seems to have strengthened the political side and political behaviour of Renamo. They have gained back some strong political names who are known for implementing policy and have experience of governing municipalities.

As a leader, Momade has also proven to be unpopular among the fighting forces of Renamo, who claim he is not their elected leader. This resulted in a splinter group of armed men from Renamo. They call themselves the Renamo Military Junta. They have threatened to continue the armed struggle despite Renamo's official signing of a new peace agreement\(^6\). It is problematic that a small group still felt disgruntled, but it is positive that Renamo as a party has taken a clear stance that this group and its actions do not in any way represent Renamo. Renamo has even mentioned that the state of Mozambique is free to take control of the situation, as these people should be seen as criminals and not as a legitimate part of Renamo. This indicates that the new leadership of Renamo is taking a clear turn towards the political side of their hybridity and that they wish to distance themselves from the strategic use of violence. The critique could be made, however, that the rank-and-file soldiers of Renamo have not been adequately included in the peace agreement signed, as these people do not wish to lay down their arms. It would have been better for sustainable peace if these people as well had felt included and therefore opted to participate in the process. From the perspective of what it means for Renamo, however, I do argue that it was positive that Renamo distanced itself from violent factions, indicating that this was no longer a desirable aspect of Renamo.

A full peace agreement was signed on 6 August 2019, which, for the first time, includes the complete disarmament of Renamo. Renamo’s elite security guard will no longer exist, and the security of Renamo will be in the hands of the national police who serve all political parties in Mozambique. This is a step towards a monopoly of violence, which is a cornerstone of a democratic system. It also implies that Renamo shows trust in the national police, which can be of normative importance to the relationship between Frelimo and Renamo.

With these changes, we can see a shift in the structure of Renamo, indicating that the armed side has become less prevalent. Renamo did, however, experience once more that using systematic violence can get you what you want.

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\(^6\) The leader of the ‘Renamo military junta’ Mariano Nhongo was shot dead in an encounter with government troops in October 2021, and by end of 2021, all forces had agreed to surrender. However, there are constant rumours about resurrection of the junta given that the demobilisation process is still in progress (as of October 2023).
Renamo set out with the political goal of achieving local self-governance, and even if this exact form was not achieved, it did get a new constitution and a new law on decentralisation. Renamo experienced that violence pays off. This indicates that resorting to systematic violence when the democratic system fails you could be a go-to strategy in the future as well.

A current situation implies that Renamo’s hybrid identity is still present. In October 2023 new turbulence occurred in Mozambique due to the local elections held, which were marred by accusations of electoral fraud and Renamo has instigated several violent protests. Hybridity is, therefore, a feature that may be rather permanent.

For Renamo, there seem to be certain key issues that are at the forefront of their political and armed struggle, which are then closely interlinked with their hybrid identity. There are three issues I see in my empirical study that I wish to touch upon here, and that I believe need further theoretical attention: Decentralisation as a peace mechanism, electoral fraud as means for undemocratic action, and entrenched norms of violence. I would like to delve a little further into these, but first, why does it matter if we call Renamo a hybrid party?

Why Does It Matter If We Call Them Hybrid Parties?

I argue in this thesis for the importance of understanding the full spectrum of what Renamo is and not placing it in an either/or category. Instead, I argue that Renamo is a hybrid party; it functions as an active political opposition party while at the same time using armed systematic violence. These two roles are not either/or and cannot be separated. This is a feature that not only Renamo possesses, but that can be observed in other political actors. The empirical findings on Renamo are context specific, but we can still increase our general knowledge on a theoretical level as well as gain insights that have policy implications. I believe it is important that we label actors such as Renamo as hybrid parties and that we take our time to understand how hybridity manifests and is maintained, as this has implications for how we understand them, how we understand their actions, how we see them as political actors, and how we might deal with such actors in, for instance, peace negotiations. There are, therefore, some key values that the discussion in this thesis brings to both theoretical development and that have policy implications.

Theoretical contributions

The core theoretical contribution of this thesis is that it increases our theoretical knowledge of how we can understand groups that appear to be stuck in rebel-to-party transformation, potentially being hybrid parties. This thesis starts theoretically from the understanding that Renamo transformed from an
armed group to a political party in 1992, and then I argue that it turned into a hybrid party after the 2014 general election. The thesis scrutinises how we can comprehend this behaviour to increase our understanding of hybrid parties.

Theoretically, we have started to see an increased discussion within the rebel-to-party literature that the idea of a complete transformation may not occur and that hybrid versions appear that need to be understood in their own right. It may not be appropriate to only view such groups as failed transformations, as they may be active and important players on a political arena, often for long periods of time. It is in this connection that I find it important to fully understand the nuances in the roles that groups have and to further our understanding of how hybrid parties are a rather constant feature of many political arenas. I have previously discussed the notion that party identity is a fluid concept, but hybrid parties are not simply to be seen as being in transition but as actors in that form.

This thesis adds substantial empirical knowledge to the theoretical discussion of hybrid parties within the rebel-to-party literature by providing an in-depth analysis of how hybridity manifests and how it is maintained. The analysis in this thesis, based on Renamo, highlights certain processes that inform our understanding of hybrid parties, shedding light on previous theoretical discussions. Hybrid parties have, in theoretical discussions within rebel-to-party literature, been loosely defined, and not much focus has been put into understanding the processes that inform how hybridity manifests. This thesis adds several dimensions to that discussion, as I have discussed in detail above. I have shown how Renamo’s hybridity manifests through contemporaneity in behaviour, one key political issue, and elite-level legitimisation, and, in addition, is maintained through narratives of democracy and a charismatic leader. My analysis resulted in a more nuanced definition of what hybridity is that goes beyond Renamo, and even if certain aspects discussed are case-specific, the analysis can still inform and enrich the ongoing theoretical discussion.

This thesis adds empirical understanding that enriches the discussion of hybrid parties, and it adds an analysis of how to analyse and understand them. A second theoretical contribution is the use of a framework to enable an analysis of how we can understand political parties that also simultaneously use systematic violence. The framework makes it possible to thoroughly describe how a group may exist on both sides, that is, be both a political party and an armed group. It demonstrates how and where certain actions seem to prevail over others, how and where actions correspond, and how elite politicians perceive and understand these actions. This enables an understanding of how entrenched the violent behaviour is and how much it is intertwined in the structures of the political party. This framework can be used to understand other groups that seem to linger between an armed group and a political party. This is important, as these groups are active, and we need to be able to see the nuances of their identity if we are to fully understand them as actors. My analysis is context specific to Renamo, but the framework can be used to analyse
other groups, and it can therefore help constitute our theoretical knowledge of hybrid parties. The framework is open in structure, enabling us to see the individual complexities and nuances of each actor, and how hybridity may manifest differently in different contexts.

This framework is constructed to understand a party that is currently active both within the political arena and as an armed group. This has important policy implications, which I will return to, but it is also increasingly important from a theoretical point of view. Many low-level violent political conflicts become protracted, and actors such as Renamo become an integrated part of political life in many hybrid regimes where democracy is weak, and violence is an easy option. This thesis, therefore, adds knowledge to an important theoretical discussion about how we can understand complex political actors that use violence as politics. We need to expand our theoretical understanding of what it means to be a political party within a conflict-prone society. The theoretical discussion of hybrid parties is still evolving, and the thorough analysis offered in this thesis, centred on Renamo, gives insights into how this complexity may be manifested in a real-life scenario.

One of the key strengths and unique contributions of this thesis is that it followed Renamo's actions and Renamo's elite politicians in real-time during an ongoing conflict. It, therefore, adds insights into how hybridity manifests while it was happening. This made it possible to see how a hybrid identity is formed as well as performed, as these two aspects constitute each other. The issues that were at stake for Renamo and how these shaped Renamo's hybridity are, as mentioned, contextual. It can still theoretically inform us and provide insights into processes of identity construction that go beyond Renamo as a case.

This study does not aim to empirically generalise, but it does provide theoretical insights into how we can study parties that seem to have a hybrid identity and add to theoretical discussions on hybrid parties in general. This study of Renamo, seen more broadly, also adds insights into the long-term effects of peacebuilding and increases our theoretical understanding of how conflict structures and conflict identity may come to linger within the newly formed political system.

As mentioned, I followed Renamo and some of its elite politicians during two years of ongoing conflict. The elite perspective in this thesis adds an important methodological dimension. I have an actor-centred approach, and I let the voices of Renamo be the core of the analysis. This can be criticised, as it means that I allow the politicians to express and develop their cause. This is an active choice, however, as it allows us to understand the formation of who they are as they construct their identity by themselves. The purpose is not to see their arguments and narratives as legitimisations of their actions, but to observe how these narratives construct their identity as a hybrid party. Identity is constructed by actions and perceptions. For this reason, an analysis holding these central is important to gaining a full understanding of what it means to
be a hybrid party. You can form criteria based on outside information that could be used in an analysis. However, the methodological dimension I add specifically furthers our understanding of how hybridity manifests, and what it is that constitutes hybridity. I also do not solely rely on their self-proclaimed perceptions, but I combine that with observations of behaviour.

Because this thesis follows Renamo for a substantial period, it, of course, also adds valuable empirical knowledge about this specific situation. It closely follows the actions of Renamo for two years as well as the behaviour and perceptions of elite Renamo politicians. Therefore, one of the main contributions of this thesis is the empirical knowledge it adds to an understanding of both Renamo and the political conflict in Mozambique. By engaging with the field using an open approach, I allowed for an increased understanding of the issues as they are expressed and articulated by Renamo politicians. This thesis, therefore, provides a thorough and in-depth understanding of the current political crisis in Mozambique, as it is understood by one of the main actors. This empirical knowledge can enhance our ability to understand how to address Renamo and the political conflict in Mozambique.

Policy implications
The framework presented in this thesis serves as a foundation for further understanding and analysing political actors that also use systematic violence. The framework aids in structuring a systematic analysis, and the actor-centred approach means we increase our ability to understand complex actors from their own perspective. I believe this is highly important from a policy perspective.

Violent conflicts are harmful and need to be stopped as soon as possible. To enable this, we need to understand the actors involved. The actor-centred approach of this thesis provides valuable insights into how to approach actors, and how to understand them in mediation and negotiation processes. The elite politicians I talked with often expressed feeling misinterpreted and not properly listened to. In mediation attempts, an actor-centred approach is key to understanding how issues are perceived by the actors, regardless of how we view these issues from the outside.

This thesis provides an analytical starting point for how we can understand and address hybrid parties. The framework enables an analysis of political parties that also perform violent acts. It helps in understanding how these two roles can co-exist and how elite politicians perceive violent actions perpetrated by the party. Being able to analyse when and how the group acts as a political party, and when it acts as an armed group, and to see whether and how these two roles overlap, can further our understanding of how to approach this kind of actor.

This is very important from a policy perspective when working actively with parties that use violence. It helps in understanding how to approach the
group in a way that does justice to how the members view themselves. It can enable an understanding of avenues where mediation is a good option and when an issue needs to be further understood to discover why violence is seen as a legitimate option by the actor. This is a policy implication that could impact how we address such groups in mediation and negotiations to achieve peaceful outcomes. The framework I propose enables us to understand actors during a conflict, how they combine using violence and politics while the conflict is ongoing. While using the framework to analyse a group, it may also be possible to see whether there are actors in the group that seem to be more democratically political than others, meaning it can help in understanding who within the party to address, and how.

From a policy perspective, it is important to see hybrid parties in all their nuances and complexities. Hybrid parties are not to be judged as being either/or – a political party or an armed group – or to be seen as only a success or failure. That limits our ability to see their actions for what they are, and to fully understand how such groups may become an integral part of political life. As discussed above, the complexities between democracy and violence are many, where some actors actively aim to connect these two. From a policy perspective focused on peacebuilding, DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation, Reintegration), rebel-to-party transformation, and democracy promotion, we could gain important insights by conducting analysis of the actors involved, and by doing so in line with the framework proposed in this thesis.

There are also many issues that arise in the interviews with Renamo's elite politicians that inform on other important policy issues and theoretical discussion. As mentioned, in interviews with Renamo elite politicians, certain issues stand out in relation to Renamo's armed struggle. These are context specific and have not been at the centre of my analysis, but they still lead to further questions. I would therefore like to discuss these issues shortly in how they could lead to avenues for future research and policy interest.

Key Issues for Future Research and Policy Interest

The main scope of this thesis has been to understand the behaviour and perceptions of Renamo’s elite politicians to increase our understanding of Renamo as a hybrid party. Behind that hybridity are a few key issues. These have been addressed outright by the elite politicians or have been issues that shine through in the interviews. These issues, as discussed here, have not been the centre of attention for my research, and I, therefore, do not claim to have any overall answers to them, but as they have been very prevalent throughout, I want to address them briefly. These discussions are reflections and therefore somewhat tentative and should be seen as avenues for future research and further theoretical discussions, and of policy interest. There are three issues I see in my empirical study that I wish to touch upon here that I believe need further
theoretical attention, Decentralisation as a peace mechanism, Electoral fraud as a means for undemocratic action, and Entrenched norms of violence.

Decentralisation as a peace mechanism
When Renamo objected to the outcome of the 2014 general election, this was done based on the claim that they could accept that Frelimo was the winner of the presidency if Renamo was granted the right to rule in the provinces where it received a majority of the votes. This was the only political demand Renamo made, and access to local power became the central political demand of the armed struggle. I have discussed the backdrop of this in Chapter 4, where we can see that this contested issue was built up over a long period of time. Decentralisation became the answer in the end at a political level. From this, there are a few issues that arise around the meaning of the local and how this corresponds to decentralisation as a peace mechanism.

My reflection, based on analysing the issue of local power and hearing Renamo’s elite politicians discuss it, is that access to local power is a historical process of belonging that revolves around exclusion and inclusion. It has been a contested process that has separated Renamo and Frelimo even farther from each other, leading to conflict structures and grievances being entwined in Renamo’s identity. The process of decentralisation could have functioned to limit Frelimo’s access to power, but it has instead been used in a way that has brought about further exclusion of Renamo. Local power has therefore become a symbol of political inclusion that would enable Renamo to function as the party it sees itself to be. This can be discussed as an idea of belonging that revolves around social inclusion and political power.

Local division was a profound aspect of the 16-year civil war in Mozambique. Renamo held control over the central parts of the country, but this was accomplished primarily through a division of perceived class belonging. Renamo came to represent the rural traditional population, while Frelimo’s policies benefited the educated urban elites. Renamo, therefore, gained support in areas that felt neglected by Frelimo and that were targeted by Frelimo’s Leninist-Marxist politics.

The post-conflict decentralisation process could have alleviated some of this division, but it became a contested and manipulated process where Frelimo gained further control over the countryside through different measures of decentralisation; see Chapter 4. The implementation of urban decentralisation was one such move that led to Frelimo controlling the process by only granting local power where it was in the majority, causing further division. Implementation of the law for local authorities also led to the division of local power based on kinship instead of politics, meaning Frelimo could increase its presence in the rural local areas. This contested process has therefore led to ongoing dissent, where Renamo sees local power as an
important part of its identity, and one that has created cleavages between those who belong and those who do not.

From the interviews, it became evident that Renamo identifies itself with the excluded poorer rural population, and more recently with marginalised urban youth, thus groups that do not belong in Frelimo’s patronage system, those that are excluded and marginalised in Mozambique’s system. This idea of social belonging is not primarily based on a regional aspect but revolves around issues of class. In Renamo politicians’ experience, the areas where they have strong support are excluded from political initiatives, which creates dissent and division. Decentralisation, in a working form, could therefore alleviate this stress and function to create a more stable peace. Local power and local belonging can be seen as very segmented in Mozambique today along party lines. Frelimo and Renamo do not represent any specific ethnic identity, but the identity of Renamo and Frelimo is one of social belonging.

The situation in Mozambique is an illustration of two theoretical discussions. First, the issue of conflict cleavages and, second, the idea of the local in peacebuilding. Within the rebel-to-party literature, there are discussions about the meaning of leaving conflict cleavages behind to enable a successful transformation into a viable peaceful political party (Curtis and Sindre 2019; Ishiyama 2019; Ishiyama and Batta 2011; Sindre 2019). Renamo has never been able to move on from the same conflict issues that were central during its time as a pure armed group. This may have a substantial effect on Renamo’s ability to become a fully peaceful political party. It is also evident that local structures, local democracy, and ideas of decentralisation are key factors to deal with in constructing a viable peace. Renamo is just one actor, but the issues are integral aspects of Mozambique’s political and social sphere.

There is today an increased focus within the peacebuilding literature on local aspects (Björkdahl 2013; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013; Mac Ginty 2015; Maschietto 2016b). These studies highlight how local features are important to understand in the creation of a viable peace. The case of Mozambique illustrates that this discussion is very much alive and necessary. Recent developments in Mozambique, with an Islamist insurgency in the north province of Cabo Delgado, also highlight this aspect, and understanding local division and belonging should be further taken into consideration (Alden and Chichava 2020).

Narratives of Electoral fraud as a means for undemocratic action

It has been discussed previously in this thesis that I struggled with how to theoretically view the violence by Renamo in relation to theories focused on electoral violence. Empirically, the new conflict erupted after the general elections in 2014, and Renamo refused to accept the outcome of the election. It is therefore not a far-fetched assumption that this could be analysed as electoral violence. The key definitions of electoral violence, however, situate the
violent acts as being in close proximity to the actual election, both in time and space. Renamo, however, did not start its use of systematic armed violence until one year later. The role of the election is nevertheless an important issue to discuss further. In my study, I could see that narratives of electoral fraud were used by Renamo to enable violence by trying to situate it within the parameters of democracy. Renamo seems to frame elections and electoral fraud as the starting point for violence, as this positions violence as a democratic response and, therefore, does not limit Renamo’s democratic legitimacy. I touch upon this when I discuss that narratives of democracy were important in how Renamo’s hybridity is maintained. I do, however, think it is also important to look closer at how narratives of electoral fraud have become more and more an integrated aspect in how democracy is interpreted in certain contexts. As already mentioned, this is not a conclusion based on my study, but an avenue I see in my study that I think needs more research and theoretical attention.

The theoretical field of electoral violence is ever-growing, and it involves a lively discussion on how to mitigate electoral violence as well as what it is (Cheeseman and Klaas 2018; Höglund 2009; Höglund, Jarstad, and Kovacs 2009; Laakso 2007; Smith 2009; Söderberg Kovacs and Bjarnesen 2018). Renamo’s actions during this period do not constitute a clear case of electoral violence. Electoral dissent and accusations of electoral fraud have been constant topics in my elite interviews and in Renamo’s rhetoric for using violence. Renamo uses election dissent to render its violent acts democratically supportable. Renamo’s elite politicians construct Renamo’s violent identity using elections as a starting point, as they frame the violence as conducted within democracy. It can be seen as an act where Renamo tries to stay politically legitimate as an opposition party and to hold on to its self-proclaimed status as the fathers of democracy in Mozambique. Renamo means that the use of violence will not tarnish that identity because violence is only perpetrated to correct the failures of democracy. A rhetoric of electoral fraud is used to construct legitimate violence. How Renamo uses elections and accusations of electoral fraud to frame its actions indicates that we need to widen our discussion of the role of elections in conflict and to further our knowledge on the role of a narrative of electoral fraud to allow for violent acts.

This use of narratives of electoral fraud is also a phenomenon we see increasingly around the world. It was a widely used strategy by Trump in the US election. It has been argued that the actions of Trump indicate a new era in how rhetoric is used to alter foreign policy (Lacatus and Meibauer 2021; Skonieczny 2021). You cry election fraud to enable a response which is normally not accepted in a democracy. The increased use of electoral fraud as a discursive practice in a primarily democratic setting could also have repercussions around the globe. It may be easier now to persuade people to rally around your cry of electoral fraud, as it is a strategy also used by what should be legitimate democratic leaders. This could lead to general distrust in the
electoral system, meaning that accusations and narratives of electoral fraud may become more prevalent. The relationship between accusations of electoral fraud, democracy, and electoral violence could benefit from more theoretical attention.

Entrenched norms of violence

General norms of violence could have an impact on how violent actions are viewed by political parties, and they could influence how violence is framed. In Chapter 4, I discuss how democracy has grown in Mozambique, and how violence has been a default response. Violent actions were used to achieve independence, and violence was used to establish a democratic system. Thus, there seems to be a legacy of violence that influences future responses.

This legacy of violence could lead to general norms of violence, which I will return to, and it could also more concretely revolve around the relationship between Renamo and its opponent Frelimo. Renamo’s actions and identity need to be understood in relation to its main opponent: Frelimo. The history of Renamo and Frelimo is marred by violence, both as individual players and in their encounters.

The relationship with Frelimo is tense and still revolves around the two groups viewing each other as enemies. The old conflict is, however, something you rarely hear anything about in public, in private, or in interviews with Renamo. The conflict between 1976-1992 is seen as a disruption that should not be talked about. Frelimo also made it clear at the end of the conflict in 1992 that there would be no reconciliation process, but it would simply be considered part of the past. This conflict legacy is still, however, very prevalent in how they view each other. In Renamo’s elite politicians’ experience, Frelimo always automatically treats them as the enemy, regardless of the political issue, meaning that, just because of the past, Frelimo would never consider voting for something Renamo proposed in parliament.

It is also evident in the internal structures of the parties that the old conflicts are relevant to who gets to hold leadership positions. For Frelimo, this means that you should have been an active part of the Frelimo that fought for independence. Having military experience from that struggle means that you are privileged. For Renamo, it means that you should have been an active part of the armed struggle against Frelimo. When Renamo was electing its new leader at the beginning of 2019, a prerequisite for being considered for the position was that you had served in the armed struggle. Conflict, violence, and the legacy of conflict between the groups linger within the system and create a context that constructs violence as not just accepted, but also privileged and rewarded.

Renamo’s choice to resume violence is also constantly viewed in relation to its opponent. Frelimo’s actions are an active part of how Renamo constructs its identity. Renamo’s elite politicians often return to the fact that they are
limited in their ability to act solely as a political party due to the actions of Frelimo: the government. They construct the need to be a hybrid armed political party on the premise that Frelimo’s abuse of power as the government party leaves them no option. Frelimo and its actions are an overarching contextual feature that shape the identity that Renamo assumes for itself. Renamo’s elite politicians create their us in relation to how they see Frelimo, and how they see the actions of Frelimo.

This legacy of conflict, which is an integrated part of the political system in Mozambique, also breeds and is enabled by norms of violence. Renamo’s hybrid identity functions due to how they keep the status as a political party at the forefront. Violence is framed as something justifiable, often as a necessary act, but also by framing violence as a viable approach when normal political avenues are not open. Renamo’s active framing to legitimise violence shapes the perception that violence may be an accepted alternative. Renamo reiterates that Frelimo uses violence, which is then seen as something bad and as an abuse of state forces. When Renamo uses violence, however, violence is viewed as necessary. The Renamo politicians construct this norm concerning which form of violence is accepted in relation to which group is in power. Frelimo holds power and therefore violence becomes abuse, while Renamo has no power and then violence becomes resistance.

For both Frelimo and Renamo, violence has meant resistance; it has been connected to something positive. Frelimo used a violent armed struggle to fight the Portuguese, and its resistance was successful. Renamo used violence to fight Frelimo’s one-party state system, and its resistance was successful. For this reason, resorting to violent acts is not a far-fetched option and is seen as something that leads to success. These norms of violence also seem to exist at a general level, where it is evident that Renamo has gained voter support during its years of actively engaging in violent acts.

It would be interesting to try to further understand how general norms of violence, outside the political sphere, might have an effect. There is interesting research being done that connects masculinities and conflict, where there are indications that overall acceptance of and use of masculine violence also interacts with conflict and political violence (Bardall, Bjarnegård, and Piscopo 2020; Bjarnegård and Melander 2011; Davies and True 2018). Norms of violence and the meaning of violence in a specific context could have implications for how hybridity functions, and for how democracy in general functions. It would be interesting to further understand the links between norms of violence and hybrid parties.

That is, however, beyond the scope of this thesis where the main contribution has been to understand Renamo, and how hybridity manifests through processes of contemporaneity in behaviour, elite-level legitimisation, and one key political issue, and in addition, how it is maintained through narratives of democracy and a charismatic leader.
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Empirical Data Collection

List of Interviews

Interview 1, MDM, MP and Head of Parliamentarian Group
  - Interview 1a, 2015-03-09, Maputo, Mozambique
  - Interview 1b, 2015-04-28, Maputo, Mozambique
  - Interview 1c, 2015-10-16, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 2, Former Renamo and Professor in Sociology
  - Interview 2, 2015-04-23 Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 3, MDM Party leader and Mayor of Beira.
  - Interview 3, 2015-03-17, Beira, Mozambique

Interview 4, Party leader PDD and former prominent long-term member of Renamo. Maputo, Mozambique
  - Interview 4a, 2015-03-10
  - Interview 4b, 2015-04-23

Interview 5 – Renamo MP
  - Interview 5a, 2015-03-18, Beira, Mozambique
  - Interview 5b, 2015-04-30, Maputo, Mozambique
  - Interview 5c, 2016-06-10, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 6 - Renamo, Sofala Province office
  - Interview 6, 2015-03-19 Beira, Mozambique

Interview 7 - Renamo, Sofala province office
  - Interview 7 2015-03-20 Beira, Mozambique

Interview 8 - Renamo MP
  - Interview 8a, 2015-03-06, Maputo, Mozambique
  - Interview 8b, 2015-10-13, Maputo, Mozambique
  - Interview 8c, 2016-10-03, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 9 - MDM and former Renamo
Interview 10 - MDM and former Renamo
- Interview 10, 2015-03-25, Beira, Mozambique

Interview 11 - MDM and former Renamo
- Interview 11, 2015-03-24, Beira, Mozambique

Interview 12 - Renamo Sofala Province Office
- Interview 12, 2015-03-20, Beira, Mozambique

Interview 13 - Frelimo Special Advisor to Head of Parliament.
- Interview 13, 2015-03-10, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 14 - Frelimo Sofala Province Office
- Interview 14, 2015-03-17, Beira, Mozambique

Interview 15 - Frelimo
- Interview 15, 2015-02-27, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 16 - Renamo MP and Vice President of Parliament
- Interview 16a, 2015-10-13, Maputo, Mozambique
- Interview 16b, 2016-03-29, Maputo, Mozambique
- Interview 16c, 2016-10-11, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 17 - MDM MP
- Interview 17, 2015-10-16, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 18 - Human Rights League
- Interview 18, 2015-10-20, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 19 - Mediator in Peace Negotiations.
- Interview 19, 2015-10-22, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 20 - FADM officer, Security Service Officer
- Interview 20, 2015-10-13, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 21 - Mediator in Peace Negotiations
- Interview 21, 2015-10-16, Matola, Mozambique

Interview 22 - Renamo MP
- Interview 22, 2016-04-16, Maputo, Mozambique
Interview 23 - Renamo Manica Province
- Interview 23, 2016-05-17, Chimoio, Mozambique

Interview 24 - Renamo MP
- Interview 24, 2016-04-13, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 25 – Renamo MP
- Interview 25a, 2016-05-10, Pemba, Mozambique
- Interview 25b, 2016-10-09, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 26 - Renamo MP
- Interview 26a, 2016-05-15, Tete City, Mozambique
- Interview 26b, 2016-10-09, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 27 – Renamo MP
- Interview 27a, 2015-05-02, Maputo, Mozambique
- Interview 27b, 2016-10-19, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 28 - Renamo MP
- Interview 28a, 2015-05-06, Maputo, Mozambique
- Interview 28b, 2016-06-14, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 29 – Renamo MP
- Interview 29, 2016-06-15, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 30 – Renamo MP
- Interview 30a, 2015-04-20, Maputo, Mozambique
- Interview 30b, 2016-06-21, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 31 – Renamo MP
- Interview 31a, 2016-05-12, Nampula, Mozambique
- Interview 31b 2016-10-10, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 32 - Renamo MP
- Interview 32a, 2016-04-08, Maputo, Mozambique
- Interview 32b, 2016-10-17, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 33 – Renamo MP
- Interview 33a, 2016-05-12, Nampula, Mozambique
- Interview 33b, 2016-10-03, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 34 - Renamo MP
- Interview 34a, 2016-04-12, Maputo, Mozambique
Interview 34b, 2016-10-10, Maputo, Mozambique

Interview 35 – Renamo MP
- Interview 35, 2016-05-18, Beira, Mozambique

Interview 36 - Renamo MP
- Interview 36a, 2016-05-09, Pemba, Mozambique
- Interview 36b, 2016-10-19, Maputo, Mozambique

List of Observations

Parliament Plenary sessions (Assembleia da República Moçambique)

Observation 1: 12 February 2015
Observation 2: 31 March 2015
Observation 3: 12 April 2015
Observation 4: 14 April 2015
Observation 5: 22 April 2015
Observation 6: 24 April 2015
Observation 7: 30 April 2015
Observation 8: 10 March 2016
Observation 9: 16 March 2016
Observation 10: 23 March 2016
Observation 11: 19 October 2016
Observation 12: 20 October 2016
Observation 13: 26 October 2016
Observation 14: 27 October 2016
Observation 15: 6 December 2016
Observation 16: 9 December 2016
Observation 17: 14 December 2016

List of Public Statements

Public Statement 1 (AIM 2014)
“Everybody knows that the October elections were marked by serious irregularities, blatant disorganisation and acts of fraud which directly influenced the results”. Viana Magalhes, Renamo MP, 18 November 2014

Public Statement 2 (AIM 2015l)
“Let the thieves take office down there (i.e., in Maputo), let them form a government there, but they will retreat, they will not govern”. Afonso Dhlakama, 17 January 2015

Public Statement 3 (AIM 2015e)
“If they (the Frelimo leadership) don’t give orders directly to the Frelimo parliamentary group to facilitate the bill, there will be consequences”. Afonso Dhlakama, 24 February 2015

Public Statement 4 (AIM 2015g)
“I, Dhlakama, shall form a government by force, even if I have to use a Plan B to reach power without Frelimo’s approval”. Afonso Dhlakama, 4 April 2015

Public Statement 5 (AIM 2015a)
“Since 1994 (the date of the first multi-party elections) Renamo has been prevented from governing, and Mozambicans have not been governed by the people they chose”. Jose Manteigas, Renamo MP, 6 May 2015

Public Statement 6 (AIM 2015b)
“Frelimo is rejecting the will of the people of central and northern Mozambique who voted for Renamo and Afonso Dhlakama”. Ivone Soares, 6 of May 2015

Public Statement 7 (AIM 2015c)
“I can’t hide it. I gave the orders. Our force noted that government troops were about five kilometres from the base”. Afonso Dhlakama. 14 June 2015
Public Statement 8 (AIM 2015c)
“I am a man of peace. I fought for democracy. I shall continue fighting, and I
don’t want to frighten away local and foreign investment, or to scare the pub-
lic, but I am tired of Frelimo playing around”. Afonso Dhlakama, 22 June 2015

Public Statement 9 (AIM 2015m)
“The government does not want Renamo to form part of the governance of the
country”. Afonso Dhlakama, 23 August 2015

Public Statement 10 (AIM 2015j)
“I want peace, I don’t want war. I always say in my speeches I don’t want war,
but if they come to attack me, since I have the right to life, I have to defend
myself”. Afonso Dhlakama, 14 September 2015

Public Statement 11 (AIM 2015d)
“If I wanted, Mozambique would already be burning”. Afonso Dhlakama, 4
October 2015

Public Statement 12 (AIM 2015d)
“A Peaceful struggle, with speeches, rallies, dialogue and all. I shall remain a
leader because Mozambique needs a man like Dhlakama”. Afonso Dhlakama,
4 October 2015

Public Statement 13 (AIM 2015d)
“I am not going to take revenge through war”. Afonso Dhlakama, 4 October
2015

Public Statement 14 (AIM 2015h)
“Frelimo is a small party which almost doesn’t exist. It’s a party of soldiers,
of policemen, of thieves, of traitors, of assassins”. Afonso Dhlakama, 16 De-
cember 2015

Public Statement 15 (AIM, 2015j)
“We shall take over without bloodshed, but if they want to send tanks and
armoured cars to react, then Renamo will destroy everything. We don’t want
war, but if they come and attack us, they shall receive a beating”. Afonso
Dhlakama, 16 December 2015

Public Statement 16 (AIM 2016b)
“Due to terrorism against our members, many of our cadres are not undertak-
ing political activities. Plain clothes policemen and soldiers are torturing and
murdering our members. Hence the measure of controlling vehicles is irreversible”. Horacio Calvete, Renamo Sofala Office, 9 February 2016

**Public Statement 17 (AIM 2016a)**
“Renamo will govern in the provinces where it won. Renamo governance is coming”. Jose Manteigas, Renamo MP, 16 March 2016

**Public Statement 18 (AIM 2016a)**
“Renamo has no plan to divide the country”. Jose Manteigas, Renamo MP, 16 March 2016

**Public Statement 19 (AIM 2017)**
“From the bottom of my heart, I guarantee that Renamo fighters will not attack the positions of the defence and security forces”. Afonso Dhlakama, 3 January 2017

**Public Statement 20 (Club of Mozambique 2016a)**
“We will rule in March, and no one will prevent it. The game is finished, and we will no longer retreat. I swear by the soul of my mother.” Afonso Dhlakama, 6 January 2016

**Public Statement 21 (Club of Mozambique 2016a)**
“It will be negotiated what? They didn’t approve any proposal and ridiculed the process. Patience has its limits, they violate all agreements”. Afonso Dhlakama, 6 January 2016

**Public Statement 22 (Club of Mozambique 2016b)**
“The best days have come for the people of Mozambique. I do not want war and do not want to hear about war, but I am not afraid of war”. Afonso Dhlakama, 14 January 2016

**Public Statement 23 (Club of Mozambique 2016b)**
“If Frelimo tries to resist, there will be skirmishes, but that’s not what I want”. Afonso Dhlakama, 14 January 2016

**Public Statement 24 (Club of Mozambique 2016c)**
“Renamo is not recruiting anyone, and does not need to. What is happening is that Renamo is currently, in different parts of the country, receiving its former guerrillas who were outside their bases for integration as well as deserters of the Armed Forces for the Defence of Mozambique (FADM)”. Antonio Muchanga, 20 January 2016

**Public Statement 25 (Club of Mozambique 2016d)**
“We condemn the attempt to silence the opposition. It is a deliberate attack on democracy. We want those responsible for the shooting to be brought to justice”. Antonio Muchanga, 22 January 2016

Public Statement 26 (Club of Mozambique 2016d)  
“They want to perpetuate a single party system, while the country adopted democracy”. Antonio Muchanga, 22 January 2016

Public Statement 27 (Club of Mozambique 2016e)  
“The government must cease these attempts on the lives of politicians, academics, journalists and businessmen unconditionally”. Ivone Soares, 22 January 2016

Public Statement 28 (Club of Mozambique 2016f)  
“If the persecution of our members prevails, we will take control of national roads”. Antonio Muchanga, 11 February 2016

Public Statement 29 (Club of Mozambique 2016g)  
“The goal is undoubtedly to continue to fight for democracy”. Afonso Dhlakama, 15 February 2016

Public Statement 30 (Club of Mozambique 2016g)  
“[President Filipe] Nyusi said, we want to get the president Dhlakama to lead a normal life. I am leading a normal life. Normal life for Nyusi is to live in a palace in Maputo with half a dozen people but without support, and here I am with millions and millions”. Afonso Dhlakama, 15 February 2016

Public Statement 31 (Club of Mozambique 2016h)  
“The scenario that exists in the country is unacceptable. People are attacked, kidnapped, and killed only because they are Renamo supporters and nobody here cares at all. Doesn’t that mean that, to Frelimo, the Save River is the border?”. Ivone Soares, 17 February 2016

Public Statement 32 (Club of Mozambique 2016i)  
“The aim of derailing the start of Renamo’s governance from the month of March will not work, despite the military incursions, kidnappings and assassinations of Renamo members and the destruction of Mozambican citizens’ houses and barns, primarily in the provinces of Manica and Tete, perpetrated by the FADM”. Afonso Dhlakama, 3 March 2016

Public Statement 33 (Club of Mozambique 2016j)  
“The great problem in Mozambique is that Frelimo does not accept democracy”. Jose Manteigas, Renamo MP, 2 March 2016
Public Statement 34 (Club of Mozambique 2016j)
“Where in the constitution does it state that elections can be won by stealing votes?” Jose Manteigas, Renamo MP, 2 March 2016

Public Statement 35 (Club of Mozambique 2016k)
“Simply joining Renamo’s name to any criminal matter is bad faith and merely seeks to justify the failure of the police to tackle crime”. Antonio Muchanga, 9 March 2016

Public Statement 36 (Club of Mozambique 2016n)
“There was no member of the public among the victims. Thirty-nine FADM died. It is possible that one or another member of the public dies, we are not making holy war – it is possible that one (civilian) gets caught up, we have to admit that, yes. But saying that Renamo is attacking civilians – no, because that would be a serious problem. Renamo only survives thanks to the support of the population. Afonso Dhlakama, 15 March 2016

Public Statement 37 (Club of Mozambique 2016l)
“Frelimo only respect those who give them money and tells the people to go take a walk”. Ivone Soares, 21 April 2016

Public Statement 38 (Club of Mozambique 2016l)
“We will not sit back and forget about the excesses and unconstitutionality practiced by the government of Frelimo”. Ivone Soares, 21 April 2016

Public Statement 39 (Club of Mozambique 2016l)
“It is disgusting to watch the Frelimo bench prevent MPs fulfilling their mandate to supervise the government”. Ivone Soares, 21 April 2016

Public Statement 40 (Club of Mozambique 2016m)
“Most of our human rights organisations are silent and only act on government orders”. Antonio Muchanga, 4 May 2016

Public Statement 41 (Club of Mozambique 2016n)
“International mediation can help solve underlying problems that are currently the concern of the armed forces, which are politicized”. Ivone Soares, 9 May 2016

Public Statement 42 (Club of Mozambique 2016n)
“There are death squads killing our colleagues at all levels on a daily basis”. Ivone Soares, 9 May 2016

Public Statement 43 (Club of Mozambique 2016o)
“Last Friday the Frelimo (ruling party) ones again tried to attack us”. Afonso Dhlakama, 1 June 2016

Public Statement 44 (Club of Mozambique 2016a)
“They (government troops) started firing from far and…then we let them come close. When they got very close we massacred them”. Afonso Dhlakama, 1 June 2016

Public Statement 45 (Club of Mozambique 2016b)
“Renamo requires the creation of a genuine commission of inquiry to investigate this mass grave. The current commission is a masquerade”. Afonso Dhlakama, 2 June 2016

Public Statement 46 (Club of Mozambique 2016c)
“If Renamo were attacking Vale trains, Vale would not have trains to run on this line. But more than ten trains per day run. [...] Renamo could dismantle that railway line”. Antonio Muchanga, 8 June 2016

Public Statement 47 (Club of Mozambique 2016d)
“It is Frelimo that has moved military contingents more than 1500 kilometres to hunt Dhlakama”. Afonso Dhlakama, 21 June 2016

Public Statement 48 (Club of Mozambique 2016e)
“Renamo have two points: The governance of the six provinces won by Renamo (in the 2014 elections) and the appointment of Renamo military cadres to key positions in the military”. Afonso Dhlakama, 21 June 2016

Public Statement 49 (Club of Mozambique 2016f)
“Renamo will open fire on the places where Frelimo leaders live”. Antonio Muchanga, 22 June 2016

Public Statement 50 (Club of Mozambique 2016g)
“There is a side that does not want democracy and that attacks us. Renamo is a victim of the attacks and cannot sit back because we also has the right to life and security”. Afonso Dhlakama, 6 July 2016

Public Statement 51 (Club of Mozambique 2016h)
“The clashes are from both sides. So, we have to know where attacks come from. Those walking 1500 kilometres, with tanks and cannons to come bombard here I the centre are Frelimo men, guided by the same person who seem to have pity for the victims of the attacks. So, it is him [Nyusi] who is perpetuating the attacks”. Afonso Dhlakama, 6 July 2016

Public Statement 52 (Club of Mozambique 2016i)
“Never, ever, ever will Renamo give up the six provinces governance claim”. Ivone Soares, 29 July 2016

**Public Statement 53 (Club of Mozambique 2016u)**
“Awe appeal to Frelimo not to complicate the dialogue in the Joint Commission, because we will not back down on the decision of the people of Mozambique to rescue the power plucked from them”. Ivone Soares, 29 July 2016

**Public Statement 54 (Club of Mozambique 2016v)**
“We will govern our provinces with our policies. We do not want to divide the country, we just want to transfer the power of Frelimo governors to Renamo”. Afonso Dhlakama, 8 August 2016

**Public Statement 55 (Club of Mozambique 2016v)**
“When they attack us, they think they are pushing us and Dhlakama will raise his hands. If the enemy attack is, we must respond to disperse it”. Afonso Dhlakama, 8 August 2016

**Public Statement 56 (Club of Mozambique 2016w)**
“Look, my brother Matias [the journalist], do not play with these things. The image of Dhlakama is brilliant, his reputation is brilliant. I do not say that I am God, but I am brilliant”. Afonso Dhlakama, 8 August 2016

**Public Statement 57 (Club of Mozambique 2016w)**
“Unfortunately, Frelimo did not accept Renamo’s political project, and we continue to fight for multi-party democracy, the rule of law, strong institutions, free and transparent elections, and courts that work. The [defence and security] forces such as the police, military, do not belong to parties; [we fight for] economic development, and employment for youth. For there to be national unity, and not only in words, people from different regions of the country must feel like brothers, and that there is development, and especially peace – this is Renamo’s political project.” Afonso Dhlakama, 9 August 2016

**Public Statement 58 (Club of Mozambique 2016x)**
“The whole world knows that Nyusi did not win the elections, yet he governs”. Afonso Dhlakama, 22 August 2016

**Public Statement 59 (Club of Mozambique 2016y)**
“I feel threatened and feel that the members of my part are also being threatened. We live in a situation of terror because there are, truly, death squads created by the Frelimo regime to shoot down any citizen who thinks otherwise, who openly critic their positions, their poor governance policies that have been implemented over the past 40 years.” Ivone Soares, 29 September 2016
Public Statement 60 (Club of Mozambique 2016y)
“If we are persecuted clearly we must be prepared to defend ourselves. And in a confrontational situation, no one who stands there waiting to be attacked by his opponent. Of course we are in a self-defence situation and we have to prevent the adversary from gaining ground and killing us all.” Ivone Soares, 29 September 2016

Public Statement 61 (Club of Mozambique 2016z)
“We cannot end the conflict and the military hostilities and restore peace, while we do not resolve the problems of governance.” Afonso Dhlakama, 10 October 2016

Public Statement 62 (Club of Mozambique 2016aa)
“Members of Renamo who have lost their lives number about 100, but we have many others – as many as 250 – who has disappeared.” Antiono Muchanga, 3 November 2016

Public Statement 63 (Club of Mozambique 2016aa)
“Unfortunately, there is no will too do anything [to stop the murders], which are financed by the state, of course, because if that were not so, they would not have become so widespread.” Antonio Muchanga, 3 November 2016

Public Statement 64 (Club of Mozambique 2016ab)
“All Renamo’s military actions are reactions, Because, if we don’t respond, Frelimo will continue to send its battalions to attack us. The only way to stop them is by responding.” Afonso Dhlakama, 22 December 2016

Public Statement 65 (Club of Mozambique 2015)
“Can we continue to persuade the people to hold back and wait patiently for solutions? Or should we accompany the sovereign people in the actions they want to undertake?” Afonso Dhlakama, 10 June 2015