

The Highland and the Coast – An Analysis of the Current Conflict in Cabo Delgado

A conversation between Yussuf Adam and Carmeliza Rosário

YUSSUF ADAM

Centre for African Studies, Eduardo Mondlane University

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-1779-0486>

CARMELIZA ROSARIO

Chr. Michelsen Institute, Bergen

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6155-1832>

Abstract

Yussuf Adam's doctoral thesis ends with a short story collected in 1981 in the village of Mualela, on the Mueda plateau. In it, the president of the village speaks of the marriage of Mary, God's daughter, as a metaphor for the post-independence dynamics, where the solidarity of the liberation struggle gave way to feelings of injustice in the redistribution of power and benefits. Using Galtung's matrix from his *Structural Theory of Revolutions*, Adam argues that the dynamics that resulted in the fragilities and tensions in the post-independence came from complex multiple and interconnected causes. Specifically, there is a link between destabilisation, foreign aid and the state's development policies. Carmeliza Rosário and Adam reflect on how the same connection is visible in the processes that fostered the present conflict in Cabo Delgado. Similarly, there are limitations in the ability to produce evidence for analysis of the conflict, and the object of intellectual exercises of this nature remains the same – peace. At stake are Mozambique's aspirations as a nation and its ability to negotiate consensus between its different parties. These consistently give rise to protracted conflicts. The sharpening of differences and the worsening of the conflict has to do with explanations for conflicts based on the sentiments of betrayal, autocracy, of the external hand, exclusion, and a 'winner takes all' worldview.

The marriage of Maria, God's daughter

'God had a beautiful daughter, Maria. Four animals wanted to marry her – the leopard, the pig, the firefly and the spider. They all went to see God to ask for the hand of his daughter. God told them to go and open a farm on the other side of the river so that he could see who was the best husband for his daughter. As the river was very dangerous, none of the animals could cross it alone. They helped each other and managed to cross to the other side.

When they arrived on the other bank of the river, the pig, the firefly, the spider and the leopard began to work. They found a good piece of land and started their farm. After four days of hard work the rain started. It rained a great deal. They tried to go back and cross the river, but the river, due to the rains, was swollen. The four were wet and hungry. The leopard killed an antelope and everyone ate. The pig dug a hole to put the seeds in, to make sure that the excess of water would not rot them. No one could swim across the river. So the spider made a web over the river. Now they had a bridge to use but it was very dark. Night had arrived. So the firefly provided light and the four crossed the river.

They crossed the river and had to march for a long time. Finally they arrived at God's house. When they arrived, Maria collected water and prepared a bath for all of them. After they had taken a rest and eaten, God called them and asked what had happened. Each one told his story about what he had done to make the trip possible. After hearing what each of them had to say, God decided. Maria married the spider and the leopard, although all had worked hard. Maria got fed up with the marriage and became a prostitute.

The story is similar to what goes on today. During the armed struggle all fought to win independence (Maria). The hunter (soldiers) and the spider (teachers, national, province and district officials, chiefs) have a salary and good living conditions whilst the pig (peasants) and the militias (fireflies) have no money. Thus Maria can become a prostitute and discontents will be created.'

And the story became true...

Story collected in Mualela village, Mueda, in 1981.

Introductions

Thus ends the thesis of Yussuf Adam, published in 1996 at Roskilde University.¹ This is also where our conversation begins. What follows is the result of multiple conversations carried out between 25 and 27 July 2022 at Adam's office in Maputo. Yussuf Adam is a historian, affiliated with the Centro de Estudos Africanos (CEA – Centre for African Studies) at the Eduardo Mondlane University. CEA was established

1 Y. Adam, *Trick or Treat, the Relationship between Destabilisation, Aid and Government Development Policies in Mozambique (1975–1990)* (Roskilde University, 1996), 303–4.

in 1976 and was a research collective composed mainly by historians. The focus at its inception was the historical research of colonial Mozambique's different periods and archaeological research including ethnographic recollection of oral traditions in southern Mozambique.²

Carmeliza Rosario is a social anthropologist. At the time of the conversation, Carmeliza was affiliated with the Christian Michelsen Institute, a Norwegian research institute, as a postdoctoral researcher working on gendered aspects of the war in Cabo Delgado, in the project 'Cabo Delgado: Conflict, Resilience and Reconstruction', funded by the Norwegian Research Council.

The conversation revisited Adam's doctoral thesis' theoretical framework to reflect on the ongoing war in Cabo Delgado. Among others, Adam used Galtung's matrix from the *Structural Theory of Revolutions* to argue that continued tensions in the province are fuelled by skewed development and economic policies, foreign interests and internal destabilisation, forming the vicious cycle that feed the conditions for the insurgency.

This conversation has been edited and condensed for clarity. It has also been complemented with explanatory footnotes, as deemed necessary. The conversation is divided into five sections, one with an historical introduction entitled 'visions of nation'; one discussing the theories used in the thesis; and the subsequent three sections discuss the three interdependent factors contributing to tensions and conflict: development policies, foreign interests and internal destabilisation.

Visions of Nation

In this section, the conversation focuses on the late colonial period, the liberation struggle and competitive visions of nation.

Carmeliza: Let's start with the marriage of Maria, God's daughter. After reading it, I felt that it had something in common with the current war. I don't know if you already knew that it could be something that you could use for another reflection about the country. When I read the part about Mueda and all the symbolism about the creation of the nation that is Mozambique, its centrality in Mozambique's history...³ Not because of the individuals, but the processes. I felt that what we are going through today, in relation to more or less the same place, not necessarily with the same actors, is certainly a continuity of similar dynamics. It continues to be, or it became again a fight for the creation of the nation that is Mozambique. The meaning of what Mozambique is, and not something that has to do only with Cabo Delgado. You talk about the relationship between destabilisation, aid and development policies. Deep down, these are the things that are still present. So, the reflection that you make in

2 C. Fernandes, 'Regional and Local Dynamics in the Shaping of the Centre for African Studies in Maputo, 1976–1986', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 41, 3, 2015), 581–97, 584.

3 The Mueda plateau in Cabo Delgado is central in the freedom fighting narrative. It was the site of a massacre perpetrated by the Portuguese colonial forces in 1960. It was also the site of the beginning of the armed struggle.

Trick or Treat continues to be relevant. How do we use ‘the marriage of Maria’, which is a tale from 1981, to look at what is happening now?

Yussuf: Development policies, foreign aid and war or destabilisation are three variables that continue to be present throughout Mozambique’s history, not just from 1974, but even before. There is something that is important to point out in the nation’s vision. I prefer to say that it is one of the visions among many visions of Mozambique. It is relevant to see how the idea of Mozambique is old. From the moment when the borders were defined. One idea of Mozambique is that it is one and indivisible. In my opinion it is completely the opposite. It is one because it is divisible, not because it is indivisible.

After this comes the importance of the Portuguese language for the consolidation of those borders. This was something from the colonial ideology that continued after independence. They are central points of Frelimo’s ideology.⁴ The Portuguese language is important because it is a form of border, within which we are all Mozambicans, irrespective of our skin colour.

There is an enormous pressure. It is necessary to guarantee that Frelimo is the only legitimate representative of the people. But there were ideas that defended that we aren’t just one, but several peoples. There were a series of debates about tribes, clans, religions, a series of divisions within the population. All that was ignored.

My first report, which was about the liberated zones⁵ of Cabo Delgado was about the contradiction with official sources. There is a lack of circulation of information about the real processes and popular knowledge. You don’t find commentators who acknowledge that there was already something before. And that worries me.

So, the colonial ideology was adopted, to a certain extent. Then comes the marriage of that and the transition to the Marxist-Leninist practice. There were people inside the provincial government in Cabo Delgado who agreed with what we researchers said about the social reality and brewing tensions because they thought that people in Maputo did not know the reality on the ground.

See the case of Mueda. Rui Guerra, when he made his movie about the Mueda massacre,⁶ he said that there was a movement in Mueda – MANU, which fought for the independence of the Makonde people. The official history, the only one that you could talk about, defended that the Makonde and Frelimo were one. But we find in John Marcum’s book about Mozambique⁷ that there was a party fighting for the independence of Mocímboa da Praia or the North of Mozambique. The president of that movement founded UNAMI in Tete and could have been interested in secession.

4 Frelimo (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique) was established as an official liberation movement in 1962, in exile, and initiated the armed struggle in 1964.

5 In the process of the armed struggle, Frelimo created the ‘*zonas libertadas*’ (liberated zones) with self-governance. These piloted a form of social organisation with principles of social management that would serve as a blueprint for the new society after independence in 1975.

6 R. Guerra, ‘Mueda, Memória e Massacre’, *Africa in Motion*, 1979, <<https://www.africa-in-motion.org.uk/resources/africas-lost-classics/films/event/322/>>, accessed 2 April 2024.

7 J. A. Marcum, *Conceiving Mozambique*, E. Burke and M. W. Clough (eds), *African Histories and Modernities* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2017).

Carmeliza: This reminds me that Dhlakama's⁸ discourse has always revolved around dividing Mozambique from the Save River. Because of the issue of resources and their redistribution. So, what you are saying is that there were different projects but that the only one allowed to succeed or be spoken about is the one about the 'one and indivisible' country.

Yussuf: The marriage between a certain colonial discourse about an indivisible Mozambique and keeping the borders intact continued with Frelimo. Walter Opello⁹ argues that Frelimo emerges as an organisation of people who had progressed within the colonial system, but who found a barrier to further progress.

Galtung and other theories

Carmeliza: With this reflexion, can you now make the link to Galtung?

Yussuf: Countries where socialist revolutions occur or are institutionalised, can have counter-revolutions or not. Galtung's argument is a bit like the marriage of Maria, God's daughter. He has several indicators. If you compare those indicators with the indicators deriving from the tale, it leads more or less to the same analytical framework. Galtung brings the political science ideas of the actor's position, the actor's importance, and such. He says that if people don't receive what they consider as fair – the fair distribution of power, of economic benefits, of political participation, etc. – they will revolt, and the political system will fall.

Another theory that I followed was the one developed by H el ene Carr ere d'Encausse in her book *L'Empire  clat *¹⁰. She also talked about movements. There are centrifugal and centripetal forces. If a government or state cares only about the centrifugal or external forces, it will lose its power because the way to win and keep power is to care about the centripetal internal forces. The theory of conspiracy of the external force doesn't explain the situation because it runs contrary to the internal contradictions faced by the country, with the social base of the holders of state power. As a consequence, the social contract is broken.

I don't use one single theory. The empirical data I used shows that even in so-called socialist or revolutionary countries there are objective and subjective conditions for counter-revolutions to emerge. The new regimes end up creating the same *status quo* that they tried to destroy. The marriage of Maria tale's metaphor illustrates the post-independence reality. A popular expression, a tale that says what cannot be said, in a situation where the right to expression was controlled, where discussion wasn't acceptable. Is there a connection with the current situation? There is a limitation in

8 Dhlakama was the second leader of Renamo (Resist ncia Nacional de Mo ambique). This was the resistance movement that waged a war against the Frelimo regime from 1976, initially funded by the white supremacist government of Rhodesia and then the Apartheid regime of South Africa.

9 W. C. Opello, *Internal War in Mozambique: A Social-Psychological Analysis of a Nationalist Revolution* (University of Colorado, 1973); W. C. Opello, 'Revolutionary Change in Mozambique: Implications for the Emerging Postindependence Society' in J. R. Scarritt (ed), *Analyzing Pol Change* (New York: Routledge, 1980).

10 H. C. d'Encausse, *L'Empire  clat . La R volte des nations en U.R.S.S* (Paris: Flammarion, 2016).

the capacity or to the attempts at investigating, producing evidence. Is this an issue of differences or the way of managing differences? There are theories of treason or conspiracy, external hand, etc. It is also a way to consolidate those who hold the state's power and their limited social base.

The great challenge is to find a methodology that allows us to approach reality when there are so many barriers, not only of knowledge, of linguistics, but even of fieldwork conditions. I mean, working in Cabo Delgado is extremely difficult. There is political control, war and so on. Then, there is the sacrosanctity of the themes and places. Which is to say, if one talks about Rua Araújo,¹¹ there isn't too much trouble. If you talk about the cradle of the revolution, there are a lot of competing interests. You are questioning the founding myth of Frelimo.

First snake¹² – Development politics and internal forces

This section of the conversation revolves around specific aspects of the development policies adopted by Frelimo after independence, including villagisation, the nationalisation of all businesses and even religious infrastructure.

Carmeliza: There is a discourse that effectively the country does not belong to everyone, which is contrary to the narrative of unity and equality. How does one move from one position to the other? There is a new attempt at social engineering, maybe? Because we are going from attempt to attempt. The 'New Man',¹³ the prototype of the post-independence anti-colonial ideal was one.

Yussuf: There is one objective in these ideologies of Frelimo supporting the maintenance of power, which is the problem that the villagisations policies had.

Carmeliza: Which is a theme that you mention often, including how there were different types of villagisations in different contexts.

Yussuf: What's most important in a village is that the distribution of a population is done based on the natural law of human settlement. Where do people settle? Where there is water, land for agriculture, and where people can feel safe. This is how they choose where to live, including displaced people. This pattern was not respected in the formulation of policies. The socialist cooperatives were against indigenous knowledge. No one in their right mind would have created large villages.

11 Rua Araújo is a street in Maputo (formerly Lourenço Marques) close to the port, famous for its nightlife and convergence of sex workers.

12 The English version of Adam's thesis has an illustration of three snakes eating each other's tails. Each snake represents an axis of the lens through which the country's reality can be read. One snake represents development policies, the second foreign aid or investment and the third war and destabilisation. The text below is, accordingly, organised around these axes.

13 New Man (Homem Novo) was the idealised post-colonial (socialist) individual, breaking away simultaneously from the values of colonial and traditional culture (see e.g. L. Macagno, 'Multiculturalism in Mozambique?: Reflections from the field', *Vibrant – Virtual Brazilian Anthropology*, 5, 2, 2008, 223–246).

We have not been thinking correctly about this issue of the internally displaced people (IDP). It could be that the war was the *déclencher*, the trigger of the process. But the solution has been to create *aldeias comunais* (communal villages), that are no longer called communal villages but refugee centres or IDP villages.

The religious question

Carmeliza: One thing I have noted is that, currently, the legitimization of power goes through churches, or at least religion. I say this because I saw at a certain point on TV, leaders from different religions appealing for people to get vaccinated against COVID-19. Large billboards in Pemba had Muslim religious leaders speaking against domestic violence. Which is to say, things of public interest are no longer only influenced by politicians. Before it was artists or known musicians. Now it is religious leaders, from different religious denominations, some of which I didn't even know existed. This made me think about the question of why a religious uprising in Cabo Delgado? It also seems clear that Renamo has lost its legitimacy as an opposition force. But effectively, with these religious advertisements, the moral guard in Mozambique, that can stand against the regime seems to come from the religious context.

Yussuf: Something that Frelimo never wanted to admit is that its elite was divided between Marxists, protestants, the Swiss Mission and the American Methodists. There was the less prominent Anglican church. In line with Foucault,¹⁴ it is necessary to do the genealogy of these groups. Then, there is the Catholic Church, which is also very important and had its own elite.

Carmeliza: But, at least in the public narrative, the Catholic Church has been considered as collaborating with colonialism, and after with Renamo.

Yussuf: The Catholic Church and all those organisations have divisions within them. They aren't homogeneous. There are a series of grey areas in the middle that have more to do with the need to construct an ideological discourse to justify power. Sometimes rifts become apparent. Those are the moments of interest to us. It is not a coincidence that the president, a Roman Catholic inaugurated the largest 'chapel' in Mozambique, belonging to the Old Apostles Church.¹⁵ To those in power, this is what connects them and allows them to have a large social base.

Renamo is Catholic, or it presents as Catholic. But they had most acceptance in Mocímboa da Praia, which is predominantly Muslim. In this war, as in every war there is an issue of power, with the security forces, the intelligence and spies, having interests coming from every side. So, if holders of state power can use religion, whichever it is, even if not theirs, they will use it.

14 M. Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, J. R. Carrette (ed) (New York: Routledge, 1999).

15 R. Sigauque, 'Nyusi apela confissões religiosas a continuarem a promover o bem-estar - MMO', 2022, <<https://noticias.mmo.co.mz/2022/07/nyusi-apela-confissoes-religiosas-a-continuarem-a-promover-o-bem-estar.html>>, accessed 3 April 2024.

What we forget is that those fighting Frelimo were Catholics fighting Protestants from the Swiss and American missions because of the previous importance of the Catholic church and lack of recognition of their religion. Though not discussed much, Frelimo also used religion. The religious map of Mozambique was changed by them. They took all the missions, Swiss and Methodist that were in the South of the country and when the post-independence war ended (in 1992), they put them everywhere. And more recently Frelimo are associated with the evangelical Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, which shows a dimension of indoctrination.

You can make a man into a soldier, destroy him and glue him back again.¹⁶ These insurgents can be called bandits, *machababe*... What they are is Islamists who are mobilising people using religion.

Villagisation and the ethnic question

Carmeliza: I made two notes based on the *Trick or Treat* book. One is about the mistrust by the Portuguese towards the returnee from Tanzania. You also talk about the villages, that the people who were in the Portuguese villages (*aldeamentos*) were mistreated by Frelimo. One issue was the relationship with the people who were in the liberated zones and the other were those in the *aldeamentos* created by the Portuguese. So, what was the difference between the Portuguese villagisation and the one done by Frelimo? The other note is your mention that although the evidence shows a Renamo progression from south to north, the perception was that it was north to south. Once again, Tanzania appears, as a source of destabilisation, at least in the imagination of people. Have you ever reflected about this aspect?

Yussuf: When the independence war ended there was a need to accommodate all that were going to be repatriated. When they returned to Mozambique and wanted to go to their homes, zones of origin, they were told that 'not the old homesteads, you stay here, we will tell you where you are going to go'. This is a double-edged sword. I don't know if Frelimo had a well thought out strategy. But they Makondised Cabo Delgado. They took people, who weren't actually Makonde,¹⁷ but who ended up being considered Makonde. And those people were forcefully sent to several places, under horrible conditions. Who were the people who went to the places they chose? They were people with links to the independence war and who had relatives within the second and first sector.¹⁸ The first sector went up to Messalo River and the second sector went from Messalo River more or less up to Montepuez. Frelimo never reached beyond the south of Montepuez.

16 B. Brecht, *Collected Plays: A Man's a Man. Rise and Fall of the City of Mohagony. The Threepenny Opera*, R. Manheim and J. Willett (eds), W. Sauerlander (trans) (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, 1971).

17 Cabo Delgado is a multi-ethnic province. The most prevalent groups are the Mwani, Makonde and Makhuwa. Additional peoples include the Yaawo, also present in Niassa province; Swahili, Makwe, and a minority of Ngoni speakers.

18 During the liberation struggle, Frelimo divided provinces into sectors, which were assigned to commanders who led the armed offensives.

These people were put in villages, which were almost like concentration camps. When Machado da Graça¹⁹ visited a village in Ancuabe district, they were forced to make *machambas* (farming plots). All routines were controlled. They collected water with a plate or a glass and watered the rice. Frelimo divided the population between 'ours' and 'others'. It picked the 'others' and spread them throughout the country. First, they spread them in Cabo Delgado and later they created Makonde or former combatant villages across the country. All of them are called 3 de Fevereiro,²⁰ 25 de Setembro (September 25th),²¹ Luta Armada (armed struggle).

Many inhabitants came from the army, when the army didn't want them anymore. They still have a military function, as the present *forças locais* (local forces). They are national mercenaries. Now it is their children that need employment and included in the system. For the first time, the ethnic discussion is uttered from the mouth of liberation struggle leader, who said that 'there are ethnic groups whom you made their life easy'. But he doesn't say, 'We also fought; we want our benefit too.'

Someone who develops this discussion, which we don't have for our country, but have for Guinea Bissau is Cabral, who said that the Balanta were a society like the Makonde society, without a state.²² Rudebeck, who was in the liberated zones of Guinea Bissau writes about only one village in Guiné, Kandjadja.²³ It is a good technique, to follow the development of a country through a case study.

These villages that Frelimo created spread the Makonde all over the place. This created new tensions. For example, at the entrance of Metuge there is a group of Makonde and right after there are Mwani who complain that the Makonde don't allow them to cut the trees and so on.²⁴ Meanwhile, the Makonde continue to feel marginalised too and cultivate that narrative.

Carmeliza: Linked to this, a friend of mine who worked at Total in the social development department mentioned that some of the villages within Total's area of influence were made up of people from all over the country, because the former combatants from the liberation zones were not necessarily from Cabo Delgado. He said that people were effectively nothing. They were not this or the other ethnicity. There are even villages called Quelimane. Could they be people coming from Zambezia?

Yussuf: You are making the same mistake I made when I went there. I said, 'These are folk from Zambezia.' The person who accompanied me said, 'Don't be stupid,

19 João Machado da Graça was a Mozambican journalist and satirical columnist (1946–2016).

20 3 February is the day that Mozambique commemorates its National Heroes' Day. It is the day that Frelimo founder and first president, Eduardo Mondlane was killed.

21 25 September is the Day of the Armed Forces and celebrates the beginning of the liberation war.

22 A. Cabral, *P.A.I.G.C.: Unidade e Luta*, Selections (Lisbon: Nova Aurora, 1974).

23 L. Rudebeck, "'To Seek Happiness': Development in a West African Village in the Era of Democratisation", *Review of African Political Economy*, 24, 71, 1997, 75–86; L. Rudebeck, "'They Have Left Us in a Hole'", *Bulletin de l'APAD*, 31–32, 2010, 65–104; L. Rudebeck, 'Kandjadja, Guinea-Bissau 1976–1986 Observations on the Political Economy of an African Village', *Review of African Political Economy*, 15, 41, 1988, 17–29.

24 Historically, the Mwani occupied the coastal northeastern Cabo Delgado, extending along Mocimboa da Praia, Macomia, Quissanga, Ibo island, and the Quirimbas archipelago (António Rafael da Conceição, *Entre o mar e a terra: situações identitárias do norte de Moçambique* (Cabo Delgado), Coleção Identidades (Promédia, 2006)).

Quelimane means “place on a hill”. There is no one from Quelimane, no one from Zambezia.’ There is a text from Irae Lundin²⁵ which deals with issues of identity. What did she find? The Makhuwa society in Montepuez was divided into three groups, the slaves or *epotha*, the *vientes* (newcomers) and the *donos da terra* (owners of the land). From this division, I confirmed that it could be applicable to any place in Cabo Delgado. It wasn’t something that applied only to the Makhuwa. This division of classes conditions many of the things that we are talking about. These issues relate to the political economy of power related to the land. What they are doing now is expanding their areas of control.

The highland and the coast

Carmeliza: Let us go to the main question. I have read the whole text about Mueda and it doesn’t mention the Mwani, even when you talk about Mocímboa da Praia.

Yussuf: I have found that fish trade was very important. People carried it on their bicycles and went to sell it in the hinterland. From the hinterland they exchanged two loads of fish for ten sacks of millet or rice. But millet is worth more in the coast. So, there were circuits. I later discovered that the coastal populations, overwhelmingly Mwani, don’t depend only on fishing. They are also farmers. In the summer, people don’t go to the coast. Rather, they go to the hinterland to work on their *machamba*. That is when it rains. In Mocímboa all the production places are in Ruarua, Centro Magaia, around the Messalo River. Even in Quissanga, to the interior, there was transport, not only trucks and the cotton cars. People lived a period at the coast and a period in the interior.

This was somewhat destroyed after independence. They are trying to recreate it now, with programmes like the SUSTENTA.²⁶ They are making *machambas* where the old Instituto do Algodão²⁷ (Cotton Institute) was. There is a continuity between my two books. The first one is about the class struggle from 1911 to 1974.²⁸ This one, *Trick or Treat*, is also about class struggle, even though I didn’t explicitly call it that, from the independence until today. It was very interesting, because it was a way of resisting the socialist transition policies of Frelimo, who didn’t let people leave the villages where they were forced to stay. If they wanted to go to their former homesteads, they couldn’t.

25 I. Baptista Lundin, ‘Cultural Diversity and the Role of Traditional Authority in Local Self Governance – the Case of Mozambique in Southern Africa’ (presented at the Regional Conference on Local Self Governance, Peoples’ Participation and Development: Preconditions for Peace and Stability, 1993).

26 The SUSTENTA is a World Bank funded programme that aimed to integrate rural households into sustainable agriculture and forest-based value chains, ‘Mozambique – Additional Financing to the Agriculture and Natural Resources Landscapes Management Project (SUSTENTA)’, *World Bank*, <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/loans-credits/2019/07/03/mozambique-additional-financing-to-the-agriculture-and-natural-resources-landscapes-management-project-sustenta>>, accessed 30 April 2024.

27 Instituto do Algodão was created in 1961 after the abolition of effective forced labour.

28 Y. Adam, *Cooperativização na agricultura e modificação das relações de produção no período colonial em Moçambique*, Coleção Identidades (Promédia, 2006).

Carmeliza: At this point, however, some Mwani youth have put an emphasis on being fishermen. That they don't want to farm land where they are being settled because they don't know how to farm, only fish. Eventually this is also the creation of a myth.

Yussuf: The whole Mwani economy stands on three legs; agriculture, fishing and trade. But all other communities have the same. It's only that it is more developed within the Mwani, because of their link to the international trade and the sea. Rafael da Conceição's book, *Entre o Mar e a Terra* (Between Sea and Land),²⁹ talks about this relationship, and very clearly about how the non-Makonde people were rendered subaltern after independence.

Second snake – Foreign aid/investment or the external forces

This section discusses the role of external forces leading to tensions and eventual conflict. In his original thesis he focused on foreign aid. In the conversation Adam focused rather on foreign investment and the extractive industry.

Transnational networks

Yussuf: In Mocímboa everything circulates. Everything you want, including high quality lobster, which is sent to Dubai. An article from Joe Hanlon came out, where he says how the trafficking of heroin in Mozambique has changed.³⁰ Before, they used to come by boat and the police controlled the truck business. Now everything comes packed in rice and sugar sacks; it is dropped at some island on the Mozambican coast. If I want to transport a kilogram, I call a special WhatsApp number and an intermediary says: 'How much do you want to transport and how much do you want for it?' He picks it up and takes it to South Africa and from South Africa to Europe. But you don't send only one kg to Europe. You put it in a container and there must be other routes.

I remember that on the Island of Quifuqui, midway between Mocímboa and Palma, and that was recently attacked by the *machababe*,³¹ there was a guesthouse owned by some Spanish nationals, with only four or five rooms. We counted a thousand canoes around it. It was strange. We know that there is a lot of trafficking. In Quissanga, 40 tons of hashish were seized, plus 40 tons in Palma. The drug business is only one of the businesses.

Carmeliza: There is the belief that the people who are involved in the trafficking are also involved in the insurgency. However, that would make Mozambique an outlier from the pattern that occurs in the rest of the world. Because everywhere else illicit

29 Conceição, *Entre o mar e a terra*.

30 J. Hanlon, 'The Uberization of Mozambique's Heroin Trade', *London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)*, Working Paper Series, 18–190, 2018.

31 Local name for the Islamist insurgents, from the Arabic *al-shabab*, meaning the youth.

trafficking flows and armed insurgencies do not coexist well. The insurgents carry out illicit activities, but they are not the same actors.

Yussuf: For an Islamist insurgent this would be *haram* (prohibited). In practice, this drug comes also from Muslim countries, like Afghanistan and Pakistan. We need to realise that this is a source of funding of activities that are not in the name of liberation. Renamo killed elephants to sell the ivory. Frelimo sold ebony wood, but certainly there were other less illicit activities.

Carmeliza: Illicit activities exist. The issue is the actor of the trafficking. The evidence in other countries where there are Islamist insurgencies is that the trafficking routes and illicit flows do not benefit from conflict, because the military and border control increase and trafficking becomes more difficult.

Yussuf: Many years ago, there used to be Tanzanians in Mocímboa who were involved in cigar contraband. They likely bought lobsters and other things. They were surely linked to some kind of trafficking, including political. They bought and sold things. There are a number of things that are illegal but are accepted in practice. They were often apprehended by the Mozambican forces, who extorted them.

The external hand

Carmeliza: There is always the tendency to look for...

Yussuf: A scapegoat. Some people say that this war is funded by Total because it has a series of investments and want to prioritise Tanzania because it has more gas than Mozambique. If Tanzania were more profitable, the international capital would already be there. There is another theory that Qatar is behind it, because they have the biggest reserves in the world and it is not interested that Mozambique enters the market. The honest thing to do would be to say that we are not going to explore gas because it is a fossil fuel. It creates problems with the atmosphere and will cost more than what we will earn. So far, I haven't heard anyone arguing this. If one calculates the value of the revenue from all the components of tourism, like hunting, fishing, ludic activities that can be done in Cabo Delgado, we could surely make more money with it.

Carmeliza: Let's go back to the issue of the scapegoat. Because it is one of the issues within this tripartite nexus. There can't be a scapegoat that is just the 'external hand' or just governance. In the thesis (*Trick or Treat*) you mention foreign aid. In this case, eventually there is a snake that is larger than foreign aid, which is the extractive industry, itself an external investment.

Yussuf: The concept of foreign aid is invalid because there is no aid. Rather there is business and investment. In one of the chapters I cite the political scientist

Morgenthau, who said that external political aid was an important weapon in the armoury of the nation. As important as weapons in wars between states or nations.³² How do nations aid? The French government will support what is in line with their geopolitical interests.

Third snake – War, destabilisation and conflict

This last section focuses on the continued violence lived in Cabo Delgado.

Three stories of war (Yussuf)

Story 1: As told by one of my students... He had a top-notch bike in Mocímboa. He had to escape and leave all behind. One day he is walking and saw his bike with a kid and asked him who owned the bike. The kid said that it belonged to his uncle. They went to the police station and he (the student) proved that the bike was his and the police gave it to him. On the same day, he received a threatening call from a high ranking official who said that the bike was his. My student did not sleep in his house that night. He had escaped twice from Mocímboa. One of the times, when the *machababe* came, he was playing football with the locals who told the *machababe* not to hurt him. Even though he was part of the state, they did not think him harmful because he played football with the locals.

Story 2: As told by a judge... A woman was walking in Pemba and saw a mattress. She said that the mattress was hers. The owner denied. She took a knife, cut open the mattress and took money out of it, proving it was hers.

Story 3: There is a case whose judgement documents I saw. It was about a young man who was in Palma and had a car. Soldiers killed him and stole the car. He belonged to an influential Makonde family. They found the car and the person who killed their child and took him to court.

Yussuf: These are three examples of what war is. Like the sixteen century Italian play *L'Anconitana* by Angelo Beolco 'Ruzante', which revolves around war and the tragedy that is war. There is still a debate about just and unjust wars. People say 'Those are criminals, terrorists.' It's not possible to make war without terror. This is the reason why Cabo Delgado was the ideal place for this war to break out.

Carmeliza: What makes you say this? Is it because of the trafficking of drugs, people? Because the trafficking doesn't happen only in Cabo Delgado.

32 Morgenthau, in Adam, *Trick or Treat, the Relationship between Destabilisation, Aid and Government Development Policies in Mozambique (1975-1990)*, 121.

Yussuf: Because of everything. If you analyse, from the story of the marriage of Maria, in 1981 until today there were already a series of contradictions then. They left the population dissatisfied with the government, the state, the party. The villages represent one crisis. When the state took people and corralled them and forced rules onto them, without considering the universal modes of human peopling, which is food or good land or water.

Carmeliza: In the case of the highland, water was a problem.

Yussuf: People from the highland always lived between the highland and the valley. The highland didn't have the function of an aircraft-carrier where people had to stay put. It was, when Renamo started roaming around the highland that Frelimo forced everyone to remain at the top.

Carmeliza: Did the Portuguese do the same when Frelimo was the rebel force?

Yussuf: The Portuguese created villages in other places, but well thought out. Chambino's book is the best about the colonial war.³³ He worked in Cabo Delgado, building villages. He always said that the villages they built worked well because people also feared Frelimo. They were afraid of the Makonde, they feared the Portuguese, but they had their life, and they did what they had to to live. They had their business, and they did what they had to do.

Carmeliza: Let us not oversimplify. We have all these interactions, and it is in the nexus of all these interactions that eventually the counter-revolutions or reaction to revolutions emerge. So, is this *jihad*, a revolution or a counter-revolution?

Yussuf: Are we talking about the war in Cabo Delgado?

Carmeliza: Yes. In the case of Renamo it was a counter-revolution.

Yussuf: It was also a revolution, in the sense that they wanted to have their national and regional rights recognised. They wanted a different model, a multiparty democracy. They say they wanted democracy. They wanted a multiparty system that means democracy in practice. João Paulo Borges Coelho's thesis on the war in Zambezia is worth reading.³⁴ It explains how Frelimo was hunted down in Zambezia. Bridget O'Laughlin also talks about the Zambezia front.³⁵ Frelimo considered Zambezian people as traitors. It was not related to ideology, but because it was a miscegenated space.

33 F. Martins Chambino, *Subversão em Cabo Delgado, Contribuição para o seu Estudo* (Universidade Tecnica de Lisboa, Instituto Superior de Ciências Sociais e Políticas Ultramarinas, 1968).

34 J. P. Constantino Borges Coelho, *Protected Villages and Communal Villages in the Mozambican Province of Tete (1968-1982): A History of State Resettlement Policies, Development and War*, (University of Bradford, 1993).

35 See also B. O'Laughlin, 'A Base Social Da Guerra Em Moçambique', *Estudos Moçambicanos*, 10, (1991), 107-42.

Carmeliza: But Zambezia is not the only miscegenated space in Mozambique.

Yussuf: Historically it is the first place that tried to become independent, in the nineteenth century, and miscegenation was profound and integrated.

Carmeliza: Lourenço Marques was part of South Africa's sphere of influence and Beira to Rhodesia. These are spaces of profound apartheid. Something that the North, including Zambezia didn't have in the same way. Places like Ilha de Moçambique, Ibo, Pemba and Palma also have an old miscegenation. The difference between the spaces in the South and the North is when the Portuguese started to settle in Zambezia it was only men, and they were forced to integrate into the local society. When they settled in Lourenço Marques, the time between them being only men and women and families joining was short. It is not that miscegenation didn't happen. But it did not allow for the establishment of autonomous cultural spaces, as it happened in Zambezia, along the Zambeze, but also along the coast and the islands.

Yussuf: There are different dynamics, but also similar dynamics, in the sense of an anti-racist ideology that 'we are all the same, we are all God's children,' etc. There were people in the colonial system that, at least in the public discourse, were against racism. They said that 'we, as Portuguese, don't follow the same line of the English.' There were conflicts within the system. But there is an ongoing racism. This racist or cultural discrimination is visceral. It is necessary to be vigilant every day. These discriminations are based often on social positions and the way Galtung theorises is good because it is almost mathematical.

Critical geographies

Yussuf: All these places that were attacked, Mbau, Quiterajo... For me this war started in Mucojo. There was a Makonde administrator who tried to set order in a village and the elders rebelled and killed the administrator. He wanted to allow prostitutes to walk freely and drink wherever they wanted and insisted that he was the boss. So, the people in the village said: 'No, we are in charge here. The prostitutes will stay under those trees. The drunkards there, and the dances will be on that side. We want our rules here.' You can call it extremism and that they wanted *sharia* (Islamic law). In reality, all of them also drank but wanted to have control. They didn't want the administrator to be the one punishing their children. They wanted to impose their discipline on their children and punish if necessary.

Olumbi is very important because it was the capital of a kingdom. According to Bernardino, the police general commanding the actions against the insurgency, many traffickers who became insurgents came with precious stones from Montepuez to Olumbi, where they washed them and then sailed away. Olumbi is a port already

mentioned by Frei João dos Santos' description of Cabo Delgado,³⁶ in the sixteenth century, which remains relevant because of the currents and winds. This area is where the contraband arrives. It is put in a boat and those who know how to sail, reach Olumbi.

Dealing with the insurgency

Yussuf: A friend of mine who managed the hotel of the Africa Group in Palma said that when the war started, the Tanzanian and Mozambican police used to meet regularly in the hotel. The Tanzanians always said: 'You chase out people as if they were thieves, terrorists. That is not true. They are legally in Mozambique. They have visas and all documents. They do artisanal mining and you are pursuing them.' The Tanzanians were being caught and exploited. The police stole their money and precious stones because the Tanzanians controlled the business of the stones. All these things start clandestinely and have a lot of ramifications.

The Tanzanians were always angry and thought that the Mozambicans were incompetent in dealing with the insurgency. They thought that Mozambicans should have done like they did in Tanzania. In Quibity, where there was a revolt, they killed everyone. They wanted the Mozambicans to do the same. It reminds me of an Italian movie, *Mondo Cane*,³⁷ where you see thousands of people lying dead on the beach. They beheaded all who identified as *Mwarabu* (descendants of Arabs).

The violence used by the insurgents is considered *halal* (permissible). To use that violence against the enemy requires the construction of the image of who the enemy is. Aquino de Bragança and Immanuel Wallerstein³⁸ wrote extensively about who the enemy was during the destabilisation war.

Carmeliza: I have a question about the patterns of attacks and the location of the bases, when comparing Renamo and the current insurgency. What are the similarities and differences when the bases are found, especially the treatment of the population that lives there? When reading the *Trick or Treat* text I find equivalences to what happens now. There seems to be a differentiated treatment between men and women in journalistic pieces that say that women are saved and rescued. But on the ground, people say that women are raped and mistreated by the Mozambican Armed Forces.

Yussuf: I made a comparison between Frelimo, Renamo and the *machababe*. I concluded, basically, that guerilla is guerilla. All of them do the same thing – kill, terrorise, carry out extra judicial executions. Then there are guerilla myths. In guerrilla there are no bases. There is a mythical word to mouth hideout. The base is always circulating. The populations, peasants are shields used by the guerillas. The Portuguese thought that the Frelimo bases were nomadic and had a hundred men.

36 J. dos Santos, *Ethiopia oriental, e varia historia de cousas, notaveis do oriente* (Impressa no Convento de S. Domingos de Evora, por Manoel de Lira impressor, 1609).

37 P. Cavara, G. Jacopetti, and F. Prosperi (directors), *Mondo Cane* (Cineriz, 1962).

38 A. de Bragança and I. Wallerstein (eds), *Quem é o inimigo?*, Coleção Século XX-XXI (Iniciativas editoriais, 1978).

Pachinuapa³⁹ always walked alone with one or two people. If he walked with a bigger group, he would easily be located and killed.

The *machababe* were first in a village, then they moved to Macomia within the dense forest of Mbau and the old reeducation camp. Matos Gomes, founder of the first Commando Company of Mozambique, shows that the guerrilla always does different from the regular troop. The guerrilla circulates low, close to streams and where the animals circulate. It is a strategy of using the environment, for camouflage and feeding. While the regular army walks high, along the roads.

There is the eternal debate of whether it is possible to control the guerrilla. Perhaps, with a large manpower, to substitute those who are killed. He, Matos Gomes, also said that the best soldiers are religious people, who believe they are going to heaven when they die. He didn't mention Muslims. We can see the same myths in our soldiers now. One of them is that women are witches. Then there is the myth that the *machababe* are full of cash. The first thing they, the government soldiers, do when they arrive in the bases is to strip the insurgents, because they think that they always have a lot of money. It may be a way of justifying money they, the soldiers, may have stolen somewhere else.

Carmeliza: Is there something in the current conflict that people are not willing to die for? Was there the same unwillingness during the Renamo war?

Yussuf: No. At least it wasn't in the discourses. But the incompetency of the troops was great. What was worst was that the Renamo troops kept out-smarting them. Casa Banana⁴⁰ was occupied by a unit from Frelimo, helped by South African, Rhodesian, and English mercenary groups. This story came out only when DAG (Dyck Advisory Group)⁴¹ intervened in Cabo Delgado. Renamo had other strategies, that varied according to their commanders.

Carmeliza: Then, there is a deterioration of willingness. One thing is to fight for independence or for national unity...

Yussuf: We are attributing too high of a ground for why wars are waged. It is not ideology that differentiates wars, despite their legitimising discourses. I wrote something about Renamo in Changara that is published in the Mozambican Historical Archive's journal.⁴² It contains pertinent information about what war is like. It was almost like the *machababe*. The director of a project was killed. What was said? 'Sir, we are going to kill you. Why don't you give us oil, you only give to those others? We

39 High ranking former freedom fighter.

40 Casa Banana was the main base of Renamo in the foothills of Gorongosa mountain in central Mozambique. It was captured in 1985.

41 Dyck Advisory Group (DAG) is a private South African military contractor that was contracted by the Mozambican Government to provide support against the insurgents.

42 Y. Adam, 'Guerra, Fome, Seca e Desenvolvimento: Licoes de Changara, Mocambique' in *Tête*, Arquivo, 10 Especial (Arquivo Histórico de Mocambique, 1991), 185-208.

are also God's children.' Apparently, he only gave to one *regulado*⁴³ but not the other. These so-called old structures were still present. Those from Renamo came from that other *regulado*, killed the man, and beheaded him with an axe.

When I went to make my research, I stopped at a bar by the road. I drank a glass of a local brew and people started to talk. I asked: 'What is this war?' They responded: 'This is a war of stealing to eat' (*Ngondo xa kulya* in their language, Nyungwe). 'Everyone wants to eat. That guy is my true brother, from my mother and father. I am his brother. When I steal oil, sugar, etc. from a passing truck, I'll say that it was him. When he steals, he'll say that it was me. We need to live. We have no money, no food.'

This is the dynamic of all wars. No one makes war to better the world. All wars are made for stealing, as the Uruguayan journalist Eduardo Galeano used to say. Which is unfortunately true. I have lost faith in the romanticism of the guerilla. The guerilla fighters also want to control the population, and the relationship between them and the peasants becomes a mechanism to discipline and punish, not a mechanism to liberate.

On jihad

Carmeliza: In a previous interview you said that this war is not a *jihad* (holy war). Do you still maintain that position?

Yussuf: Yes, I do. Everyone who makes war transforms the war in *jihad*. For the government of Mozambique, fighting against Renamo was a matter of defending equality, democracy and homeland. If you turned to the other, he was also making his *jihad*. Their God just varies. This will continue to happen as long as we don't consider war a crime against humanity. This and other conflicts were perfectly avoidable. But now the problem is, how do we resolve it? We should only study war to guarantee peace.

There are myths that are worth exploring. One is about a grave near a mosque in Chiúre that is not covered. The locals say that the reason is because the owner is going to return. In 1962, the Portuguese executed several Makhuwa chiefs in Montepuez, and the population says that they did not die but ascended to heaven. This is one of the myths, that the war did not begin in the north, in Mueda, but in Montepuez. The Portuguese were convinced that the guerilla would start in the Islamic areas, because of Egypt's independence in 1952. Radio Cairo broadcasted anti-colonial propaganda⁴⁴ directed at the Muslims. Muslims were their historical enemies. They, the Portuguese, were not expecting that the uprising would come through the Makonde.

Carmeliza: Why did the Mwani become the face of this new revolution or counter-revolution?

⁴³ Area ruled by a *régulo*.

⁴⁴ See e.g. L. Mosia, C. Riddle, and J. Zaffiro, 'From Revolutionary to Regime Radio: Three Decades of Nationalist Broadcasting in Southern Africa', *African Media Review*, 8, 1, 1994, 1–24.

Yussuf: It is convenient for the Makonde to justify their occupation. Because, after independence they entered Mocímboa and started Makonde-owned businesses, Makonde zones, stores.

Carmeliza: Were there no Makonde in the coast, prior to independence?

Yussuf: Very few. They came and went and were labourers. Christianity has an important role in that division. In Ibo, for example, Christians and Muslims got along well. Frei João dos Santos did not like it and forbade Christian women from partaking in Muslim dances and ceremonies, calling them satanic rites. There are interesting comments to interventions by Chipande⁴⁵ on Facebook. Like: ‘You’re tribalists. The war is happening because you want to exterminate the Mwani, pursue the Makhwa. You took their land. If you give it back to them, the war will end.’

Leonor Correia de Matos⁴⁶ says that where there is high population density, the land tends to be privatised. Land has two dimensions, the individual’s, the farmer’s, the first one to arrive; and the king’s, the sovereign’s, which is inherited. Everywhere, the borders of the sovereign’s land were known, and people paid tribute. It was a form of private property. The post-independence cooperativisation was a way to fight private property.

On peace

Carmeliza: Is making peace equivalent to ending the war?

Yussuf: Ending the war is negative peace. What we need is positive peace, eliminating the conditions for war. There is a difference.

Carmeliza: What is the finality of what we have been talking and thinking about? Reflecting through the snakes, we see that there is a continuity in development policies, there is a continuity in the logic of foreign aid or foreign investment, which contribute, create or exacerbate conflict and destabilisation. It is a vicious cycle. How do we exit this?

Yussuf: Basically, you need to respect human rights and have a constitution where everyone has rights.

Carmeliza: Don’t we already have a constitution where everyone has rights?

Yussuf: Frelimo imposed the constitution we have. It was not the result of a constitutive assembly. The constitution needs to follow the wishes of the people.

45 High ranking former freedom fighter, presumably the shooter of the independence struggle’s first bullet. He is also the mentor of the current president, Filipe Nyusi.

46 M. L. Correia de Matos, *Notas Sobre o Direito de Propriedade Da Terra Dos Povos Angoni, Acheua e Ajava Da Provincia de Moçambique*, Série C (Instituto de Investigação Científica de Moçambique, 1965).

Carmeliza: And what if the wishes of the people are contradictory? For example, conservative Muslims and neo-traditionalist are now at odds with feminists regarding women's rights, and all are equally Mozambican.

Yussuf: We must negotiate a solution. Mats Friberg, a Swedish social scientist discusses four important factors: values, value-judgement, theory and objectives. The objective is not the object of the study. People usually confuse the two. The objective is to understand what is going on. Basically, fight for peace and the wellbeing of people. This is the objective of the scientific work that we do. That means that peace is the balance of relationships, you don't want torture, you don't want domination, oppression.

Carmeliza: For a long while there was a project that led, if not the majority of people, at least the most influent institutions of the country to follow values and ways of being, and an ideal of a nation that did not necessarily match the feelings that the majority identified with. The idea was that whatever happened...

Yussuf: ... the inequities of the past, both colonial and pre-colonial, would not be repeated. But there was no clean slate with the past, at least discursively.

Carmeliza: In the past decade, however, I feel that those idealised values have not been followed by the institutions and their current administrators. They are more populist and hung up on power for the sake of power. I wonder if it will be possible to find the balance of relationships, consensus, ability to relate to and accept other values. For example, violence is accepted as a reasonable response to prevent crime. It's the example of the local militia, which people defend because the state does not have the capacity to respond. We went through a similar process when the traditional leaderships were reinstated. According to Irâe Lundin's reports the traditional leaders wanted to reinstitute corporal punishment, and it was necessary to reign them in.⁴⁷

Yussuf: It is necessary to be very careful. It is a matter of definition. If one accepts torture, in whichever form, one enters a bottomless well. The former freedom fighters, in the time of Renamo, went from village to village presenting captured rebel fighters and delivering them to the population, who lynched them. There was violence, but it was unimaginable that people with that level of historical responsibility could be complicit with such barbarity.

It is so that Maria's, God's daughter's story continues to be true today...

47 I. B. Lundin and F. J. Machava, *Autoridade e Poder Tradicional*, Autoridade e Poder Tradicional (Ministério da Administração Estatal, Núcleo de Desenvolvimento Administrativo, 1995).