

**Problems of Democratic Transition  
in Mozambique: A Look over Two  
Decades of Electoral Politics**

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**ABSTRACT**

Independent from Portuguese colonial system in 1975, the new-born Mozambique elected Marxism-Leninism political ideology to guide its future. However, forced by an endemic socio-economic crisis generated by a brutal civil war that started two years after the national independence, the country started a series of economic and political reforms in the early 1980s that resulted in the peace agreement in 1992 and its first multiparty elections in 1994. This process has been acclaimed worldwide as one of the most peaceful and successful post-conflict socio-political transition. Indeed, the process of democratisation in Mozambique can be considered successful in the sense that it was able to keep alive peace and socio-economic stability in the country. However, analysing the

**Introduction**

The process of democratisation in Mozambique is part of a bigger socio-political transformation movement initiated in the mid-1970s in Europe and quickly spilled over Latin America, Asia, and Africa generally known as the third wave. As we will see later in the next section of this paper, the social, economic, and political reforms that led to the Mozambican democratic transition in 1980s and early 1990s were mainly triggered by internal factors such as the hardships produced by a civil war that broke soon after the national independence in 1975. This process is rightly referred to as one of the most successful post-conflict socio-political transition. In fact, the Mozambican post-war democratic transition was very fruitful in the sense that it reached its goal, that is, ended the war and its associated socio-economic hardships. However, looking back to the history of the process of democratisation of Mozambique since its inception, one may correctly conclude that it did not experience any appreciable development in terms of democratic consolidation. Indeed, the process of democratisation in Mozambique did not pass the Samuel P. Huntington's "two-turnover test" nor can we claim the country is more democratic after four rounds of relatively stable presidential and parliamentary elections as Staffan I. Lindberg would make us believe.

In this context, seeking to answer the question why the electoral processes did not contribute to the development and consolidation of democratic rule in Mozambique, this paper discusses the obstacles to democratic and institutional development. To reach this goal, it uses historical and comparative methods combined with documentary techniques. Generally speaking, by using historical method this work was able to examine the process of democratisation in Mozambique since its inception in the early 1980s. The comparative method was useful in capturing the similarities with other third wave countries, especially those in Sub-Saharan Africa. Finally, the documentary technique dealt with the literature sources that this paper was based on. As for the structure, this paper is organized as follows. Section I, the current introduction, presents brief contextual and methodological considerations of this work. Section II brings the historical evolution of the process of democratisation in Mozambique since its birth in the early 1980s. Section III seeks to answer the research question of this paper by discussing the obstacles to democratic development and consolidation in Mozambique. Finally, section IV concludes this paper suggesting some political reforms to mitigate these obstacles and develop a genuine democratic political system in Mozambique as well as other developing countries.

**The Process of Democratisation in Mozambique**

Mozambique is a Southern African country that was under Portuguese colonial system until 1975. Soon after the declaration of its independence, Mozambican leaders decided to adopt the Marxist-Leninist ideology to guide the future of the newly founded Peoples Republic of Mozambique. In fact, the country adopted its socialist-oriented constitution and the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO)<sup>1</sup> was formally transformed into vanguard party in its third congress in 1977. As a result of this ideological move, FRELIMO's government decided to assist other liberation movements seeking independence in the Southern African region. In 1976, for instance, Mozambique decided to implement the United Nations Security Resolution 253 (1968), of 28 May imposing sanctions to then Southern Rhodesia (nowadays Zimbabwe), cutting all trade and communication links with Rhodesian apartheid regime<sup>2</sup>. Apart from a huge negative economic impact, these solidarity actions triggered anger of apartheid regimes of Southern Rhodesia and South Africa which started to openly conduct military incursions and sponsor destabilisation activities inside Mozambique, culminating with formation of a rebel movement named Mozambique National Resistance (MNR)<sup>3</sup>. In other words, "the major cost of the Mozambican support for the Zimbabwean nationalists did not become apparent until later, when the opposition movement in Mozambique created by the Rhodesian intelligence services was transferred to South African tutelage, thereafter blossoming into a guerrilla movement capable of creating major disruptions in Mozambique" (Ottaway 1988: 223). Indeed, as a result of the emergence of this apartheid sponsored guerrilla movement, two years after its independence (1977), Mozambique found itself in a bloody civil conflict catalysed by the Cold War rivalries.

Economically and socially devastated by the already long civil war and exacerbated by natural disasters such as drought, Mozambique tried in early 1980s to seek external help from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and socialist bloc in general. An example of this being the 1981 happenings; the country desperately sought to get some economic assistance by joining the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON)<sup>4</sup>. Unfortunately the application was rejected allegedly as the country did not meet all conditions to be considered a socialist nation. In this perspective, left without any other choice and unable to cope with the socio-economic and security situation, Mozambican leaders started to rhetorically distance themselves from Moscow and socialist ideology and were forced to search for some proximity to the capitalist bloc. As a result of

political developments of the last twenty years, this paper argues that the democratic system in Mozambique did not experience any appreciable progress toward the consolidation of the multiparty politics. In fact, the electoral politics in Mozambique is being shadowed by multiple electoral malpractices that are preventing the development of democratic institutions necessary to the development and consolidation of any multiparty and inclusive political system. In this perspective, this paper acknowledges the necessity of deep institutional reforms in order to mitigate the shortcomings of the democratic system in Mozambique.

**KEY WORDS:**  
 Democratisation,  
 Electoral malpractices,  
 Democratic  
 Consolidation.

this strategic move, in its fourth party congress in April 1983, FRELIMO decide to gradually change its political orientation in order to attract political sympathy and economic aid from the West. An example of this being: in 1984 Mozambique signed a “non-aggression and good neighbourliness” pact (Nkomati Agreement) with South African apartheid regime at the time considered a common enemy by all Sub-Saharan African countries (Alden & Simpson 1993: 112) and joined the Bretton Woods institution – International Monetary Fund (IMF) and International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). It was in this context that the country started to implement IMF and IBRD’s sponsored Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) in 1987. It was here that the process of economic and political liberalisation of the People’s Republic of Mozambique started.

Soon after introducing the IMF and World Bank’s sponsored economic reforms through the SAP, Mozambique started to work on the legal framework to implement necessary political reforms that would accommodate the conditionalities tied to the financial assistance of these two international financial institutions and international community in general. For instance, in 1990 the then People’s National Assembly approved the first liberal constitution in Mozambique. Generally speaking, the 1990’s constitution introduced deep alterations in almost all legal and ideological aspects of Mozambique. Politically, it introduced for the first time the multiparty democratic system. This means that Mozambique was no longer a one-party guided country. In fact, it opened the political space to other voices and formally institutionalised democratic system where elections became the only legal way to achieve political power. In addition, the country officially switched from a planned economy to a market-oriented one. In this perspective, the private sector was re-activated and stimulated, and the State became a mere passive agent in the economy only performing regulatory functions. Another important fact lies in the social arena; Mozambicans saw their individual and political rights and guarantees increased. At the same time they became active actors in the political decision making process through direct participation in the political life of the country via regular general and local elections.

These deep reforms on political, economic, and social arenas paved the way to solve the long and bloody civil war and transform former warring enemies from armed movements to civil political parties. As a result of these political developments, the Government of Mozambique (GOM) and the then rebel movement – Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) – signed the General Peace Agreement in October 4, 1992. RENAMO was legalised and recognised as civil political party and

alongside the ruling party, FRELIMO and other newly founded political parties started to prepare themselves to compete in the first multiparty and democratic elections that took place in October 27, 1994<sup>5</sup>.

### **Post-conflict Elections and the Development of Democratic Rule in Mozambique**

Since the introduction of the multiparty and democratic political system by the first liberal constitution and the General Peace Agreement, the space for competitive elections opened. In fact, even though it was delayed, the founding elections<sup>6</sup> in Mozambique took place in October 1994. Mozambicans went to cast their vote for the first time in a multiparty and democratic election to choose the president and the members of the national parliament. These founding elections were followed by other presidential and parliamentary elections in December 1999, December 2004 and October 2009 respectively. The four presidential and parliamentary elections were intercalated with local elections in June 1998, November 2003, and November 2008. With the total voter turnout around 88 percent, the presidential and parliamentary elections of 1994 were the most participated among all electoral processes that took place in Mozambique. As Iraê Baptista Lundin rightly put it, “the 1994 democratic election and its outcome surely helped deepen reconciliation between the belligerent parties” (Baptista Lundin 2004: 98).

However, the enthusiasm of the first democratic elections soon disappeared in subsequent electoral processes and with it, the chances to consolidate the democratic political system in Mozambique. In fact, many scholars interested in the process of democratisation of Mozambique are now concerned with the lack of progress in terms of development of democratic institutions including political parties and consolidation of the whole democratic system. For instance, Carrie Manning addressed problems of electoral processes in Guebuza’s administration and its impact on the development of democratic rule in Mozambique in her most recent article about the democratic process in Mozambique entitled “Mozambique’s Slide into One-party Rule” (Manning 2010). Indeed, in her previous similar works, Manning found that Mozambique follows the two-track strategy using formal and informal institutions to settle electoral conflicts which is beneficial to the democratic system in the short run, but negative to the elite habituation, institutional development and democratic consolidation in the long run (Manning 2002 and 2008). In addition, analysing the problems of electoral processes in Mozambique,

some scholars pointed out that the lack of transparency of the electoral administrative bodies in conjunction with polarisation tendency of the Mozambican political system is the main factor of low levels of voter turnouts and lack of democratic development and consolidation (Ostheimer 2005; Garbone 2005). Accordingly, the Mozambican political system suffers from a lack of competitive opposition parties and legitimacy of the electoral processes as a whole (refer to table 1 below). As Giovanni Garbone put it, “although all three rounds of national elections were recognised by observers as actual expressions of the voters’ will, in each case there were complaints about the results being either fixed by the two main parties or unilaterally manipulated by FRELIMO” (Garbone 2005: 440).

Table 1. Parliamentary Elections Results in Mozambique, 1994-2009

Total Number of Votes				
	1994	1999	2004	2009
NATIONAL	5,404,199	4,821,499	<b>3,321,926</b>	<b>4,387,250</b>
FRELIMO	2,115,793	2,008,165	1,889,054	2,907,335
RENAMO	1,803,506	1,604,470	905,289	688,782
3 <sup>rd</sup> PARTY	245,793	111,280	60,758	17,275
Total Percentage of Votes and Number of Parliamentary Seats				
NATIONAL	<b>87.90% (250)</b>	<b>69.54 % (250)</b>	<b>36.42% (250)</b>	<b>44.44% (250)</b>
FRELIMO	44.33% (129)	48.55% (133)	62.03% (160)	74.66% (191)
RENAMO	37.78% (112)	38.79% (117)	29.73% (90)	17.69% (51)
3 <sup>rd</sup> PARTY	5.15% (9)*	2.69% (0)*	2.00% (0)*	3.93% (8)**
<b>Legend:</b>				
3 <sup>rd</sup> PARTY = the third most voted political party. Democratic Union (UD) in 1994; Labour Party (PT) in 1999; Party of Peace, Democracy, and Development (PDD) in 2004; Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM) in 2009.				
*Parties were required to reach 5% of the total nation-wide votes to gain seats in the Parliament.				
**The 5% threshold was removed in 2007 by the new electoral law nr.7/2007.				
All data in this table was compiled by the author using official results published by electoral administrative bodies.				

In short, all scholars and students of the process of democratisation in Mozambique unanimously agree that despite the incontestable political achievements in

terms of peace and instability, Mozambique still has a long way to go in terms of institutional development and democratic consolidation. Irãe Baptista Lundin, analysing the evolution of the electoral law since the founding elections in 1994, perfectly summarises this trend of democratic and political development in Mozambique. In her article “Towards Stable Electoral Laws in Mozambique”, Baptista Lundin concludes that even though “in terms of legislation the system has been developing in Mozambique in a positive way, (...) and the pluralism of the political system has kept peace alive (...), it has not yet been able to consolidate the principle of interaction, giving and taking for the common good in order to construct a peaceful situation in state affairs above the classical definition of peace concentrating only on the absence of war” (Baptista Lundin 2004: 116/7). We may ask, why did this successful socio-political transition did not contribute to the development and consolidation of democratic rule in the post-conflict Mozambique? With the objective of shedding some light to this question, the next section explores the obstacles to democratic development and consolidation in Mozambique.

### Obstacles to Development of Democratic Rule in Mozambique

#### Ballot Fraud and Vote Buying

Among the most studied obstacles to democratic consolidation, this paper focus on electoral strategies such as vote buying, ballot fraud, and political violence. These electoral malpractices are perceived as the main factors responsible for the lack of development and consolidation of the democratic system and institutions in Mozambique in particular, and Africa in general. To be sure, one of the most common malpractices of all newly democratised countries, especially those in Africa is the use of ballot fraud and vote buying and/or clientelism as electoral strategies by political parties and candidates. In fact, ballot fraud is the most common among all illegal electoral strategies. Andrew Gumbel in his article “Elections and the Myths of American Democracy” describes in detail the various forms that ballot fraud assume even in those countries considered developed or consolidated democracies such as United States of America (Gumbel 2008). To numerous democratisation scholars, the most common forms of ballot fraud are (a) ballot stuffing and improper ballot nullification as was allegedly the case of Iranian presidential elections of 2009 (Mebane 2010) and the 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections in Mozambique (EU EOM 2004, EISA 2005, Hanlon

& and Fox 2006, Manning 2010; Wimpy 2011). In these countries the incumbents are accused to artificially fixing the results by stuffing ballots in proportions that the voter turnout reached unrealistic figures and in some electoral constituencies exceeded the number of registered or eligible voters. (b) The making up of election results by miscounting votes or manipulating tally sheets either by increasing the favoured party or candidate's votes or reducing his opponent's. For example, this is reported to be the case of the 2007 presidential elections in Kenya where the incumbent Mwai Kibaki was suddenly declared the winner after his rival Raila Odinga was leading in the vote counting (Dercon & Gutiérrez-Romero 2010). (c) The manipulation of electoral law to favour certain candidate or political party in detriment to the other (Gumbel 2008). As it can easily be noted by looking at the examples cited above, these illegal electoral strategies are common in developing countries. This is maybe why some scholars connect the phenomenon of ballot fraud with socioeconomic inequality (Ziblatt 2009). Other non-violent illegal electoral strategies are vote buying or/and clientelism, though these practices received less attention among scholars and election observer missions in Africa compared to other regions such as Latina America and Asia. In fact, if we define vote buying as offering to voters of money or other consumption goods by political actors in exchange for vote (Brusco, Nazareno & Stokes 2004: 67) then we will all agree that this electoral strategy is also largely used in Africa. In addition, the common phenomenon of votes for cash and/or other fungible goods in Africa and other developing countries is complemented to or reinforced with the proffering of favours such as job or political position attached to condition of the buyer being elected, a practice known as clientelism (Vicente and Wantchekon 2009).

Why and at what extend ballot fraud, vote buying and/or clientelism is bad for and illegal in democratic political system? First of all, these electoral strategies damage the quality of democracy in the sense that they deprive voters of the right to exercise their constitutionally recognised freedom of choice, reduces the voter turnout<sup>7</sup>, diminishes the legitimacy of electoral contests, and exacerbate the political inequality since the target of these strategies are the most vulnerable groups of the society: the poor and uneducated people (Brusco, Nazareno & Stokes 2004; Bratton 2008; Nicheter 2008; Vicente and Wantchekon 2009; Morgan and Várdy 2010; Collier & Vicente 2010). Indeed, almost all academic works reviewed in this paper are unanimous in asserting that the main target of these illegal electoral strategies is generally the most vulnerable people of a given country. For instance, Brusco, Nazareno & Stokes 2004 argue the low-income people, especially those

who live in the small neighbourhoods or constituencies are the one who matches the vote-seller profile. In the same perspective, Vicente and Wantchekon (2009), Bratton (2008), and Morgan and Várdy (2010) argue that poor people, those who do not know how to read and write, and those who lack any kind of political information are the natural target of vote buyers. The immediate consequence of this tendency is that the politicians will always perpetuate poverty of this class of people in particular and the country in general (Gersbach & Mühe 2011, Vicente & Wantchekon 2009, and Collier & Vicente 2010) in order to continue to explore their weakness. This seems to be true either in Mozambique, Nigeria, Argentina, or Thailand as academic works reviewed here documents.

As for the solution to these electoral malpractices, most of the democratisation scholars assert that policy reforms can help mitigate them and improve the quality democracy and democratic institutions. Brusco, Nazareno, and Stokes (2004) argue that enforcing laws forbidding the distribution of certain goods during election periods may prevent the phenomenon of vote buying. In addition to this, these authors believe that ballot reforms intended to limit the ability of political parties and candidates to monitor voters is also essential. Institutional reforms and civic education are two other advocated solutions to prevent ballot fraud and vote buying (Bratton 2008; Vicente & Wantchekon 2009). These authors argue that voter education and media coverage may improve the levels of information, hence give voters the ability to freely choose the candidates who they think will efficiently provide public good. Finally, arguing that electoral systems with secret ballot<sup>8</sup> can generate negative vote buying (paying voters to abstain), Morgan and Várdy 2010 assert that the problem of vote buying in particular and electoral corruption in general might be mitigated with policy reforms combining secret ballots with mandatory voting. Generally speaking, these were also the common recommendations present in virtually all final reports of election observer missions to Mozambique cited throughout this paper.

On the whole, while the phenomenon of vote-buying and clientelism is almost absent from the Mozambican political official discourse, allegations of ballot fraud can be found almost everywhere. To be sure, ballot fraud in the form of ballot stuffing and other misconducts such as improper ballot nullification, intentional organisational failure of the electoral administrative bodies is present in the main opposition parties' complaints, election observers missions' reports and some academic papers since the founding elections in 1994 (The Carter Center 2000; EU EOM 2004; EISA 2005; Garbone 2005; Hanlon & Fox 2006; EU EOM 2009; EISA



2010; Manning 2010). For instance, Joseph Hanlon and Sean Fox taking the case of the 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections concluded, based on their detailed statistical analysis, that “ballot stuffing, improper ballot nullification and organisational failure did take place on a large scale in Mozambique (Hanlon & Fox 2006: 27). However, these scholars in line with election observer mission and official electoral administrative bodies’ statements and reports unanimously claim that the overall elections result was not affected by the fraud (The Carter Center 2000; EU EOM 2004, Ostheimer 2005; Hanlon & Fox 2006, EU EOM 2009, EISA 2010). However, even though this may be true, if we look at individual electoral processes, the same cannot be expected when the process of democratisation, the development and consolidation of democratic rule as a whole are taken in consideration. In other words, the ballot fraud, vote buying, and other electoral misconducts may not affect the individual election result but they certainly damage the prospects for democratic development and consolidation in Mozambique.

### **Electoral Violence in Mozambique**

Departing from the commonly accepted assumption behind the peacebuilding missions that democracy is the only political system most likely to bring sustainable peace and stability, Christoph Zürcher (2011) argues that in most cases peacebuilding missions failed to carry out their main goal, that is, democracy and stability. Trying to explain why this opposite outcome is happening, he cited various factors, especially highlighting the nonexistence of required resources and capacity to sustain democratic governance. In addition, contrary to widely accepted assumptions, the process of democratisation may increase the occurrence of violent collective actions when taken in the context of undeveloped or non-existent democratic institutions. This fact happens because the process of democratisation opens space for intense competition between different actors and interest groups while the new democratic system is still very weak and incapable to regulate it (Zürcher 2011; Mansfield and Snyder 2002a: 299). For this reason, most scholars interested in the process of democratisation of developing countries conclude that the good outcome that is attributed to democracy may only happen when the installed democratic system is profoundly consolidated (Collier 2009; Mansfield and Snyder 2002a: 300). Bruce A. Magnusson (2001: 211), for example, taking Benin as his case study showed how the process of democratisation can affect the “configuration of domestic security”. According to him, in new democracies, insecurity emerges from the uncertainties that the democratic processes

bring, that is, multiplicity of actors and interests that have to be considerate in the distribution of power and decision making, combined with incapacities of new institutions of public order. In other words, like the previously cited scholars, Bruce A. Magnusson identified the weakness of political or democratic institutions as the main causal mechanism linking the process of democratisation and the occurrence of political violence “in newly democratising countries of the developing world, whether in the former Soviet Union, Cambodia, the Congo, El Salvador, or Nigeria” (Magnusson 2001: 212).

In addition, in his chapter “Political Parties and Violence in Africa: Systematic Reflections against Empirical Background”, Andreas Mehler analysed the relationship between political parties and violence in Africa. Using six francophone African countries namely Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo Brazzaville, and Côte d’Ivoire, Mehler found that violence is used both by ruling and opposition parties as a political instrument and as such it is established as a mode of political competition (Mehler 2007: 197). Furthermore, describing different shapes and variations that political violence takes, Mehler (2007: 199-208) asserts that “the use of violence by political parties depends on a variety of factors [such as] the cause and outcome of the transition, the depth of social cleavages, the quality of the monopoly of violence, the legitimacy and efficiency of the electoral process and the organizational capacities of parties themselves”. Accordingly, these factors also serve as favouring and/or constraining conditions of the use of violence as a dominant mode of political contest (Mehler 2007: 208-211). As a whole, this author argues that in Africa, “the frequency of use of violence might not be a coincidence” (Mehler 2007: 217); it is consciously used as a political tool in the process of democratisation. In the same line of analysis, Liisa Laakso discussed this issue throughout her article “The problem of electoral violence in Africa”. Based on the finding that 80% of elections in Africa witnessed some kind of electoral violence, Laakso (2007) argues that in the context of political transition parties and other political actors, violence is or can be used within the democratic game. In other words, quoting Patrick Quantin (1998), Liisa Laakso asserts that “political transition leads to electoral violence”. This fact seems to be true in Africa and elsewhere. For instance, Quantin (1998) argues that even the now consolidated western democracies (e.g. France in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) faced electoral violence similar to one that Africa is experiencing nowadays. As Liisa Laakso noted, Quantin’s “analysis suggests that violence correlates with the meaningfulness of the elections which, of course, is very high during periods of transition (Laakso 2007: 27)”. Defining electoral violence as “an activity motivated

by an attempt to affect the results of election – either by manipulating the electoral procedures and participation or by contesting the legitimacy of result”<sup>9</sup> (*ibidem* 228), the author tried to show through her case studies (Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe) that this phenomenon is common in African democratic games. This conclusion seems to support Mehler’s finding that political violence is used as a political instrument or mode of democratic participation in most African countries. Highlighting other variables, namely political elites<sup>10</sup> and institutions, Peter VonDoepp and Leonardo A. Villalón (2005) also analysed problems of democratic transition and consolidation that African countries are facing nowadays. VonDoepp and Villalón (2005: 12), defining democracy “as a system in which institutions constrains the behaviour of political elites”, argue that the study of the process of democratisation in Africa should pay more attention to the relationship between political elites and institutions.

Contrary to the view of the previously cited scholars, Staffan I. Lindberg, another scholar concerned with the process of democratisation, addresses this issue in the first chapter of *Democratization by Elections* entitled “The Power of Elections in Africa”. He states that repetitions of elections significantly “improve and spread democracy” and helps to create democrats (Lindberg 2009: 34, 37). However, Lindberg (2009) recognizes that Africa still has low levels of electoral results acceptance and high levels of political violence. As a consequence of this finding, Lindberg (2009: 34) argues that in Africa, “we need democratic institutions and rights that can stack up incentives and costs in ways that increase the cost of repression, while facilitating and rewarding democratic behaviour among both incumbents and opposition leaders”. Sharing the same view and highlighting the role of opposition parties, one of key political institution in the process of democratisation, Lise Rakner and Nicolas van de Walle argue that “strengthening opposition political parties and their position in the national legislature is a central component of any strategy of democratisation by elections” (Rakner & van de Walle 2009: 203). In brief, analysing more closely these academic works on democratisation and political violence in Africa, this paper found significant and interesting similarities concerning the importance of strong political institutions in the process of democratic transition and consolidation. Summing up, almost all democratisation scholars highlight the impact of weak institutions on the process of democratisation. Accordingly, institutional weakness is referred to be the main causal mechanism linking the process of democratisation and the failure of establishing democracy in developing countries, on one hand, and

the outbreak of political violence on the other. As a whole, electoral violence is most likely to be the most effective and thus preferred electoral strategy either by incumbents (voter intimidation) or by opposition (post-election violence) to change the elections results in their favour (Chatuverdi 2005; Collier & Vicente 2011; and Bratton 2008). In this perspective, even though election-related violence in Mozambique is not statistically significant compared with other well-known African cases such as Zimbabwe and Kenya, it deserves some consideration in this paper. In fact, pre and post-election contentious politics episodes in Mozambique are very insignificant if one compares its frequency and magnitude with those of other similar cases in Africa. Still, it is worth discussing considering its effect on the development and consolidation of democratic rule. In the case of Mozambique, the small and insignificant episodes of voter intimidation during electoral campaigns and post-election violence are reported to have forced some political parties to completely abandon their electoral campaigns and most importantly pushed voters away from ballot boxes (The Carter Center 2000; EU EOM 2004; EISA 2010).

In fact, the period after the installation of democratic governance or opening of political space to the common citizens and other political actors represented a nightmare for some Sub-Saharan African political elites and governments. This is so in the sense that we observed (and still observing) the emergence of innovative forms, at least within Sub-Saharan African society, of collective political action: mass demonstrations, public marches and more recently riots. In Mozambique, for instance, phenomena such as popular unrest and political protests become common (AIM 2000, Hanlon 2008). As has previously been mentioned, Mozambique is neither a representative nor a unique case among African countries when the topic is contentious politics. For example, “Zambia witnessed violent riots in December 1986, when the price of maize meal was doubled as a result of subsidy cuts under an IMF-sponsored economic adjustment plan. Benin’s capital, Cotonou, was rocked by public sector strikes all through 1989, as civil servants protested against accumulated arrears in salaries” (Bratton & van de Walle 1992: 422). The initially non-political student and civil servants protests and demonstrations against increasing the rising cost of life gradually acquired political characteristics soon after the process of democratisation. For instance, Michael Bratton & Nicolas van de Walle noted that “spurred by deepening economic hardship and reacting against heavy-handed regime reactions, protesters began to insist on systemic political changes. For the first time, particularistic interests took a

back seat to general calls for the ejection of national leaders” (*ibidem*: 424). In fact, we can observe this kind of contention politics events in almost all African countries since their founding elections back in 1990’s, even though the level of organisation and violence vary from election to election and country to country. To illustrate this trend, the attention of this paper goes to the most salient episodes of political violence that took place in Mozambique after the second presidential and parliamentary elections held in December 1999. Naturally, within all these after-1999 general elections’ contentious politics episodes, this work highlights the deadliest one which happened in a small district village of the Mozambican northern province of Cabo Delgado named Montepuez.

Almost one year after the December 1999 general elections, the main opposition and defeated political party (RENAMO) decided to organise a series of demonstrations throughout the country protesting against the election results alleging they were fraudulent. The contentious events started on 9 November 2000 and took place in all ten provinces of the country with some degree of violence, even though the worst cases were registered in some Central and Northern provinces where RENAMO has a large number of supporters. As has been noted, one of these worse episodes which deserve to be highlighted here is Montepuez, in which the death toll is estimated to be over 200, including 82 demonstrators who died asphyxiated in a prison as a result of its overcapacity. In a few words, the riots of November 2000 share the same characteristics: the rioters (allegedly RENAMO supporters) attacked official buildings such as office of administrators of provincial districts, police stations and the district jails where they released prisoners and looted guns. As expected, the government used highly repressive means as a response to this wave of mass demonstrations, public marches and riots; although in some places they were held peacefully<sup>11</sup>. Undoubtedly, these contentious events in Mozambique remind us of similar happenings in Kenya and Zimbabwe in 2008. In Kenya for example, after the December 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections, supporters of the opposition leader Raila Odinga entered the streets to protest the electoral results, which were, according to the opposition, fictitiously favourable to the incumbent Mwai Kibaki. The nearly four months riots and political violence almost turned into civil war with thousands of deaths and internally displaced persons (IDPs) when the crisis saw its end in April 2008 when Kibaki and Odinga announced a power-sharing agreement (Goldstein & Rotich 2008, Roberts 2009, Dercon & Gutiérrez-Romero 2010). As for Zimbabwe, the opposition party (Movement for Democratic Change – MDC) organised a general strike

to demand the announcement of delayed electoral results. Like in Mozambique and Kenya, the government responded violently, starting in this way a long and deadly post-election violence ended also with power-sharing agreement in February 2009 in which the opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai became Prime Minister, joining in this way the incumbent President Robert Mugabe’s unity government (EISA 2008, Hickman 2009, Ploch 2010). As a whole and needless to say, more than other illegal electoral strategies, voter intimidation and post-election violence have a devastating effect on development and consolidation of democratic rule especially in newly democratised countries such as Mozambique.

#### **Weak Democratic Institutions and the Polarisation of Political System in Mozambique**

Being a highly conflictual process in its nature, the process of democratisation requires for its implantation, development and consolidation strong and stable democratic institutions<sup>12</sup>. Recognising the importance of these features, Samuel P. Huntington in his book *Political Order in Changing Societies*, published for the first time in 1968, argued that developing countries such as Mozambique suffer from a “widespread of blatant corruption among cabinet ministers and civil servants, arbitrary infringement of the rights and liberties of citizens, declining standards of bureaucratic efficiency and performance, the pervasive alienation of urban political groups, the loss of authority by legislatures and courts, and the fragmentation and at times complete disintegration of broadly based political parties” (Huntington 1968/2006: 2). According to this well-known scholar, these problems are “in large part the product of rapid social change and the rapid mobilisation of new groups into politics coupled with slow development of political institutions” (*Ibidem*: 4). In fact, like Samuel P. Huntington (1968/2006 and 1991), other democratisation scholars recognise the importance of building strong political institutions if the aim is to have a consolidated democratic system, reduce the frequency and levels of political violence including other electoral malpractices. For instance, Jack Bielasiak noted that “the development of electoral systems and political parties is essential for democracies to function well. Therefore, the institutionalisation of viable parties within well-established electoral rules is critical to the consolidation of democracy in the former communist world” (Bielasiak 2002: 189). In the same perspective, enumerating the conditions or “arenas” of consolidated democracy, Juan José Linz and Alfred C. Stepan also highlighted the importance of strong institutions in the following terms:



If a functioning state exists, five other interconnected and mutually reinforced conditions must also exist or be crafted for a democracy to be consolidated. First, the conditions must exist for the development of a free and lively civil society. Second, there must be a relatively autonomous and valued political society. Third, there must be a rule of law to ensure legal guarantees for citizens' freedoms and independent associational life. Fourth, there must be a state bureaucracy that is usable by the new democratic government. Fifth, there must be an institutionalised economic society (Lins and Stepan 1996: 7).

In this context and recognising that many developing countries lack these conditions, one may conclude that the democratising principle that all "governments should be based on free and fair elections" is empty and/or irrelevant in the context of weak or non-existence of effective political institutions. On the whole, "elections to be meaningful presuppose a certain level of political organisation" (Huntington 1968/2006: 7). In other words, without strong and effective political institutions or organisations (in Huntington's terminology) "elections serve only to enhance the power of disruptive and often reactionary social forces and tear down the structure of public authority" (*ibidem*). Summing up, weakness of democratic institutions such as electoral administration bodies and political parties is partly responsible for the multiple electoral malpractices and, as a consequence, lack of development and consolidation of the democratic political system in developing countries.

Political polarisation is another problem for the development and consolidation of democratic rule in newly democratised countries. Political polarisation is detrimental to democratic development in the sense that it limits the political competition to only two parties, narrowing the options available to voters. It also leads to a very low voter turnout since voters lose their interest when confronted with lack of political options (Akinda 1989; Barnes 1998). In Mozambique, for instance, the political arena is since the founding elections (1994) dominated by two former belligerents, that is, the ruling FRELIMO and the main opposition party RENAMO, even though the latter is continuously losing ground election after election as presented by table 1 in the second section of this paper. Indeed, most scholars interested in the process of democratisation in Mozambique recognise this fact as one of the contributing factors to the lack of progress of democratic governance. For instance, recognising that "the more political parties develop as durable, socially rooted, country-wide effective and legitimate organisations, the more they contribute to the consolidation of democratic politics" (Garbone 2005: 418), In

fact, Garbone argues that polarisation of Mozambican polity is the main factor for slow or non-existent democratic development. In the same line of thinking, Manning (2002) showed that the dual use of formal and informal institution to settle electoral conflicts, generally practiced when the political system is polarised, may be beneficial to the democratic system in the short run but it is negative to the elite habituation, institutional development and democratic consolidation in the long run. As a whole, the development of the democratic process in Mozambique is not only blocked by electoral malpractices, but also by the weakness of electoral administrative bodies and political parties as well as the polarisation tendency of the political system.

## Conclusion

The process of democratisation in Mozambique is a part of global socio-political transformation also known as the third wave of democratisation. These socio-political transformations started in the early 1980s culminating with the adoption of the first multiparty constitution in 1990, the signature of General Peace Agreement in 1992, and the realisation of the founding presidential and parliamentary elections in 1994. For this and other reasons, it has greatly attracted attention and enthusiasm among members of the international community, donors, and scholars of democratisation and was soon after labelled one of the most successful post-conflict democratisation process. In fact, judging from its ability to enable a smooth and peaceful transition, it deserves all the credit. Yet, looking closely at the process since its establishment, one can clearly see that the country did not experience any palpable evolution in terms of democratic development and consolidation. Taking this trend into consideration, this paper claims that electoral malpractices such as ballot fraud, vote buying, and political violence are the main obstacles to the development and consolidation of democratic rule in Mozambique. In addition to these problems are the weakness of the political institutions and the polarising tendency of the political space and its consequent lack of freedom of choice.

As has been mentioned in this paper these electoral malpractices damage the quality of democracy in the sense that they deprive the voters the right to exercise their constitutionally recognised freedom of choice. It also reduces the voter turnout and the legitimacy of electoral contests, while exacerbating the socio-political inequality since they are mainly directed to the most vulnerable groups of

the society. Even though voter intimidation and post-election violence is not as significant in Mozambique, they deserve to be mentioned. This is because voter intimidation, post-electoral violence have a huge and devastating effect on development and consolidation of democratic rule especially in newly democratised countries such as Mozambique. In this perspective, electoral reforms aiming to discourage electoral malpractices as well as to boost democratic institutions should deserve more attention if we want a genuine and consolidated democratic system in Mozambique and other developing countries. In the case of Mozambique, for example, institutional reforms in order to boost independence and transparency of key electoral administrative bodies such is National Electoral Commission (CNE), Technical Secretariat for Electoral Administration (STAE) and the Constitutional Council (CC) need to take place urgently. As a matter of fact, this are widely advocated measures in the majority of electoral reports issued by various election observation missions to Mozambique. In addition, the country needs legal reforms in order to broaden and allow fair political competition for all political parties, groups, and individuals.

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- <sup>1</sup> Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) is the Mozambican ruling party since the country's independence in 1975. It was founded in 1962 as an anti-colonial liberation movement and in 1977 transformed itself in "vanguard party" meaning that it was the only acceptable and legitimate representative of all Mozambicans until the adoption of the first democratic Constitution in 1990.
- <sup>2</sup> The Mozambican government's decision to cut all trade and communication links with Southern Rhodesia was immediately supported by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) through its Resolution 386 (1976), of 17 March 1976
- <sup>3</sup> Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) is the main opposition party in Mozambique. It was founded soon after the proclamation of independence by the Southern Rhodesia intelligence service allegedly to fight a communist regime that FRELIMO installed after independence.
- <sup>4</sup> Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) was Soviet Union sponsored organization founded in 1949 by People's Republic of Bulgaria, Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, People's Republic of Hungary, People's Republic of Poland, People's Republic of Romania, and Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) to facilitate and coordinate the economic development of socialist-bloc countries.
- <sup>5</sup> Alongside FRELIMO and RENAMO and their presidential candidates, other 12 newly founded political parties and 10 presidential candidates participated in the first electoral process in Mozambique. Among other parties and coalitions that took part in the 1994 parliamentary elections, we can mention Democratic Union (UD), Patriotic Alliance (AP), Social Liberal Party (SOL), Mozambique United Front-Democratic Converge Party (FUMO-PCD), National Convention Party (PCN), Independent Party of Mozambique (PIMO), Democratic Congress Party (PACODE), Mozambique People's Progress Party (PPPM), Democratic Renewal Party (PRD), Mozambique Democratic Party (PADEMO), Mozambique National Union, and Labour Party (PT).
- <sup>6</sup> The term 'funding elections' refers to "elections in which the government's head office is openly contested, following a period during which multiparty political competition was denied" (Bratton and van de Walle 1997: 198).
- <sup>7</sup> The relationship between voter turnout and vote buying is somehow mixed. Some authors believe that the phenomenon of vote buying increases voter turnout (Nicheter 2008, Vicente & Wantchekon 2009, Brusco, Nazareno & Stokes 2004). Others, however, assert that this electoral malpractice decrease voter turnout either by encouraging "negative vote buying" in secret ballot systems (Morgan & Várdy 2010) or by confusing voters when exposed with multiple vote buying offers and electoral violence (Bratton 2008).
- <sup>8</sup> The impact of secret ballot in vote buying is another issue that deserves great debate among democratisation authors. Political scientists such as Bratton 2008, Vicente and Wantchekon 2009, Brusco, Nazareno & Stokes 2004, believe that secret ballot may reduce the phenomenon of vote buying by limiting the parties' ability to monitor the voters. However, some argue that the secret ballot increase the phenomenon of vote buying by adding to the normal vote buying (cash, favours or other fungible goods for vote) the negative vote buying, that is, distributing cash or other fungible goods in exchange for voters abstention (Morgan and Várdy 2010 and Cox and Kousser 1981).
- <sup>9</sup> According to Laasko (2007:228) electoral violence "might involve voters' and candidates' intimidation, killings, attacks against their property, forceful displacement, unlawful detentions and rioting".
- <sup>10</sup> Borrowing Burton, Gunther and Higley's (1992) conception of Elite, VonDoepp and Villalón (2005:2) define elite as a group of persons that are able to "regularly and substantially" affect political outcomes or influence national political life.
- <sup>11</sup> For more details about the post-1999 general elections (November 2000 riots) please consult the following source. Mozambique News Agency (AIM) Reports (2000) <http://www.poptel.org.uk/mozambique-news/newsletter/aim195.html> (accessed 20 November 2010).

- <sup>12</sup> As Geoffrey Hodgson rightly put it, "institutions are the kinds of structures that matter most in the social realm: they make up the stuff of social life". They can be defined as "systems of established and prevalent social rules that structure social interactions" (Hodgson 2006: 2). In other words, an institution is "a set of rules that structure social interactions in particular ways" (Knight 1992: 2). In this perspective, institutions weakness should be understood, in this paper, as the lack and/or ineffectiveness of these system or set of social rules. Indeed this is the situation of almost all developing countries where weak socio-political institution and State or government capacity go hand in hand.