

WITHOUT SECURITY REFORMS, VIOLENT ELECTIONS LIKELY IN ZIMBABWE

By Alexander Noyes

In the wake of the peaceful March 2013 constitutional referendum in Zimbabwe, fierce debates have erupted over the long-contested issue of security sector reform. As they have since the formation of Zimbabwe's unity government in 2009, President Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and senior military officials have strongly rebuked recent pledges of security reform from Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T). The vociferous push-back from ZANU-PF indicates the importance the party places on maintaining its symbiotic relationship with the state's security apparatus. Despite progress on the new constitution, without security sector reforms and strict enforcement of the new constitutional dispensation, another chapter of electoral violence carried out by security officials and non-state actors is likely to occur around upcoming elections in Zimbabwe. [more...](#)



Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe inspects the honor guard at a military parade honoring Zimbabwe's armed forces in Harare, Tuesday, Aug. 9, 2011. (AP Photo/Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi)

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RENAMO VS. FRELIMO: COULD THE POLITICAL CRISIS HOLD DEVELOPMENT HOSTAGE?

By Dorina A. Bekoe

Mozambique's former rebel group, RENAMO (*Resistência Nacional Moçambicana*), and the ruling party, FRELIMO (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*), have been in the process of negotiating reforms to the electoral commission and other political issues. The talks, which recently broke down, are a bid to defuse the political tensions brought on by RENAMO's retreat to its former stronghold of Gorongosa in October 2012, when RENAMO charged that the government had not enacted meaningful political and electoral reform. Some regarded the move as a precursor to renewed conflict, but others have judged it to be another [negotiating](#) tactic. Few have paid attention to RENAMO's other grievance: that FRELIMO is not sharing the newly found mineral wealth from Mozambique's oil and gas deposits. The political crisis in Mozambique and threats of civil war by RENAMO could hinder the country's prospects of reaping the full benefits of its oil and gas discoveries. With Mozambique ranked 185th out of 187 countries in the Human Development Index, it is imperative that talks resume and meaningful political reform take place to give hope that Mozambicans might be lifted out of poverty. [more...](#)



Main opposition candidate Afonso Dhlakama of RENAMO, a rebel movement turned political party, casts his ballot for presidential, parliamentary and provincial assembly elections in Maputo, Mozambique, Wednesday October 28, 2009. (AP Photo/Ferhat Momade)

Dr. Dorina Bekoe, a Research Staff Member at the Institute for Defense Analyses, is a specialist in African politics.

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Political squabbling over security sector reform has intensified as election season approaches. Earlier this month, a political storm was ignited by local reports of meetings between MDC Defense and Security Secretary Giles Mutsekwa and high-ranking military commanders, including General Constantine Chiwenga. While such meetings suggest that an opening exists for dialogue between the two groups, the disclosure of these discussions angered ZANU-PF and top security officials, leading to warnings and well-worn proclamations of resistance to the idea of reform. Police Commissioner Augustine Chihuri [threatened](#) any opposition: "I wish to take this opportunity to warn liars and peddlers of falsehoods who dream of talking to us. . . that the law will visit them harshly." Such threats have proved to be more than mere rhetoric, as the police continue to harass and [detain](#) MDC officials and those deemed as MDC supporters. On the heels of these controversies, Tsvangirai unveiled MDC-T's [election platform](#), which included promises to rein in the political influence of the security chiefs. As a result of failure to agree on security sector and other reforms, general elections, originally slated for the end of June, now look likely to take place in September or October, [according](#) to the International Crisis Group.

Although far from a perfect document, the new constitution does contain a few security reforms that, if implemented and fully enforced, could make a real difference in helping to level the political playing field ahead of elections. Taking a sanguine view, MDC-T Spokesperson Douglas Mwonozora [noted](#) after the referendum: "ZANU-PF has already given in to security sector reform. Chapter 11 of the draft constitution provides for security sector reform and says that the security services. . . must not further the partisan interests of any political parties, neither must they campaign for any political party."

Despite this ostensible step forward, current domestic political conditions are highly unfavorable to reform, with Mugabe and ZANU-PF staunchly in command of the security apparatus. The renewed obstinacy of ZANU-PF and security officials regarding security sector reform, combined with their historical disregard for formal institutions and persistent use of political intimidation, suggests that without outside assistance, real progress on this front remains unlikely, at least in the near term. Unfortunately, this lack of reform greatly increases the chances of a rerun of the 2008 electoral violence, in which over 200 were killed.



Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe inspects the honor guard at a military parade honoring Zimbabwe's armed forces in Harare, Tuesday, Aug. 9, 2011. (AP Photo/Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi)

That said, regional pressure, most notably from South Africa and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), could help pry open opportunities for security sector reform ahead of the vote. Such actors could do so by insisting on the implementation and enforcement of security sector reform provisions within the new constitution and by continuing to push for further reforms as part of the “road map” to elections. In addition, as I [outlined](#) in *World Politics Review* in February, the early presence of international election observers, the continuation or threat of resumption of sanctions, and the possibility of amnesty for security officials could all help lessen the risk of violence in upcoming elections.

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In justifying its move back to the bush, RENAMO showed its frustration with the government and its inability to gain more political representation. In April 2013, responding to RENAMO's retreat to its former stronghold, the government disrupted RENAMO's meetings in Muxunge (located in Central Mozambique). RENAMO retaliated by [attacking](#) a police station, which resulted in five fatalities—significantly unnerving the local population, many of whom fled the area.

RENAMO's charges are not new. Since the first post-conflict poll in 1994, RENAMO has alleged that FRELIMO has used fraud to win every election, and RENAMO has demanded changes to the electoral commission. RENAMO has also seen its popularity decline from gaining 37.7 percent of the parliamentary seats in 1994 to 17.65 percent in the 2009 polls, according to the [African Elections Database](#). RENAMO's declining popularity aside, [studies](#) point to the uneven political playing field in Mozambique, which has undoubtedly contributed to the dominance of FRELIMO.

The April clashes do not represent a potential for renewed conflict, but they do represent the possibility of continued political disruption. With national elections scheduled for next year and Mozambique on the verge of reaping unprecedented [gains](#) from its oil and gas discoveries, the government is forced to take notice. Indeed, there is a realistic possibility that continued political tension could delay the exploitation of the newly found natural resources. Zanzibar is a case in point. Only after the government of Tanzania [negotiated](#) an agreement that provided the semi-autonomous government of Zanzibar with control over the oil and gas deposits on the island could extractive industries begin their work in earnest.

Mozambique's resource potential may soon place it among the world's [largest](#) producers of natural gas. In this regard, the government is actively [learning lessons](#) from other countries, like Ghana, that have found themselves with unexpected mineral deposits. But reaping their full benefit also entails enacting meaningful reform to reduce the country's political uncertainty. Such reform will go a long way toward ensuring that the country creates a climate conducive to fully benefiting from its minerals and lifting its citizens out of poverty.

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