

# INTRODUCTION

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During the Cold War attention was focused on weapons of mass destruction, which were perceived as presenting the greatest threat to human security.<sup>1</sup> Whereas global balance was being achieved based on these super-weapons, regionally and nationally a different picture was taking shape on the African continent.

The hegemonic tendencies of both superpowers, the USA (United States of America) and the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), provided support to military and/or authoritarian regimes perceived as friendly, with disregard for the fragility or sustainability of such regimes. In most instances, this support was translated into the unregulated provision of small arms and light weapons (SALW) to these regimes, or to those daring to challenge them.

The Cold War was thus able to create relative (albeit artificial and oppressive) stability in parts of Africa, a region favoured by both superpowers for the Cold War game. Such stability was to crumble together with the Berlin Wall in 1989. The façade of the Cold War world and of its relative stability left Africa awash with SALW and well established traders and routes for their traffic.

Without the external support of superpowers, governments perceived as corrupt, oppressive and with little legitimacy could now be openly challenged. The proliferation of SALW, trafficking routes and traders turned armed insurgency into a feasible option, as opposed to more time consuming political alternatives, while widespread poverty created the recruitment pools insurgencies needed.<sup>2</sup> Mozambique was not immune to this regional dynamic in Africa, which was compounded by the specific historical determinants of the country—the struggle for independence from 1964 to 1974 and the subsequent 14 years of civil war.<sup>3</sup> As in other Portuguese colonies, independence in Mozambique was achieved by an armed struggle, in the case of Mozambique led by Frelimo, *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*.

Frelimo resulted from the merger of nationalist movements, whose binding thread was the fight against colonialism. Created as an umbrella organization

Frelimo evolved into a cohesive nationalist movement with a clear Marxist ideology, striving for the creation of a classless society in Mozambique. After independence in 1975 until the mid-1980s Frelimo constituted itself as a political party, imposed a single party system, and adopted a Marxist economic approach. The dissatisfaction and dissent created by the impact of these measures on traditional social structures and on the expectations of some sectors of the society not only prevented the emergence of national unity, but also created the necessary recruitment pools that hostile regional powers (Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and apartheid South Africa) needed to interfere in the nation building process. From these recruitment pools, supported by regimes hostile to Mozambique, emerged Renamo, *Resistência Nacional de Moçambique*. Soon after independence,<sup>4</sup> Renamo's armed incursions started to disrupt rural life in Mozambique and ultimately led to a civil war justified, *inter alia*, along ethnic lines, which are still used today to canvass and define political loyalties.

The civil war in Mozambique came to an end with the signing of the General Peace Agreement (GPA) in 1992, followed by a United Nations-led peace process supported by the United Nations Operation in Mozambique, ONUMOZ until the end of 1994.<sup>5</sup> After the withdrawal of ONUMOZ, increases in crime, particularly armed crime, made it obvious that SALW were not only still prevalent in Mozambique but also leaking into neighbouring countries, above all South Africa.<sup>6</sup>

In 1995, merely one year after the withdrawal of the ONUMOZ mission, the proliferation of SALW and the problems they caused in both countries led the governments of Mozambique and South Africa to join efforts and implement a disarmament initiative: Operation Rachel. This government-backed programme was complemented in Mozambique by ongoing civil society initiatives, namely the Arms for Tools project (TAE) sponsored by the Christian Council of Mozambique (CCM).

In August 2001 Mozambique signed the SADC Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition and other Related Materials, aimed at preventing and controlling through regional mechanisms the illicit trade of arms and light weapons in the region. In September 2002, parliament ratified the Protocol and the government of Mozambique (GoM) began to take steps towards its implementation. In spite of the troubled history of the country, Mozambique is now at the forefront of regional efforts to control and prevent the proliferation of SALW.

However, the implementation of international agreements often poses unforeseen problems to national governments: some institutions may have to be created, while others need to be developed; priorities differ from country to country and the need for the allocation of resources to other sectors may be deemed more important.

The government of Mozambique is establishing a multi-institutional body – COPRECAL (*Comissão para a Prevenção e Controlo de Armas Ligeiras*) – to supervise and co-ordinate the implementation of the SADC Protocol. The role and scope of COPRECAL will be discussed in depth later in this monograph.

Given the history of SALW control efforts in Mozambique and the recent impetus provided by ratifying the SADC Protocol, as well as adopting the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, it was apparent that research to assess the current situation in Mozambique regarding the different approaches to controlling SALW proliferation and the constraints that the implementation of the SADC Protocol may have to face would be valuable. This is what the research team set out to achieve.

This monograph is based on fieldwork carried out in Mozambique from November 2002 to September 2003. The research consists mainly of interviews with officers in the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Armed Forces, customs and excise, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), journalists, academics, and Mozambican citizens. The field research was concluded with a two-day workshop, which included representatives from the Ministries of Interior, Defence, and Foreign Affairs, the armed forces, the Presidency, academic institutions and civil society organizations. The field work was complemented by extensive documentary research. Finally, the research team conducted a survey in Chimoio (central Mozambique) on the impact of SALW at the community level. The findings of this survey constitute a chapter of this monograph.

Although the focus of the research was on the approaches to disarmament and steps taken by the Mozambican government towards the implementation of the SADC Protocol on small arms and light weapons, it became clear very soon that the prevention and control of SALW should be viewed within the wider context of the security sector. For example, one official from the Ministry of Interior remarked: “What is the point of investing so many resources in weapons destruction if we are unable to efficiently patrol our

coastline? ”<sup>7</sup> The same feeling is expressed by Mosse and Nyararai in an article called “Mozambique: a powder keg”, published in June 2003:

“... The authorities do not know who owns what arms, or how they get access to them. The government does not even know the quantity of arms used by the uniformed forces. If the government cannot control the movement and use of small arms within its jurisdiction, clearly it cannot control the illicit proliferation and misuse of small arms in the country.”<sup>8</sup>

It has become clear that the successful implementation of the SADC Protocol needs to bring together several governmental institutions, which are currently at different stages of institutional development and receiving varying support from donors.

Thus, the parameters of this monograph were broadened in order to accommodate an analysis of the different institutions that could be active in SALW control efforts, of the ways they can contribute towards the common goal of preventing and controlling SALW and of the different problems they face.

During the survey conducted in Chimoio, it was obvious that although SALW research in Mozambique is possible and even welcome, questions related specifically to SALW raised discomfort among respondents. People in government institutions did not react differently – whereas officials would openly discuss problems plaguing their institutions in particular and the social and political environment in Mozambique in general, questions relating specifically to quantitative data on legal SALW, such as numbers and composition of current stockpiles, were met with some resistance and suspicion. This is not to say that government officials were obstructive; on the contrary the research team felt tremendously supported inside these institutions and has only gratitude for those interviewed. They were open and candid in their statements, had a strong grasp of the issues being discussed, and were available in spite of all the concurrent initiatives in Maputo at the time.

However questions regarding quantitative data are still perceived as intrusions in matters of national security and national sovereignty. In the same way that some donors appear wary of supporting the security sector, which is considered too political, so national governments seem to perceive a threat when disclosing security-related information. Nevertheless, given the tremendous impact that the security sector has on the development of post-conflict societies, both donors and national governments should consider a

serious shift in perspective when addressing this issue. This will be discussed with more detail later in the monograph.

Given the sensitivity of the issues discussed, the research team has not named the people who so generously offered their time and information.

## Notes

1. Margaret O'Grady, *Small Arms and Africa*, <<http://www.caat.org.uk/information/publications/countries/africa-0909.php>> (May 2003).
2. The link between poor governance, poverty and militarization has been explored by Angela McIntyre in several ISS publications.
3. For a more detailed explanation of the impact of both conflicts on arms proliferation in Mozambique see articles and reports written, amongst others by Anícia Lalá, Martinho Chachia, and Alex Vines.
4. Different authors attribute different dates for Renamo's incursions: some mention 1976 while others consider 1978. Here we use 1978 as a reference date, since it was from 1978 on that Renamo's incursions took the systematized character of a civil war.
5. The English acronym for the mission is UNOMOZ, however, it is the Portuguese acronym ONUMOZ that is mostly used.
6. N Stott, "*Operation Rachel: Lesson drawing and the potential for a regional (SADC) initiative*", ISS, forthcoming. However, the link between Mozambican SALW and South African crime is made by nearly any author writing on this subject.
7. Intervention during the workshop 17-20 September, 2003.
8. N Magudu & M Mosse, "Mozambique: a powder keg", IANSA newsletter, June 2003.