

## XII Frelimo's Congress: The Frelimo Party at the crossroads...and National Unity in limbo

- Although the Frelimo Party constantly proclaims the idea of National Unity, the truth - clearly revealed in its last XII Congress held in the city of Matola - is that the Frelimo Party circumscribes National Unity, expressly, in the internal cohesion of its members. The unity of all Mozambicans, beyond its own militants, does not seem to concern, to say the least, the party of the drumbeat and the corncob, judging by the way that the party appropriates the history that belongs to all Mozambicans. Now, the philosophy behind this modus faciendi is the expropriation of the symbols of the Mozambican homeland and nation from its history - which the Frelimo Party claims for itself - to all other members of the Mozambican family who do not militate in the Frelimo Party. For there is no doubt that both the foundation of the nation and the driving force that makes Mozambicans coalesce into a single yet diverse entity is rooted in "the legacy and patriotic values of the founders of FRELIMO and the intrepid fighters of the national liberation struggle." Thus, when the Frelimo Party calls upon these symbols, it portends an act of sectarianism with the potential to crumble rather than cement the idea of National Unity.



However, any careful observer of the country's political dynamics of the last four decades will have noticed the gradual and natural aging of the hard core of the Frelimo Party leadership, largely derived from the fighters of the national liberation struggle. Moreover, obviously, the perspective was that with the "natural departure" of the former fighters from the Frelimo Party leadership, this party would become just another party in the national political-pluralistic scenario. Yesterday; Party of Machel, Chissano, Guebuza, Pachinuapa, Chipande; today, it could be Party of Matangala, Amide, Commissário, Jequissene, Kassotche, etc. We would thus have a change of paradigm; even if the ideals, the political-ideological values, were the same, at least the names and the symbolic evocation that they translate would be different!

Nevertheless, since the IX Congress held in Quelimane in November 2006, the Frelimo Party adopted a policy of encouraging the integration of the children of the historical leaders of FRELIMO in its governing bodies. The consecration of this policy reached its apogee in the XII Congress, where the Frelimo Party brought to its Central Committee a large contingent of "juniors" of the members of the hard core, historical, of FRELIMO's leadership. They are all there, or almost all: Mondlane Junior, Machel Junior, Chissano Junior, Chipande Junior, and many more. It looks like the enunciation of dynasties in party democracy, in a scenario where, arguably, power is almost offered on a platter. The direct entry of these "juniors" into the highest governing body of the Frelimo Party, in the interval be-

tween its Congresses, reinforces the idea that is beginning to be cogitated in Mozambican society of the existence of "noble families" on whom power effectively rests within the Frelimo Party. In addition, definitely, over the Mozambican State in general, since this party has controlled the country's destiny since national independence.

In this way, the XII Congress of the Frelimo Party definitively buried deep underground the prospect of a paradigm shift in the superimposition of the "symbols" of the Mozambican homeland and the Frelimo Party leadership. In other words, the Frelimo Party strengthens itself while removing the "ground" from other Mozambicans, those who are not members of the Frelimo Party, in contrast to its appeals to the ideal of National Unity. This circumstance is problematic in a particularly young society, where about two thirds of the population are under 17 years of age, and are therefore still in the age of forging their civic conscience. Perhaps even more serious is the breakdown of the bases of Mozambicanness in a society historically martyred by successive conflicts and where the foundations of PEACE are still quite fragile.

It is true that all political parties, by definition, exist to fight for political power; however, given the historical responsibilities that it carries with it, the Frelimo Party is expected to have a genuine concern for the fate of the approximately 32 million Mozambicans, which is certainly a much larger proportion than its approximately 4 million members. At a time when the province of Cabo Delgado is being ravaged atrociously by the phenomenon of violent extremism, with the whole

procession of deaths, internal displacement, and destruction of goods and bases of subsistence of the population, the Frelimo Party should observe the moral duty to fight for social peace, far beyond the desire for its perpetuation in power. And, above all, the obligation to show all young Mozambicans that the opportunities of life and progress are open to all, not only to the youth of the Frelimo Party, and much less to the "juniors" of the historical leaders of FRELIMO.

In the month in which the XXX anniversary of the signing of the Rome General Peace Agreement (AGP) is celebrated in the country, it was expected that the Frelimo Party would revisit the real reasons for the prevalence of violent conflicts in Mozambique. Yesterday, with the 16-year war, and today, with the violent extremism in Cabo Delgado, history teaches us that extreme poverty, social and political exclusion and marginalization, injustice, and corruption in the spheres of power are the root causes of the almost perpetual violence in the country. Today's young people, who constitute the overwhelming majority of the Mozambican population, expect the Frelimo Party to design enlightened public policies that will galvanize the economy, create jobs, and lift the youth out of the deplorable period of waithood in which many of them are currently agonizing, facing only uncertainty and bewilderment. In short, worrying about its internal cohesion and perpetuating the "noble families" at the helm of power should not be the leitmotiv of the Frelimo Party at this time.


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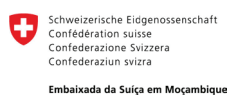
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