



Meticulously researched, incisive, using previously unexplored archival resources and scores of interviews with veteran Rhodesian and Zimbabwean officers, former FRELIMO and RENAMO soldiers – including interviewing RENAMO leader Afonso Dhlakama – Emerson provides fresh insights into the Mozambican civil war, merging personal insights of protagonists with the broader strategic landscape. What emerges is an objective account of the civil war from the deep personal insights of the various protagonists – regional and national – whilst the civil war raged. Whilst the focus is on the conflict between FRELIMO and RENAMO itself, the book is contextualised within the broader context of the Cold War explaining the motivations of the United States and Moscow, the fragility of post-independence African states, the Southern African strategic environment and the machinations of Salisbury and Pretoria in getting involved in the Mozambican theatre.

Whilst academics would find this account of tremendous importance, Emerson provides much more than a novel historical account of the civil war. Policymakers would find the insights of strategic importance when seeking to learn lessons for ending contemporary conflicts. For instance, Emerson's account of RENAMO's lack of political acumen and its highly centralised decision-making process, which created needless obstacles in the negotiations between the parties is superb. FRELIMO, meanwhile, too easily dismissed RENAMO as merely a foreign proxy or bandit movement. In the process, the legitimate grievances driving the insurgency were not dealt with, preventing negotiations from taking place earlier. On the more positive side, the fact that opposing parties shared similar backgrounds created the necessary empathy needed for rapport and trust to develop. Such was the case between Zimbabwe's former President Robert Mugabe and Dhlakama who were both guerrilla fighters, Shona speakers and Catholic educated. Following their meeting in Malawi, Mugabe told the RENAMO leader, "You have your dignity and you know what you are fighting for." The meeting between the Zimbabwean president and the Mozambican guerrilla set the basis for constructive talks, which were to lead to the historic August 1992 peace negotiations, which concluded Mozambique's brutal civil war.

Emerson's book is a veritable tour de force and should find its way in the curriculum of any course focusing on Africa issues of peace and security

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