I. Introduction

Processes of prolonged conflict and consequent displacement have assumed mounting importance in the political, social, and demographic re-organization of many developing countries, particularly in Africa. Current frameworks for analyzing conflict in developing nations usually focus on the agendas of national-level parties to conflicts. In this paper I draw on my own ethnographic work in south central Mozambique to demonstrate how political alignment during the Mozambican civil conflict (1977-92) was regarded by local actors as primarily a tool for engaging in family- and community-level political struggles.

Comparing my own findings from work in the district of Machaze to that of other ethnographic researchers who focused on wartime experiences elsewhere in Mozambique, I show how the means of violence of national-level parties during the civil conflict were appropriated by local actors in service to local forms of social struggle. I propose the concept of “fragmented war” to describe such contexts in which national “civil wars” take on a large degree of local character and in which there is considerable variation in that local character as a result of socio-cultural and ethnic diversity within a country.

This paper also documents how wartime migration—as one of the most prominent strategies for reacting to violence—was organized primarily as a response to such micro-level political struggles rather than merely to the state of hostilities between national-level political actors. I detail how locally-specific forms of social antagonism and cultural beliefs in Machaze significantly shaped wartime violence, assessments of risk, and consequent migratory reactions during the conflict.

Comparing wartime migration patterns in Machaze to those in other areas of Mozambique I demonstrate how the ways in which different forms of local social conflict affected wartime violence ultimately resulted in very different patterns of displacement. Thus in Gaza province displacement was organized along ethnic lines that pitted the Ndau against the Shangaana; in Manica and Sofala provinces intra-familial conflict led to the dissolution of family units; while in Nampula province ethnic tensions between the Erati and Macuane resulted in entire villages migrating together.

I also detail how the ongoing conduct of micro-level social struggles within Machazian households and communities continued to shape migration throughout the war. Focusing on the struggles over the redefinition of gender relations within Machazian marriages, I provide a detailed case study of how the micro-political negotiation of social relations continues throughout macro-political conflicts, and shapes wartime migration in fundamental ways.

In conclusion I briefly outline some of the critical historical conditions that allowed wartime violence in Mozambique to become fragmented. I also briefly outline general conditions that might produce “fragmentations of violence” in other civil war contexts and that are worthy of further empirical and comparative investigation.

II. Theorizing Wartime Violence

As a form of “political violence”, war is typically understood and analyzed as a phenomenon that is organized by the interests and agendas of state-level actors—i.e. governments and/or insurgencies who are contesting state power. In such formulations violence is understood as an instrumental expression of the interests of those who have the means to technically perpetrate it. There is consequently a tendency for analysts of conflict to explain the specific ways in which violence is organized (its forms, its timing, who enacts it, who suffers from it) in terms

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1 It bears mentioning for those unfamiliar with the social and cultural geography of Mozambique that there are at least sixteen major ethno-linguistic groups in Mozambique, a variety of matrilineal systems in the north, and patrilineal ones in the south; all manner of religious persuasions including Islam, a broad gloss of Christian beliefs, and many variations in local forms of ancestral veneration (Newitt, 1995).
of the interests of those who control the means for violence. Such assumptions have certainly informed much of the analysis of the Mozambican conflict.

Thus in the Mozambican case most analysts attempting to explain the savagery of RENAMO’s tactics against civilians in certain parts of the country during the war have explained these measures as part of the insurgency’s tactics for controlling local dissent (Geffray, 1989; Vines, 1991: Finnegan, 1992), or in other cases as an attempt by a nominally weak military force to use terror in order to gain influence it could not achieve on the battlefield (Africa Watch 1992; Gersony, 1988; Hanlon, 1984; Wilson, 1992).

Similarly it is generally assumed that those who experience or suffer from violence also understand it to be a direct and unmediated expression of the political interests of the military forces and political factions that perpetrate it. In other words when a rural Mozambican who refused to comply with the government’s (FRELIMO) demand that locals resettle in fortified villages was confronted by a government patrol that burned his house, killed or forcibly recruited his sons, and moved his family to the village by force, it is assumed that he understood his suffering to be the consequence of his violation of the government’s publicized interests (Lubkemann 2000a).

In such frameworks violence is seen to be perpetrated and given its particular form in service to the macro-political interests of the parties who have military forces in the field, and who generally are contesting state-level power. Similarly such approaches assume that individuals expect to be targeted for violence primarily if they challenge or oppose the interests of one of these parties to the conflict (though they may clearly expect to suffer inadvertently if caught in the crossfire as well).

In contrast this paper demonstrates how wartime violence in the district of Machaze in south-central Mozambique, was significantly shaped by local-level social tensions and micro-political goals at the community and even family level, rather than by the macro-political projects and priorities of the parties to the national conflict. I demonstrate how Machazians managed to appropriate the means of violence of the government (FRELIMO) and the insurgency (RENAMO)—the two national parties to the civil war—and use those means to pursue local forms of social struggle with culturally-particular logics and with micro-political objectives unrelated to the contest for state power. Understandings of wartime violence, assessments of risk, and consequent migratory reactions thus had little to do with the political programs or pretensions of either of the national parties to the war. Rather Machazians calculated risk and their reaction to it, primarily in terms of the logic of local social conflicts.

III. The Mozambican Civil War

Mozambique gained independence from Portugal in 1975, after more than a decade of anticolonial struggle. Shortly thereafter, Mozambique closed its borders with Rhodesia to support the struggle against the apartheid regime of Rhodesian leader Ian Smith by the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA), headed by Robert Mugabe. The Smith regime drew on Mozambican political dissenters to establish a military movement to support Rhodesian efforts against ZANLA guerrillas based in Mozambique and to help destabilize Mozambique politically and economically. That military movement later came to be known as the Mozambique National Resistance Movement, or RENAMO (an acronym for the name in Portuguese). When the Smith regime capitulated in 1980, South Africa’s apartheid regime took over the role as RENAMO’s patron. Foreign support remained vital for RENAMO and greatly influenced its early strategy and operations (Hall and Young, 1997).

However RENAMO’s eventual success in extending the insurgency to the whole country and in prosecuting a civil war that lasted until 1992 ultimately depended on more than its initial external backing. Most specifically the policies pursued by the post-colonial FRELIMO government after independence from Portugal was achieved in 1975 amplified deeply ingrained
sentiments of mistrust against any and all forms of central political authority in many areas of the country.

Within the first two or three years that followed independence rural populations in areas such as Machaze quickly became disillusioned with the new post-colonial government as a result of a significant decline in their economic well-being. This decline resulted in large part from government policies designed to recast Mozambique’s economy in a socialist mold (Wuyts 1994, 1995). In Machaze FRELIMO’s policies raised new obstacles to long-established habits of labor migration, imposed unpopular forms of mandatory collective agriculture and price controls, and reduced the availability of commodities for purchase in rural areas. The new post-colonial government’s drastic social engineering policies also disenfranchised local social elites, while placing many of those who had been socially and economically marginalized in positions of power and influence at the most grassroot levels of local government (Lubkemann 2000a, Alexander, 1994).

Not far from the district of Manhica where RENAMO made its first appearance in 1977, by early 1979 Machaze too had witnessed its first RENAMO incursions. In Machaze RENAMO’s early actions were directed against visible and unpopular symbols of FRELIMO’s local policy—such as the government run ‘lojas do povo’ (people’ shops). Through its actions and its propaganda RENAMO articulated a simple political agenda – the expulsion of FRELIMO and the demise of the unpopular social and economic changes it had brought to bear on local lives after decolonization. The fact that it articulated no alternative program, did not prevent it from garnering considerable local sympathy.

The arrival of RENAMO in Machaze, and the evident is still relatively passive support of significant segments of the population for the insurgency, led the FRELIMO government to pursue draconian measures meant to prevent RENAMO from benefiting from that support. Taking a page directly from the politico-military strategy of the Portuguese during the recent war for independence, FRELIMO sought to move all the residents of the district-by force-into communal villages (Coelho, 1998; Hall and Young 1997; Lubkemann 2000a). In an area in which a highly dispersed form of agricultural subsistence was practiced few Machazians complied willingly with this directive. This generalized reluctance was interpreted by FRELIMO as default evidence of support for RENAMO leading to even more violent measures against those who did not obey this order.

It is important to note that although many Machazians were sympathetic with RENAMO and many were highly resentful of FRELIMO’s social and economic engineering policies, these sentiments did not translate immediately into active mobilization in support of RENAMO. For the most part Machazians were primarily interested in avoiding both military parties and in continuing to practice their traditional forms of subsistence agriculture that presumed highly dispersed settlement patterns. However by 1980 it had become increasingly hazardous to pursue such strategies as both FRELIMO and RENAMO soldiers began to treat those who would not resettle into the zones that were securely under their control as by default supporters of the other side to be targeted for capture or for death. It is in this context that longstanding forms of local social antagonism were able to infiltrate and influence the dynamics of military violence in the district.

IV. Local Social Conflict and Wartime Violence in Machaze

Historically in Machaze local social divisions tended to occur primarily within kinship groups—often even within households—in part because of cultural beliefs that identify social intimates—and especially members of one’s own extended household—as the most likely sources of rivalry. Elsewhere I have documented how significant socio-economic changes during the decades prior to the civil war had accentuated socio-economic differentiation, re-distributed power inequality within households, and produced a significant rise in witchcraft as an expression of social tension and antagonism.
Specific changes in migration had opened up new intergenerational rifts in Machazian society, allowing younger men to challenge the authority of their fathers and senior kinsmen. Differential success in migration—the result of changes in the structure of employment opportunities in the major labor migration destination (South Africa)—had also significantly increased socio-economic differentiation within extended households and local communities. In short, a series of significant socio-economic changes during the two decades prior to the civil war had substantially amplified forms of intra-household and intra-community strife.

It is important to realize that particularly early in the civil war both FRELIMO and RENAMO troops and commanders were unfamiliar with the area and thus tended to rely heavily on locals to guide them and to identify enemy cadres or collaborators. Machazians became adept at using accusations of “collaboration with the enemy” in order to further private agendas founded in local forms of social strife unrelated to the political agendas of the warring parties. In one case a brother who had been a particularly successful migrant and consequently had started several grinding mills was the subject of intense jealousy on the part of older brothers who had not been as successful in translating their migratory careers into investments back in Machaze. He actually was a RENAMO sympathizer and had thus chosen to move to a remote area in order to be farther from the FRELIMO villages. However his brothers convinced RENAMO troops that he was taking grain into the villages and giving it to government soldiers. As a consequence he was shot by RENAMO troops—the very party he actually sympathized with!

In one case a man and his wife who had moved into the village had been involved in a long dispute with a neighbor over a honeycomb bordering their two homesteads. The neighbor, who was also re-settled in the village, actually managed to obtain a landmine through a family member who was a part of the government militia, and planted it near the honeycomb. The other man and his wife were both hit by the landmine on a daytime trip to the honeycomb, killing the man instantly and fatally injuring his wife who died later the same day after crawling back to the village.

In another case one of two junior wives of a man I interviewed, reported to FRELIMO soldiers that the son of a rival co-wife was about to join RENAMO. As a result the rival wife and her children were forcibly removed to the village and the son in question was detained and later died under interrogation.

Such cases were typical rather than exceptional in my in-depth life-history interviews with over 120 members of different Machazian households conducted in 1996 and 1997. Such cases exemplify the way that local social agendas cast in culturally-specific terms strongly influenced the deployment of violence by FRELIMO and RENAMO from the very outset of the conflict. The violence of the national parties to the conflict was more often than not diverted in the service of local micro-political rather than national macro-political political ends.

Wartime violence in Machaze was thus primarily understood and reacted to as a product of locally generated and defined social conflicts, rather than as a product of political affiliation with RENAMO or FRELIMO per se. While a small minority of local FRELIMO party cadres and early RENAMO mobilizers may have been motivated by the political projects of the contenders for national power, most residents of Machaze reacted to the way in which that power itself could be manipulated in the service of micro-political projects generated in the cultural logic of local social relations.

V. Culture and Violence in Machaze:

Machazian interest in using wartime violence for private ends was also encouraged by the ways in which widely held religious beliefs amplified local social antagonism. Machazians believed that those who suffered violent deaths were likely to become mfukwas. The death of soldiers who were “outsiders” raised the specter of a proliferation of dangerous unknown mfukwas who could randomly intervene to cause death. A more predictable, yet also more constant threat was posed by the intimate relative whose violent death was believed to provoke
them to take on a mfukwa state. Although wrongful death obligated the living to seek redress, the culturally prescribed institutions for doing so had been decimated by targeted post-colonial government repression. Moreover the impossibility of interacting with the guilty parties (often unknown or else unreachable in the opposing force’s area of control) made the negotiation of a settlement with the mfukwa all the more difficult if not impossible. Sometimes even proper burials were impossible—another ritual failure thought likely to provoke ancestral virulence. Not only could an irate mfukwa threaten its own family members, but its “presence” placed a family’s relationships in the broader community at risk since the mfukwa became part of the “package of actors” brought into social interactions of all forms with other parties. Any form of conflict with a family with a mfukwa was believed to be particularly dangerous.\(^2\)

Lacking the possibility for redress, revenge was upheld as the very lowest level of action believed capable of deflecting the ancestral wrath of those violently slain in war. This belief in conjunction with the crippling of “peaceful” forms of resolution thus led many Machazians to perpetrate radically violent actions of revenge themselves in what amounted in part to a form of “socio-spiritual defense”. Each act of violence inevitably gave motive for reactive acts of at least the same magnitude, thus multiplying the number of accusations and violent deaths in a viciously escalating and ever more socially inclusive spiral.

This analysis (see Lubkemann 2002 for more details) shows how forms of social antagonism that organized the specificity of violence in Machaze had their genesis in processes and cultural logics of social conflict that pre-dated the war itself. These antagonisms and their logics were largely unrelated to the larger political agendas of the national parties to the war. Rather they involved motivations and dynamics which were locally-specific and that were expressed and configured in highly culturally-specific terms.

VI. Machaze in Comparative Perspective: Mozambique as a “Fragmented War”

Comparative analysis of close ethnographic work in different areas of Mozambique clearly demonstrates the degree to which the war itself was interpreted and constructed in highly variable and culturally specific terms throughout the country. The means of violence were shaped to serve the ends of specific forms and expressions of local conflict, making the war in one area something in many ways entirely different from the war elsewhere to those actors embroiled in it on a day to day basis. The dynamic reported by other social scientists as shaping the use of violence and meaning of the war in these other areas is startlingly different.

For example in the northern province of Nampula the anthropologist C. Geffray (1989) reported on how very different forms of social tension informed the political alignments among the Macuane and the Erati ethnic groups-two groups with a history of warfare and antagonism that predated colonial conquest. The much more politically centralized Erati had been more readily co-opted into the Portuguese system of indirect rule, with eventual benefits for the Erati as they came to occupy an intermediary position of privilege between the Portuguese and the subordinate Macuane. When independence arrived in 1975 the Erati continued to occupy most bureaucratic positions in local government while the Macuane remained marginalized. The Macuane who had retained a generalized stance of distrust and disengagement with central authority throughout the colonial period, and who had suffered from the post-colonial governments’ attempts at forced villagization and attempts to divest traditional authorities of legitimacy, proved receptive to the anti-government insurgency when it arrived in Nampula in the mid-1980’s. The Macuane saw in RENAMO a way to simultaneously restore local autonomy vis-à-vis the central state, and to simultaneously react against the perceived and resented ethnic dominance of the Erati. Conversely in response to the almost universal adherence of the Macuane to RENAMO, the Erati reacted by universally choosing lots with RENAMO. Thus in Nampula, the war took on ethnic characteristics quite different from those evidenced in Machaze. In

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\(^2\) For example, whether a family had a mfukwa became a concern in selecting a spouse.
Nampula entire communities thus tended to be align as a whole with either FRELIMO or with RENAMO (Geoffray, 1989). This pattern of community cohesion and inter-ethnic violence contrasts sharply with the patterns in Machaze where ethnicity was irrelevant in the shaping of wartime violence that primarily occurred within communities and quite often among actual household members.

In yet an entirely different area of the country—in the southern province of Gaza—local social tensions were primarily structured by yet a different ethnic dynamic with its own particular history (Roesch, 1992). The atrocities committed by RENAMO troops (who in this area were predominantly Ndaus) against civilians (who were predominantly Shangaana) were particularly noteworthy for their savagery (Gersony, 1988; Roesch, 1990, 1992; Hall 1990; Minter 1994). RENAMO originated in the Ndauspeaking center of the country and its leadership was initially largely Ndaus. In contrast much of the leadership of FRELIMO was originally from the Shangaana-speaking south. There was a long history of contention between Shangaana speakers and other ethnic groups from north of the Save river. This rivalry pre-dated the advent of colonial rule, extending back to the late 1800’s and the brutal northward expansion and domination of the Gaza empire first under Shoshogane and later under Gungunhanna (Newitt, 1995).

Antagonism between Shangaanas and Ndaus persisted throughout the colonial period as a result of labor migration policies that attempted to prohibit those from north of the Save from engaging in labor migration to South Africa. Such policies forced many Ndaus speakers from the central provinces of Manica and Sofala to attempt to “pass” as Shangaanas from the southern province in Gaza in order to work in South Africa. Ndau speakers often had to enter into subordinate relations with local Shangaana chiefs or individuals in Gaza that involved payoffs in order to succeed in this strategy. Many Ndau labor migrants resented not only this form of exploitation but also what they perceived to be a Shangaana sense of superiority (Lubkemann, 2000a).

It is thus not surprising that Ndaus combatants in Gaza, many who had most likely previously been Ndaus labor migrants in Gaza, found in the war opportunities to use violence as a form of redress for their own grievances stemming from subordination in the ethnically organized structural violence that had shaped migration before the war.

What such comparisons suggest when viewed together is the degree to which local social tensions rather than national political projects shaped the deployment of violence as well as the assessment of risk in the Mozambican civil war as a whole. Such conflicts can be described as “fragmented wars”. These wars are “fragmented” in that violence is likely to be organized in service to very different (and largely local rather than national) agendas throughout the country that is suffering from civil strife. What the “war is about” is likely to vary widely throughout the country, as very different forms of culturally-informed social antagonisms inform the ways in which local populations appropriate, assess, and react to violence.

VII. Fragmented Violence and Mozambican Wartime Migration

The notion of fragmented wars is significant to theorizations of demographic change in conflict environments, most specifically to the theorization of wartime population movements. Migration is perhaps the most dramatic response to exposure to violence or the threat of violence in wartime. In fragmented war contexts, in which the violence of military actors is appropriated and deployed in the service of local-level social conflicts, reactions to violence—migratory or otherwise—will tend to reflect the logic of those local social conflicts. In short wartime migration behavior in fragmented wars will be primarily a reaction to the use of violence in struggles with local social and cultural logics.

By extension, variation in the social organization of forced migration will occur to the degree that the national space of a civil war is fragmented by different primary forms of local social organization and micro-political conflict. Within a single national space, different local “conflict logics” will result in different patterns of violence and thus in different patterns of
migratory reaction to violence, producing in turn different demographic outcomes with respect to wartime population redistribution.

In the Machazian case cultural logics of local social conflict clearly shaped the social organization of wartime migration—namely, whom individuals fled with, when they chose to flee, and where they chose to go. As the war intensified in Machaze, more and more people opted to flee from their homes not when they themselves were targeted for violence but soon after hearing that a significant social rival had been captured or targeted by one faction. Upon hearing that a social rival had been captured by one military faction, individuals or households often chose to move in exactly the opposite direction into areas controlled by the other faction. Such moves were pre-emptive measures, since it was feared that under duress those who had been forcibly relocated would readily identify their own social rivals to their captors as sympathizers with the “other side”. Similarly, if one’s social rivals were known to have suffered violence at the hand of either military faction, it was often deemed wise to relocate under the assumption that the search for the perpetrator of witchcraft believed to have instigated such violence would likely focus on the victim’s social rivals, who would then be likely targeted for revenge.

By contrast, in Nampula migration did not generally involve the fragmentation of households into individuals or small groups. Rather migration tended to occur in large groups, as entire communities would together—Erati villages into FRELIMO areas and Macuane communities into RENAMO ones. Such patterns of wartime migration contrast sharply with those witnessed in Machaze where displacement typically involved the atomization of families, domestic units and communities.

Wartime migration patterns in Gaza also reflected the ways in which local ethnic tensions were perceived to structure wartime violence. Whereas in Machaze, an ethnically Ndau area, a majority of civilians fled from the government forces into RENAMO controlled areas, throughout rural Gaza the reverse pattern held true (Roesch, 1990; 1992; Hall 1990). This difference can be attributed to the fact that in Machaze RENAMO was primarily identified as simply an “anti-central government force”, whereas in Gaza it was perceived as an “ethnically Ndau force”. In each of these three cases very different patterns of wartime migration resulted from the way in which local social struggles shaped the interpretation of wartime violence. Resulting differences in the social organization of wartime migration reflected differences in the dynamics of local social strife that resulted from different histories and socio-cultural milieus.

VIII. The Persistence of Micro-Political Processes in Macro-Political Conflicts—A Case Study

Demographic outcomes in contexts in which local micro-political agendas predominate in shaping violence also strongly reflect the ongoing development throughout the war of everyday forms of social struggle that define local social relations. Struggles over gendered, generational, or class-based power also shape displacement patterns and outcomes as the conditions of war have variable effects on the opportunities and challenges that face different categories of social actors. Wartime conditions may have highly socially differentiated effects on different categories of social actors, resulting in the shift of balances of power within social relations and thus leading to the redefinition of those relations themselves.

In the Machaze case wartime migration was particularly responsive to forms of gendered social struggle that ultimately influenced wartime population re-distribution through migration. Estimates suggest that between 40% and 70% of the population left the district to South Africa, Zimbabwe, or other internal destinations within Mozambique during the conflict (GTZ 1993, 1996; CARE 1994; Wenzel and Bannerman, 1995). Even those who remained within the district were displaced from their homesteads, forced to choose between moving into FRELIMO’s fortified communal villages or to flee deep into the “bush”, nominally under RENAMO’s control. From the outset wartime migration exhibited a highly gendered pattern. Throughout the war almost twice as many women as men remained in Machaze or in neighboring rural districts (GTZ
By contrast, most adult Machazian men moved out of the district to the peri-urban areas in South Africa during the first few years of the conflict. This patterns of predominantly male migration to South Africa early in the conflict represented the continuation of long-established coping strategies similar to those employed historically during cycles of intensified colonial labor recruitment (Lubkemann 2000a: 90-95; 100-115; 127-131). Similarly, Machazian women’s relocation within the district reflected their preference for rural destinations that allowed them to re-establish some form of subsistence agriculture. Few Machazian women had either the desire or the intention early on in the conflict to join male relatives in moving out of the district.

However the war’s intensification and unforeseeable prolongation along with successive droughts throughout the 1980’s drove more people out of the district by further restricting the possibilities for subsistence. The large population of those initially remaining in the district - predominantly women, children, and elderly men - eventually fled to Zimbabwe and settled in UNHCR refugee camps. Many Machazian men in South Africa either sent instructions or else personally returned to help family members move to these camps before returning to South Africa. These men often maintained support and communication channels with their families in these “surrogate home bases”. Despite the attempts by some Machazian men to assist their spouses and other dependent family members, the one option that was systematically avoided by these men was that of having these family members, and spouses in particular, join them in South Africa. In fact husbands quite actively discouraged their spouses from coming to join them in South Africa even if they expressed a desire to do so.

Machazian men had several motives for preventing their Mozambican spouses from joining them. The humanitarian aid provided in UNHCR camps reduced the cost that these men had in maintaining their families, in a manner analogous to that in which subsistence production had done back in Machaze. The townships in the Vaal area consisted of small houses and shacks, with tiny yards generally less than ten square meters in area, sprawled often from horizon to horizon. Even small garden plots and animals such as chickens are rarely seen since these are often stolen. Many men whom I interviewed argued that having a Machazian wife move to South Africa would drain their earnings because she would become a dependent herself.

However other “non-economic” reasons also loomed large in motivating Machazian men’s efforts to prevent their spouses from joining them in South Africa. Throughout the twentieth century Machazian men’s life strategies have depended on rather acute culturally prescribed asymmetries in gender relations that allow them to exploit women’s labor for their own benefit. Women historically have and still do provide virtually all of the labor for the practice of subsistence agriculture in Machaze. In Machaze poor land quality and acute water scarcity made domestic and agricultural tasks highly labor intensive. Women performed most of these labor intensive tasks. For example the average woman walked over 8 kilometers per day to get water. Most agricultural activities were culturally prescribed as primarily “women’s work”. Most men from Machaze whom I interviewed expressed a need to keep Machazian women unaware of the very different gender norms and division of labor operative in peri-urban South Africa, afraid that such exposure would lead women to question the asymmetries upon which men’s ease of life back in Machaze depended upon.

3 References for following discussion on gender politics - Lubkemann 2000a, 2000b, 2000c.
4 Those men who did not migrate to South Africa during the war usually fell into one of three categories: 1-those recruited by the military; 2-young men who had not yet engaged in a migratory labor trip abroad; and 3-older men who had retired from migratory careers. As the war progressed younger and older men tended to move in patterns similar to those of Machazian women (and frequently in their company), with the exception that once in Zimbabwe, younger men sought (illegally) work outside the refugee camps on farms or in other wage labor opportunities while retaining contact and mutual support with camp-settled relatives.
Machazian men were also concerned with the essential role wives played in maintaining proper relationships with senior kin believed to have particularly strong influence with ancestral spirits. Historically a man’s wife or wives contributed substantial labor to his parents and in particular to his mother. Many of these men preferred to see their wives remain with their parents in the refugee camps or within Mozambique rather than have them join them in South Africa. Machazian men were also able to pursue entirely new social opportunities in South Africa by preventing their Mozambican wives from joining them. As the war progressed Machazian men facing prolonged stays in South Africa began to establish conjugal unions with South African women. The possibility of pursuing conjugal options with South African women was largely dependent on keeping South African partners unaware of other marriage partners elsewhere since South African women were not receptive to the idea of polygyny in general and adamantly opposed in particular to the presence of a Mozambican wife in their homes in South Africa.

The presence of a Machazian wife in South Africa could also threaten to expose the Mozambican identity of these men, subjecting them to greater risks of deportation. In light of their illegal status most Machazian men sought to disguise their Mozambican nationality even from their South African partners. They would present themselves to South African women as Shangaanas from the Giyani area in South Africa, usually seeking non-Shangaana partners who were less likely to recognize differences in their use of that language that would mark them as Mozambican in origin.

Finally many Machazian men feared that rivalry between Machazian and South African spouses who knew of each other, and more importantly were in physical proximity to each other, was likely to heighten the likelihood of uloi (witchcraft) within the household and against the husband in particular.

Machazian men thus used a variety of passive and active tactics to prevent spouses who wanted to join them in South Africa from doing so. Men often gave dubious and misleading reasons to their Mozambican wives as to why they should not come to South Africa. Men frequently promised what eventually became indefinitely delayed assistance. Sometimes men provided incorrect return addresses to make locating them more difficult. Nonetheless, some women made their way to South Africa on their own initiative and found their spouses, despite lacking or misleading information. In some cases these women were actually sent back by their husbands to Zimbabwean refugee camps or even the war zone in Mozambique!

Gender politics thus clearly played a significant role in shaping the organization of Machazian wartime migration and in the production of wartime demographic outcomes. Machazian wartime migration was thus not only or necessarily even primarily responsive to the macro-political dynamics of the conflict but also to other forms of culturally-specific “micro-political struggle” within households, communities, and families that had been developing in Machaze throughout the twentieth century. The long, ongoing processes of negotiating the reconfiguration of gendered power within households was neither suspended nor eclipsed by the civil war.

IX. Conclusions: Theorizing Fragmented Wars and Their Displacement

In most social science and policy analyses of displacement and of the conflicts that produce it violence is generally analyzed and understood in as a phenomenon organized by the principles and agendas of the highest level at which political legitimacy is being militarily contested, typically those parties with national level political aspirations. However the empirical evidence from Mozambique indicates that the violence experienced in the conflict was not solely shaped by FRELIMO and RENAMO, the national level parties which were contesting political legitimacy at the national government level.

The Machazian case and comparative ethnographic analysis of conflict and forced migration in Mozambique demonstrate that “violence” was an experience problematized and
fundamentally shaped by the social formations and micro-political matrixes in which it took place. Far from being a singular phenomenon whose meaning was pre-established by larger forces and brought unaltered into local contexts, violence was significantly re-shaped by a highly differentiated terrain of local social tensions and cultural currencies. In this sense it can be argued that their was no singular war—no monolithic experience or understanding of violence—in Mozambique. Rather, as seen from the perspective of the local actors who had to formulate strategies for reacting to conflict—what the war “was about” in one area of the country had little to do with what it was about elsewhere.

It is worth briefly considering the historical trajectories and political and economic conditions that rendered the Mozambican conflict susceptible to “fragmentation” in an attempt to begin sketching the outlines of a more general theory of “fragmented wars” and their migratory (and other) dynamics. In large part the fragmentation of the Mozambican conflict’s meaning and the capacity of local social dynamics to “hijack” and redirect the means of violence of national parties to the war can be traced to a history that:

1-created a pervasive culture of local “disengagement” from central political authority in which the primary local “political logic” was one of maintaining distance from central authorities;
2-exhibited a strong continuity in a weak central government’s strategies for articulating its local power: through heavy handed policies and sporadically intrusive action at the local level based on shows of force rather than through more systematic and bureaucratic means;

Throughout much of the twentieth century, the weakness of the Portuguese colonial structure in Mozambique--both in administrative and financial terms--led to practices of governance at a local level that were sporadically intrusive and heavy-handed (Lubkemann 200a, Isaacman 1983,1996, Newitt, 1995). Consequently, the central state’s actions and intention came to be seen by local actors as suspect by default, viewed as a source of unwanted attention to be evaded (Lubkemann 2001; Chingono, 1996 ; Geffray, 1989; Baptista-Lundim and Machava,1995: Hall and Young, 1997).

Rather than employing overt resistance or forming grassroots political movements to change the state’s policies, rural Mozambican reactions to colonial rule were characterized by mass illegal labor migration across international borders, flight from forced labor, evasion of tax collectors, and a multitude of other strategies of passive resistance: noncompliance, absenteeism, and petty vandalism (Isaacman, 1996). These strategies proved highly effective in defending local interests against the far more powerful colonial state, particularly since that power was not so great that its exercise could be sustained in a uniform manner through space and time. Throughout the colonial era a political culture of “disengagement” (Azarya, 1988) developed throughout much of rural Mozambique in which the primary objective became to minimize the presence of the state in everyday local life.

In the immediate colonial aftermath, FRELIMO’s own radical attempts to create not only a centrally planned and managed economy but also a “command society” continued and arguably even intensified this alienation of large portions of the Mozambican population, particularly in rural areas. FRELIMO’s policies not only reinforced an already established culture of disengagement with central authority, but also significantly amplified local forms of social antagonism by challenging the established local socio-political order and through policies that accentuated socio-economic crisis. Despite its pretensions at broad social change FRELIMO’s governance capacity remained highly limited and thus dependent upon those locals it co-opted into its own program. Many of these locals had been previously marginalized and were not drawn from already locally legitimized authority (Hall and Young 1997; Lubkemann 2000a, 2001).

The historical and the precipitating conditions that may more generally lead to the susceptibility of wartime violence’s fragmentation may be hypothesized for further empirical investigation and testing:

**Historical conditions:**
1-a national context characterized by significant socio-cultural and socio-economic variation;
2-in which a history has led to a generalized political culture of local disengagement from central authority
3-in which the central authority’s strategies of governance are sporadic, based on coercive force, and involve dependence on local agents (a form of perpetuation of “indirect rule”)—all in large part as a result of the central government’s own weakness—its own lack of instrumental power;
Precipitating Conditions:
4-an environment in which economic policies or conditions amplify already existing forms of local social antagonism and competition;
5-the implementation of policies that directly challenge the established local socio-political order; and
6-the availability of means of violence in the form of an organized armed movement with a highly localist political program limited to the notion of challenging government policies rather than articulating an alternative national vision.

Conflict contexts such as Afghanistan (Dupree, 1980; Marsden, 1999) and Somalia (Besteman, 1999; Brons, 2001) may be particularly interesting cases in which to explore and test whether these conditions produce a “fragmented war” dynamic. The dynamic of “fragmented wars” is hypothesized to be quite distinct from that of “ethno-nationalist” wars (such as in Eritrea, Kosovo, or Chechnaya) in which ethnic minorities aspire to the creation of independent states, and from “ethnic civil wars” (such as in Rwanda, Burundi, Ivory Coast, and Sri Lanka) in which different ethnic groups are contesting state-level power and political predominance. By contrast in the environments in which the conditions above predominate the “political logic” that organizes violence is primarily “localist”-directed against central authority presence in local affairs rather than at replacing one set of central authority actors with a different set. In such environments the primary objective may not be to capture or control the state, but indeed to minimize its everyday presence in local lives.

I propose that in fragmented war contexts the currently predominant analytical approaches that assume wartime violence and migration are primarily shaped by state-level political processes and agendas need to be revised. Rather an understanding of migratory behavior in contexts in which the notion of the state is not the predominant trope for organizing the political imagination (as is the case in much of the developing postcolonial world) requires analysis of how local-level social organization and ideologies shape violence and strategies for reacting to it. The behavior of the people who are reacting to and living these conflicts can only be understood once their own interpretative terms and logics are investigated in order to determine how they shaped the contours, direction and structure of violence. Other social agendas, struggles, and considerations for a whole array of life-strategy concerns, grounded in culturally-specific terms, and social relationships and formations, may play a central role in the organization of violence and reactions to violence during the conflict.
REFERENCES


