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SOUTH AFRICA - MOZAMBIQUE RELATIONS IN THE 1990s

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1. Introduction

On the 27th and 28th of October 1994, Mozambique will experience its first national multi-party elections in living memory. This event, although the culmination of a long process of negotiations between former adversaries Frelimo and Renamo, will be overshadowed by other considerations: among them, the daunting task of rebuilding a shattered society, revitalising the national economy, and rethinking Mozambique's place in the community of Southern African states. Given its dominant position, it is perhaps inevitable that neighbouring South Africa will play a prominent role in all of these developments. In light of the remarkable interplay of forces in the transition processes evident in both countries, the aim of this essay is to report on current developments in Mozambique and relations between it and South Africa.

2. Peace in Mozambique - But where is the development?

Visitors to Mozambique are often struck by the new mood of optimism evident in many quarters (especially noticeable among street vendors peddling curios: their prospects have improved dramatically with the influx of dollars from the huge UN contingent in the capital). Closer investigation reveals that this is very much a psychological phenomena, flowing from a belief that the negotiation process (began in 1992) will deliver peace and (re)development. Indeed, this feeling is supported by economic data: it appears that the economy has turned around, growing by 5,6% in 1993; rural transport works again; and

agricultural production is being revived.

Are these hopes well-founded? Many analysts remain sceptical. In my view, a more realistic assessment must consider the following factors:

- * Economic growth must be seen in the context of starting from an extremely low base. Problematic too is the continuing decline in industrial production, now in its fourth year of downturn. Industrial operation is extremely ineffective, using obsolete technology. There is a continuing shortage of raw materials and spare parts.
- * In rural areas, appearances are deceptive. Even though farmers are now benefitting from a peace dividend as well as good agricultural prospects, more is needed to achieve sustainable growth. There is an extreme shortage of skilled human resources, and as a result of the war, virtually no local government structures are in operation. These deficiencies were well illustrated by the disastrous management of the 1993/4 bumper cashew-nut crop. Because of the failure of both the authorities and the delivery agents to reach agreement on prices, all five processing plants have ground to a halt. Result: no cashew nuts for export.
- * Even though investment opportunities appear attractive, investors remain hesitant. The main reason for the delay, apart from awaiting the outcome of the election in August, lies with the performance (or lack thereof) of the bureaucrats in Maputo. It is known that

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some potential investors have been waiting since 1992 for a detailed investment code, without which informed decisions cannot easily be made.

* Many analysts believe that donor involvement perpetuates Mozambique's dependency on the North; the country therefore remains underdeveloped. Indeed, there are many problems related to aid dependency, including aid addiction. For example, the extent of external support for the national budget to be balanced, amounts to 75%-80%. Added to this is the problem of growing corruption. World Bank observers believe that paradoxically, money is not the problem in Mozambique; rather, it is the 'absorption capacity' of the country: the ability to spend money wisely on development projects.

* Underlying all of this is a wider question concerning the impact on society of colonialism and underdevelopment, inappropriate state policies, destabilisation, and 're-colonialisation'. What has variously been described as the collapse of the state in Mozambique, social anarchy, and political decompression,¹ has left an indelible mark on the country and its people, with after-effects to be felt for generations to come.

Nevertheless, one need not be deterministic in thinking about the country's future. New trends in global as well as regional politics, and especially an emphasis on societies to adopt democracy, might offer hopeful possibilities. Some analysts argue that the dynamics of the peace process, international support for reconstruction, and the coming multi-party election in October are aspects of a development that should result in normalisation and eventual recovery. What then are the prospects for the coming election?

3. Election 1994: Some Change? No change?

All indications are that with the invaluable support of the United Nations peace-keeping mission in Mozambique (ONUMOZ), preparations for a relatively free and fair election are well advanced. At the time of writing, it appeared the 21-member National Electoral Commission (CNE) was confident of successfully completing the registration of voters and political parties. According to the CNE, 80% of potential voters (7 million voters out of a population of 16 million) have registered, and

so have 13 political parties. The CNE is also confident that the parallel-running peace process, which includes the demobilisation of the rival armed forces, is well under control. It therefore does not foresee a 'Savimbi-option' scenario for Mozambique.

Electoral Divisions and Numbers of MPs for each to elect

Area	No. of Potential Voters	No. of Seats
South		
City of Maputo	486,685	20
Maputo	440,432	14
Gaza	729,473	16
Inhambane	687,559	19
Centre		
Sofala	683,904	19
Manica	328,141	11
Tete	464,601	14
Zambezia	1,533,444	48
North		
Nampula	1,473,853	52
Niassa	413,158	10
Cabo Delgado	653,600	24

Source: CNE (National Elections Commission) estimates, before the end of voter registration

(See Map on Page 5).

Talking to the public reveals that potential problem areas do exist, however, and it has to do with voter education (adult literacy rate: 31%); the sheer inaccessibility of parts of the countryside; and the lack of information available to potential voters in especially the northern parts of the country. Given these obstacles, voting will almost definitively not be completed within two days. Consider, also, that the CNE must organise the transport and delivery of voting material to 7000 'assembly points' or voting stations throughout the country in the week prior to the election itself. As we have learnt in South Africa, there is every possibility of the voting process being dragged out considerably longer than actually planned or budgeted for.

On the question of the election outcome, opinion polls have generally put President Chissano and his ruling Frelimo party ahead of Mr Dhlakama and his ex-rebel Renamo movement. Of the 16 opposition parties, only three or four (including Renamo, Monamo/PMSD, and Fumo/PCD) can be considered as serious candidates for presidential elections and might obtain significant percentages for the legislative elections.² Generally, given the lack of both democratic structures and a vibrant, participatory civil society, it appears that the prevailing balance of forces will result in little change of governance in the post-election phase.

Given this situation, will it be possible for the new Mozambican government to turn to the region for support in realising its National Reconstruction Plan (NRP)?

4. **Bilateral relations: No to politics, Yes to technical co-operation**

Mozambique has limited options. The dominant foreign policy direction in recent years has been both to secure the flow of emergency and development aid from the North, and to maintain a working relationship with those International Financial Institutions that are involved in (some would argue, run) the country's economic rehabilitation programme. However, the problems associated with this option are increasingly recognised by Mozambicans. Secondly, Mozambique is tied into regional political initiatives primarily through membership of SADC.

Thirdly, since 1990, Mozambique's relationship with South Africa, which previously was strained by political and ideological factors, have been characterised by a process of normalisation. However, the relationship continues to be extremely uneven.

The current view from Pretoria (where bureaucrats still determine policy - rather than the new political elite) is that relations with Mozambique, as with the region, should be conducted within a 'functionalist' or 'neo-realist' framework.³

Essentially, this means that South Africa's approach to Mozambique consists of the following elements:

- * An emphasis on the expansion of bilateral relations to promote South Africa's economic and commercial interests. This should be done by opening up opportunities for South African companies and institutions through trade, tourism and joint ventures
- * This approach should be used to gain Mozambique's support for the achievement of greater economic integration in the region
- * Support for the peace process to ensure that a 'stable neighbour' will pose less of a security risk to South Africa
- * An attempt to develop an 'unbiased' approach toward all Mozambican political parties. The purpose is to ensure 'good relations' with a post-election government,

regardless of the outcome.

Currently, the following bilateral agreements are in place:

- * The Nkomati Accord (to be phased out and replaced by agreements listed below);
- * Sea Fisheries Agreement;
- * Trade Office Agreement;
- * Labour Agreement;
- * Bilateral Air Services Agreement;
- * Civil Aviation Agreement;
- * Cahora Bassa Agreement (on electricity);
- * Agreement on Relocation of Refugees;
- * Agreement on Diplomatic Relations.

In future, agreements on security, extradition, and road transport might be entered into. As things currently stand, therefore, the two countries have full diplomatic relations (established in October 1993), with the extent of cooperation perhaps reflected in the signing (by the two presidents) of an Agreement for the Establishment of a Joint Permanent Commission for Cooperation during President Mandela's first State visit to the country in July 1994.

Key areas of cooperation include bilateral trade, security issues (especially illegal cross-border activities such as weapon smuggling), the Cahora Bassa hydroelectric scheme, development assistance, repatriation of refugees (in conjunction with the UNHCR), health issues (with a focus on training and dealing with communicable diseases), and transport. In addition, there is growing concern among sectors of South African society about the increasing number of illegal immigrants from the region.

Estimates of illegal Mozambicans in South Africa (excluding refugees) range from over 500,000 (1994) to a projected influx of 2,300,000 by the year 2000.⁴

In the area of trade, a Preferential Trade Arrangement is in place, whereby Mozambican exporters can export certain specified goods (including fish & prawns, cashew nuts, citrus fruit, coconut oil, tyres) to South Africa at a nominal import duty rate. Quotas are allocated on an annual basis. An overview of statistics⁵ reveal that trade

has continued to grow at a steady pace since 1990. In 1993 total exports from South Africa to Mozambique were R964.5 million. By January 1994, exports had increased by 41%, compared to the same period in 1993. On the other hand, exports from Mozambique to South Africa are growing very slowly, as shown in the following table:

Tonnage of goods transported by road between South Africa and Mozambique

Mozambique to South Africa	South Africa to Mozambique
1990: 92 tons	1990: 17,065 tons
1993: 3,810 tons	1993: 44,315 tons

Source: Department of Foreign Affairs, Pretoria, 1994.⁶

5. Conclusions

Relations between South Africa and independent Mozambique were for many years characterised by suspicion, hostility and outright aggression. Many blame the apartheid government for Mozambique's predicament. Indeed, destabilisation must be recognised for destroying the socialist dream. However, a balanced view would also acknowledge other factors, including inappropriate state policies pursued by Frelimo, as well as the scars left by colonialism. Emerging from this maelstrom of struggle and instability is a new relationship between South Africa and Mozambique, made possible by exciting developments in both countries which could bring them closer towards achieving peace and stability. However, the terms of the new relationship are almost exclusively determined by South Africa. Bureaucrats and business interests are pursuing a functionalist agenda, in line with the

notion that South Africa will benefit from expanding trade and commercial opportunities with the region. Although it is argued that this approach will benefit all sides, it cannot be assumed. Given the acute imbalances in existing regional economic relations, a conscious effort must be made to promote equitable and mutually beneficial cooperation and integration. It is therefore vitally important that Mozambique develops an appropriate and well-informed policy in response to the South African initiatives as outlined above.

Endnotes

1. Simpson, M., *Political Decompression and Historical Revisionism in Mozambique*, SAIIA, Braamfontein, September 1992.
2. Interview with Dr Simbine, Vice-president of the Comissao Nacional De Eleicoes (CNE), 8 September 1994, Maputo.
3. Information obtained from the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC), Maputo.
4. Du Pisani, A., 'Ventures into the interior: Continuity and change in South Africa's regional policy', in Van Nieuwkerk and Van Staden, *Southern Africa at the Crossroads*, SAIIA, 1992.
5. *Financial Mail*, 9/9/1994.
6. Information obtained from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Pretoria. See also Maasdorp & Saville's, *The SADC Economies - Waiting for South Africa*, SAIIA Occasional Paper, 1994.

MOZAMBIQUE: PROVINCES

