

Mozambique: a success story continues?

When Mozambique conducted its second multiparty elections from 3-5 December 1999, the focus of the regional and international community was on this southern African country, considered a glimmer of hope in African sky of darkness. Major problems with the computerisation of electoral data at provincial level delayed the proclamation of results until 22 December, even though the National Electoral Committee's (CNE) calendar provided sufficient time between the last election day and the publication of the official results. Incumbent President Chissano (FRELIMO), with 52.3% of the vote won the presidential elections against RENAMO-UE candidate, Afonso Dhlakama (47.4%). In the parliamentary elections FRELIMO defeated RENAMO, with 48.5% against 38.8%.

Prior to the announcement of the official results RENAMO-UE had already tried to create the impression that the party had won the elections, and that any other outcome could only be a consequence of FRELIMO's fraudulent manipulations. When FRELIMO was named the winner, RENAMO-UE refused to accept the official results and appealed to the Supreme Court. However, on 4 January Mozambique's highest court rejected RENAMO-UE's claims and declared the results valid. Although the representatives of RENAMO-UE took their seats in parliament on 14 January (otherwise they would have lost their mandates after 30 days), they still threaten to block parliamentary work.

So far, Mozambique has been praised as an economic and political success story. But what will RENAMO's destructive policy mean for the country's future political development? Will Mozambique continue to be a model of democratisation in Africa? However, to raise this question of continuity requires one to simultaneously question Mozambique's myth of success.

Economic achievements and challenges

With the discrediting of Marxism-Leninism at the end of the 1980s Mozambique — like many Eastern European countries — faced the challenge of a two-fold transition. First, a socialist-orientated, one-party regime had to be transformed into a democratic system. Second, the planned economy had to give way to liberal market mechanisms.

From 1987 onwards the International Monetary Fund (IMF) supported Mozambique's sustained adjustment effort. Economic growth rose from an average of 6.7% per annum between 1987 and 1995 to 10% p.a. between 1996 and 1998. In December 1999, the governor of the central bank, *Banco de Moçambique*,

was again able to confirm an annual growth rate of 10%. Inflation, which had reached a highpoint of approximately 50% in 1995, was reduced by a prudent fiscal and monetary policy to less than one per cent in 1998. Furthermore, in 1999, the government was able to keep to its target of an inflation rate of less than 5.5%.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) is being encouraged in Mozambique through the establishment of a legal and institutional framework similar to other developing countries. In 1999, 13 new financial institutions were registered under Mozambican legislation and the Mozambique Stock Exchange opened in Maputo.

However, despite bright economic expectations, with GDP growth rates of 10% p.a., one should keep in mind that such developments are entirely dependent on FDI and concentrate mainly on mega-projects like the US\$1.3 billion MOZAL aluminium smelter. Although a large number of major industrial projects are under way, the structure of Mozambique's economy will not change overnight. The largest sector is still agriculture and fishing, accounting for about 30% of total economic activity.

In the medium term AIDS will be the biggest threat to economic development in Mozambique. The Health Ministry estimates that about 14.5% of the adult and economically active population is HIV-positive. Approximately 700 people are infected each day and 250,000 Mozambicans will have died of AIDS by the end of this year.

The record of political success

When after more than a decade Mozambique's civil war ended in 1992 with the General Peace Accord (GPA) of Rome, the country was not only challenged

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by the peace process itself, but also by the need to implement democratic structures. Within that context, Mozambique's first multiparty elections in 1994 constituted a critical point as well as a formal end to the peace process. The UN not only monitored the elections with about 1,200 observers but also supported the organisation of the election in technical and operational terms. The acceptance of the election results by all participants was decisive for the 1994 elections — especially with regard to the Angolan débâcle in 1992 — and contributed to a further consolidation of Mozambique's peace process.

Despite minor flaws regarding aspects of participation and competition in the elections (for example, about one million refugees in neighbouring countries were not able to vote; and financial resource allocation was ostentatiously unequal: RENAMO received US\$12 million for its election campaign, while all other parties had to share a trust fund of US\$1.8 million), they were declared 'free and fair'.

The first blemish on Mozambique's 'immaculate' record of democratisation appeared with the local elections in 1998. RENAMO, the biggest opposition party, boycotted the elections, and voter turnout was less than 14.5%. The local election

débâcle served as a warning to the political actors, especially FRELIMO, who then saw to it that the legal framework for the national elections in 1999 was based on a broad consensus between the two main antagonists and that the electoral process itself remained as transparent as possible. As a result, both major parties were represented in the electoral bodies: CNE and STAE (the technical secretariat responsible for the organisation of the election).

What had seemed impossible in 1994 — a coalition of opposition parties including RENAMO — came within reach for the first time in 1998 when several smaller parties joined RENAMO's boycott of the local government elections. It became a reality when RENAMO and 10 other parties formed the electoral alliance RENAMO-*União Eleitoral* in June 1999.

Some 85% of the voting population registered between 20 July and 17 September despite the electoral process's late start.

In contrast to the situation in 1994, the organisation of the 1999 elections was entirely in Mozambican

hands and the only logistical support came from seven South African National Defence Force helicopters. International and national election observers were full of praise for the organisational efforts and the orderly conduct of the elections. Quite early, before the actual election results were published, the election monitors bestowed their mark of approval on the elections — 'free and fair'.

Although the whole process can, without a doubt, be characterised as 'free and transparent', the attribute 'fair' should certainly be used more cautiously. Inter alia, 'fair' means an equality of opportunity, implying that the ruling party is not using state resources for campaigning, that party representatives have equal access to polling stations, that all complaints of irregularities are treated equally and that election results are therefore accepted by participants. However, Mozambique's second national election did not prove to be entirely fair in the above-mentioned sense. Smaller parties had to begin their canvassing late in November, as funds for the campaigns were not released earlier. Although the campaign officially started on 19 October, the CNE decided on the amount of money and the mode of distribution only on 8 November: The Mozambican state gave US\$480,000 to the

election fund. Switzerland, Sweden and the Netherlands created a fund of US\$917,000 and the United States made US\$1 million available. One third of the money went to the presidential candidates of FRELIMO and RENAMO, one third was allotted to the parties represented in parliament and the rest was distributed among the parties running for elections but who had not been represented in parliament previously.

As in 1994, the much better financial and material position of ruling FRELIMO, which did not hesitate to use state resources for the election campaign, was notoriously obvious. As canvassing accelerated, it became much harder to contact state officials since many of them were campaigning for their party — FRELIMO.

Although equal access to public media for all parties is guaranteed by law, inequalities of press coverage were striking. As 'Article 19', an NGO covering media and press freedom, confirmed afterwards, it was only Radio Moçambique that gave well-balanced coverage. The public television station TVM, as well

Presidential Elections		
	1999	1994
Chissano (FRELIMO)	52.3%	53.3%
Dhlakama (RENAMO)	47.7%	33.7%
Others	^a	13.0%
blank votes	6.5%	5.8%
invalid votes	2.9%	2.8%
Parliamentary Elections		
	1999	1994
FRELIMO	48.5%	44.3%
RENAMO	38.8%	37.8%
UD	^b	5.2%
Others	12.7%	12.7%
blank votes	9.6%	8.4%
invalid votes	4.9%	3.2%
voter turnout	70.0%	88.0%
^a No other candidates ^b While UD was able to get over the 5% barrier clause in 1994, this time they remain out of Parliament.		

as the semi-public newspapers *Notícias, Domingo* and *Diário de Moçambique* focused on FRELIMO during the election campaign. In mid-November Dhlakama even refused press coverage of his rallies by *Notícias*, as the newspaper reports were biased and directed against him. Given these circumstances during the pre-election phase, it is hard to assume the existence of a 'level playing field' for all participants.

In addition, 'fair' also implies the acceptance of the election results by all participants. Certainly, the long period between the last election day and the announcement of the results provided much time for rumours, speculation, claims of betrayal and it created uncertainties on both sides. Although all the claims RENAMO brought before the Supreme Court were dismissed, the party still does not accept its defeat. Dhlakama keeps demanding a recount of votes, and has already moved his party headquarters to Beira. On 31 January 2000 Dhlakama sent a 10-day ultimatum to the government threatening to install parallel RENAMO governments in those provinces where the party gained the majority (Niassa, Nampula, Zambezia, Tete, Manica and Sofala). During a party rally in Cabo Delgado at the end of January, Dhlakama did not hesitate to proclaim himself President of the Republic. Apart from calling for a recount, RENAMO is now also demanding new elections to be held after the end of the rainy season, in April or May 2000.

Although RENAMO's behaviour highlights a political culture that still has to reach maturity, the question of whether FRELIMO would have been prepared to accept a defeat may also be asked. After all, democracy means government for a limited period of time and a change in government revitalises any democratic system. Confronted with Dhlakama's

threats, future progress depends on to what extent Chissano and FRELIMO are willing to find a consensual solution to the existing political complexity.

Regarding developments within FRELIMO, it will be interesting to see who becomes Chissano's crown prince in the current legislative period. In terms of the constitution, Chissano will not be able to stand for a third term of office in five years' time. And so far, FRELIMO does not have the necessary two-thirds majority in parliament to change the constitution and to introduce a semi-presidential system (Chissano would then be able to run for the office of prime minister). Neither will FRELIMO gain the support of RENAMO who have already thwarted an attempt to amend the constitution in the previous legislative period.

So far, the composition of the new government has not provided any surprises. On the contrary, with no change in the important portfolios of the interior, foreign affairs and justice, and with Pascoal Mocumbi keeping his office of prime minister, Chissano has sent a clear sign of continuity. With Armando Guebuza remaining leader of FRELIMO's parliamentary bench, Chissano has also underlined that he prefers to have the *historicos* within FRELIMO in parliament rather than in government.

All in all, the aftermath of the December elections shows that although at first sight the results indicated no major changes in Mozambican politics, RENAMO's destructive policy may now force FRELIMO to make significant concessions for the sake of political stability. However, Mozambique's move towards a consolidated democracy continues to be a long and slow, sometimes even stagnant, process.