

Democratic Deficits and Underdevelopment in Mozambique

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Abstract

Mozambique has the trappings of a progressive African state: abundant gas and coal resources, expanding foreign direct investment, aid from international donors, a decade of political stability, and social welfare for her most vulnerable. However, Mozambique ranks among the least developed nations on the African continent (World Bank 2018; UNHDI 2018). This study investigated why resource-rich, democratic Mozambique is underdeveloped, aid-dependent and poor. Using survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, findings indicate three critical factors: Mozambique's version of democracy, particularly the dominance of Frelimo; "Dead Aid" and state inefficiency, evidenced by weak forward and backward linkages within the economy, and escalating insecurity in Cabo Delgado. These red flags indicate deficits in Mozambique's democratic process and shortfalls in her political economy. Affluence and democracy have become sundered during this recent history; this paper seeks causes. One main challenge to the existing deficit could be provided by the introduction of a Freedom of Information Act to strengthen radical media and civil society groups and open up Mozambique's politics to ethical, progressive and democratic scrutiny. Urgency is required to alter the current regressive path Mozambique treads. The study's limitation is its moderate sample size.

Keywords: Democracy, Mozambique, political process, corruption, resource curse

Introduction

Mozambique is a significant epicenter of foreign direct investment in Africa. After the world's largest natural gas reserve was discovered in northern Mozambique, seven countries – USA, UK, Japan, Italy, France, South Africa and Vietnam in 2019 invested \$14 billion in a \$20-billion project to liquefy and export natural gas from Mozambique. According to French oil giant Total (2019), Mozambique will profit significantly from the venture. The African Development Bank

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(ADB) also injected \$400 million to co-finance the construction of the gas project. On its part, the Mozambican government remains optimistic, forecasting revenues from the Rovuma Basin gas sector totaling \$35 billion to \$63.6 billion over the project's lifetime. When fully operational, the joint venture project is expected to generate over 40 million tons per annum and transform the energy sector with productive forward and backward linkages to Mozambique's socio-economic future. "Through the availability of domestic gas, the project stands to facilitate the development of gas-fired electricity in Mozambique. This will play a key role in providing reliable and affordable energy for the country and the wider region" (Muriuki 2020 1).

Mozambique has also benefited significantly from extensive development cooperation and Official Development Assistance (ODA) from the United States. According to a Congressional Research Service Report (CRS 2019), between 2016 and 2018 the U.S. government gave Mozambique an annual average of \$452 million in aid to fund the provision of primary health care, procure needed medical infrastructure and train health-care professionals. Data from the report indicated that aid to Mozambique from the International Community in general averaged \$1.96 billion annually from 2008 through 2017, making Mozambique the 15th largest recipient of international aid globally (OECD 2019). In 2019, the World Bank (2020) approved over \$425 million to finance the provision of infrastructural development in Eastern and Southern Africa. The Regional Infrastructure Financing Facility project (RIFF) aims to expand long-term finance to private firms in selected portions in the power sector, as well as in the transport, logistics and social sectors in Southern Africa, including Mozambique.

These substantial foreign direct investments and aid from international donors complement Mozambique's sustained, rapid post-civil war economic growth and political stability. At the end of the civil war in 1994, Mozambique's economy grew by an annual average of 8.4%, through 2015. This was facilitated by liberal economic reforms, political transformations in the 1990s and the formation of a new constitution that enshrined multiparty, competitive elections, thus ending sixteen years of internal conflict between the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo), the ruling party, and the Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo), the opposition. The 1992 peace accord between the two rival parties set the agenda for subsequent economic growth that lasted a decade (Haysom 2020). However, political stability, international donor support and increasing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) are yet to significantly improve living standards of Mozambicans. According to the United Nations Human Development index (UNHD 2019), more than half (52%) of Mozambique's population live below the \$2 a day poverty line; 77% of its labour force work in subsistence agriculture and about 20%, that is one in every five Mozambicans, are unemployed. In terms of human development, the report ranks Mozambique low, positioning it at 180 out of 189 countries worldwide. More complicated is the scale of financial corruption by Mozambique's political elite, as evidenced by a 2016 clandestine loan, estimated at \$2 billion. "In reaction to these revelations, the IMF and the "G14"— a coalition of donors that provides budget support, united in cutting off financial aid to the government and demanded independent inquiries into the debts" (Haysom 2020: 8). With almost half of the yearly national budget derived from donor funds, a suspension of aid impacted the country's economic stability significantly. As stated by The World Bank in 2018, Mozambique will continue on a reduced growth trajectory after dropping 3.8% and 3.7% in real GDP growth in 2016 and 2017 respectively. In 2011, Lloyd expressed concerns that Mozambique's incumbent government has not ensured the independence and transparency of its economic decision-making procedures; warning that the country must work towards limited dependence on foreign aid and implement sound economic policies in order to gain international respect.

This paper explored why resource-rich, democratic Mozambique is economically underdeveloped, using the lenses of its political process. While previous studies highlighted corruption (CMI Report 2016), resource curse (Bidaurratzaga-Aurre & Colom-Jaen 2015), aid (Manning & Malbrough 2012), political economy (Orre & Ronning 2017) and economic

inefficiency (World Bank 2018) to deconstruct underdevelopment in Mozambique, this current study examined Mozambique's peculiar democratic history, its political structure and its effect, if any, on delayed growth and poverty. We argue that under-development in Mozambique is not a consequence of Western neo-colonial arrangements designed to lock Africa in general and Mozambique in particular in a cycle of poverty, dependence and despondency. Rather, Mozambique's version of democracy gets in the way of economic development to the extent that concentrated political power within Frelimo (ruling party) is no longer a means to national development ends, but a conduit pipe through which legislative, political and economic resources remain in the hands of a few powerful party-men. In its current form, Mozambique will experience economic growth and Frelimo will further consolidate its hold on the state, but Mozambicans will remain poor. Findings from this investigative project will add to growing scholarship on democratization and political economy in Africa.

Democracy and underdevelopment in the Global South – a theoretical framework

In the last three decades, countries in the Global South gravitated towards democratic rule as a political means to development ends. This was inspired by the belief that development and democracy have strong correlations (Sen 1999). As seen in the West, democracy guarantees the protection of human rights, press freedom, free speech, the right to protest and periodic elections. These conditions have over time increased the likelihood of good governance and development in Europe and North America. In *Why Nations Fail*, Acemoglu & Robinson (2012) add that democracy promotes economic growth by strengthening state institutions, enforcing the rule of law and increasing investors' confidence. It is believed that democracy stimulates the social insurance safety net, government capacity and efficiency, human capital development and social cohesion (Ariely 2015). However, in the Global South, particularly in emerging democracies in Africa, evidence does not support these claims. Generally, across the continent, except in a pocket of isolated cases – Ghana, South Africa and Botswana – two decades after democratisation in the 1990s has yet to result in political inclusion, free and fair elections, respect for human rights, and freedom of the press; let alone good governance or sustained economic growth. For example, African countries still rank very low on the global press freedom index: Eritrea is 178 out of 180, Djibouti 176, Somalia 163, Burundi 160, Sudan 159, Rwanda 155 and D. R. Congo 150 (Reporters Without Borders 2020). Africa is also home to democratic dictators, leaders who through constitutional intrigue, coercion and control have perpetuated themselves or their political parties in power. Democratic presidents in Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Republic of Congo, Uganda, Chad, Rwanda, Djibouti and Eritrea have each spent a minimum of 20 years in power). In human development terms, the United Nations Human Development Index (2019) notes that more than a third of the continent's population have limited access to quality education, health care and housing. In *The Bottom Billion*, Collier (2007) argues that concentrated poverty in the Global South is complex and deep-seated. These poverty traps (civil war, famine and bad governance) still exist and in some cases fester in democratic African nations.

It is therefore the case that democracy outside the Global North, particularly in Africa, is yet to reproduce a system that thrives on the rule of law, protection of fundamental human rights and equal access to opportunities. This is especially so in countries with unstable institutions, high inequality, economic underperformance and a checkered political history. Countries in which old regimes and power blocs still exert their hold on the state and civil society are most vulnerable. Although most of Africa democratised in the 90s, these democracies have had bad economic outcomes, to the extent that Moyo (2009) advocated "benevolent dictators" in Africa, citing the rise of communist China as a model of development. Adejumo-Ayibiowu (2019) takes it a step further and asserts that Western-style democracy in Africa is a way of pushing a capitalist, neoliberal agenda that contributes to Africa's poverty and allows developed nations to exploit the

continent. While these arguments are rooted in Gunda Frank's (1978) *Development of Underdevelopment*; they present Africa as victim and somewhat absolve political rulers within the continent of responsibility and leadership. A more nuanced argument is that within new democracies, there are variations of systems and outcomes. Benin and Togo in West Africa share a common French colonial history, currency, ethnic composition, geography and economic realities; however, Benin's democratisation and adoption of policies that protect human rights, media freedom and transparency of government has increased political stability, human development and economic progress. Togo on the other hand has performed less, by reason of limited freedoms within its democratic arrangements. Democratisation is thus a necessary step towards political reform and economic growth, but not an end in itself (Kapstein & Converse 2015). Democracy evolves within each society to the extent that it becomes a means to an end. What is critical therefore are the structures of a country's democratic process measured by the separation of powers, rule of law, independence of the judiciary, freedom of the press, its political economy and motivations of its political class! These factors fundamentally shape state capacity, economic progress and national development (Knutsen 2011).

Democracy and development in Mozambique

Mozambique became independent in June 1975, after four centuries of Portuguese influence. As the wave of decolonisation and political independence swept across Africa after World War 2, in 1962 the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo) was formed by exiled activists with a determination to free Mozambique from Portugal. Led by Eduardo Mondlane, Frelimo forces led what would become known as the war of independence through guerilla tactics, thereby gaining control of territories in northern Mozambique in 1964. As the struggle for liberation gained momentum across Africa, it was events in Lisbon, Portugal that changed the course of history in Mozambique. Following a military coup in Lisbon in 1974, the new Portuguese government agreed on terms of independence with Frelimo in Lusaka (Rodrigues 2019). By 1975, Mozambique was declared an independent nation under Frelimo's one-party rule, with Samora Machel as the nation's first president. However, in 1976 the Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo) was initially founded to challenge the legitimacy of newly-independent Mozambique. Renamo's opposition intensified when Frelimo adopted Marxist-Leninism ideologies and politically aligned Mozambique with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) (Orre & Ronning 2017). Thus, from May 30, 1977 to October 1992, Mozambique was engulfed in civil war, stirred by both political groups, which currently remain the nation's main political parties.

With the United States backing Samora Machel's Frelimo government and the USSR supporting Andre Matsangaissa's Renamo insurgents, Mozambique became a theatre of war, Cold War on the African continent. During this period, chaos engulfed Mozambique to the extent that the national economy, infrastructure and resources were significantly plundered. Again, events outside Mozambique led to significant political shifts within. The collapse of the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991 and its consequent disintegration made Frelimo-led Mozambique renounce Marxist-Leninism. A year later, in 1990, South Africa also faced political shifts that brought a black majority African National Congress into power. Just as Frelimo lost its main supporter and arms supplier (USSR), so did Renamo lose the backing of South Africa and the West. Consequently, both sides agreed to amend the constitution, initiating the move towards multi-party elections. This was followed by a signed peace deal leading to Mozambique's first general election in 1994. This ended fifteen years of civil war and set the newly democratic country on the path of economic recovery.

Mozambique progressed economically and remained politically stable until 2014 (Stella Conshello) when fighting erupted between Renamo and Frelimo forces over grievances linked to Frelimo's control of the state (Orre & Ronning 2017). Two years later, tensions subsided with the signing of a peace accord between leaders of both parties, but Frelimo's grip on power

remains a sticking point in Mozambique's politics. Although a permanent cease-fire was signed in August 2019, Renamo "residual forces" have rejected the peace agreement. The potential for failure in Mozambique's delicate peace process remains active and alive. Equally worrisome is Mozambique's economy: a fragile, underperforming system, based on subsistence agriculture and extractive industries, but heavily reliant on donor support. Since 2016, economic mismanagement and substantial trade imbalances have accentuated widespread multi-dimensional poverty in spite of the International Monetary Fund's debt forgiveness and restructuring (WBG 2020). Today, Mozambique remains a Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) in spite of a decade of economic progress that ended in 2014. Growing discontent within its young population is a concern for its long-term democratic stability.

As its objective, the study investigated why resource-rich, democratic Mozambique is economically underdeveloped using the lenses of its democratic process. What are Mozambique's political and economic structures, and what effect, if any, do these have on delayed growth and poverty in an emergent African state?

Research method

This study employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods, particularly survey method to explore the perspectives of Mozambicans. Specifically, the use of online questionnaires via email and semi-structured interviews both in-person and via Zoom were applied in gathering data among a wide variety of participants, including students, professionals, researchers and members of the general public within and outside Maputo, Mozambique's capital city. Justification for these data gathering methods hinged on three factors: first, in the context of the coronavirus and restrictions imposed as a consequence, e-mail questionnaires ensured the safety of investigators as well as participants. Importantly, 80% of targeted participants responded to the email survey. The quality of data generated from interview participants also enriched the study significantly. Second, online semi-structured interviews proved faster and more flexible to conduct and record via Zoom. To ensure consent, participants were emailed questions in advance and were informed interview sessions would be recorded. Finally, the combination of questionnaire data and interview commentaries gave a more rounded picture of public perception of Mozambique's political processes on one hand and increased the credibility and reliability of the study's findings on the other hand (Bhattacharjee 2012).

In sum, 58 participants out of a total sample size of 70 individuals responded to the survey. In addition to stating the purpose of the study, participants were expressly reassured of anonymity and confidentiality. This is particularly important in the context of the sensitive political nature of the subject of inquiry. In total, 34.4% respondents were female while 65.6% were male. In terms of age, 40% were within the 18-29 age group; 41% within 30 to 39; and 19% were aged 40 and above. The percentage of participants based on their province of residence include: Maputo City (46.6%), Maputo Province (19%), Nampula (24.1%), Rio Tete (1.7%) and Inhambane (1.7%).

A total of 13 semi-structured interviews were conducted in Maputo city and Maputo province. Nine were done via Zoom, while four were face-to-face (all parties involved observed social distancing rules and wore facemasks). Initially, a large number of participants were randomly selected, but in the context of Covid-19, only a limited few could eventually take part. Several individuals who initially indicated interest pulled out due to limited access to the Internet and/or restrictions imposed by spikes in the number of new Covid-19 cases across the capital Maputo in summer 2020. The age range of interview participants included young adults in the early twenties and middle-aged individuals in their forties. Each participant was personally contacted by email/phone call and upon consent, a Zoom session followed. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews followed the same format. Open-ended questions were used during interviews and in questionnaires to explore the perspective of participants on Mozambique.

The analysis of data followed strict thematic systematic procedures, a detailed method for identifying, analysing and interpreting recurring patterns in data. All interview sessions were recorded and transcribed accordingly. Thereafter, a detailed familiarity process with the content was undertaken before texts were coded. Coded texts were then developed into broader thematic categories as they related to study objectives. In the discussion section that follows, commentaries from interview participants are presented in different formats including a general description of the interviewees. This was done to ensure and abide by the confidentiality clause that preceded each interview session.

Results and discussions

This section presents findings from a broad range of data gathered to explore the effect of Mozambique's political process, if any, on its economics. As set out in the introduction, this study examined Mozambique's democratic deficit and its implications on the future of a resource-rich African country.

Mozambique's skewed legal system, political dishonesty, police corruption and state inefficiency rank among the main drivers of dissatisfaction according to participants. They believe corruption, especially within the police force, is a threat to social stability and progress. One participant described the effect of corruption as "endemic and brutal". Another called it, "the single biggest obstacle to Mozambique's future."

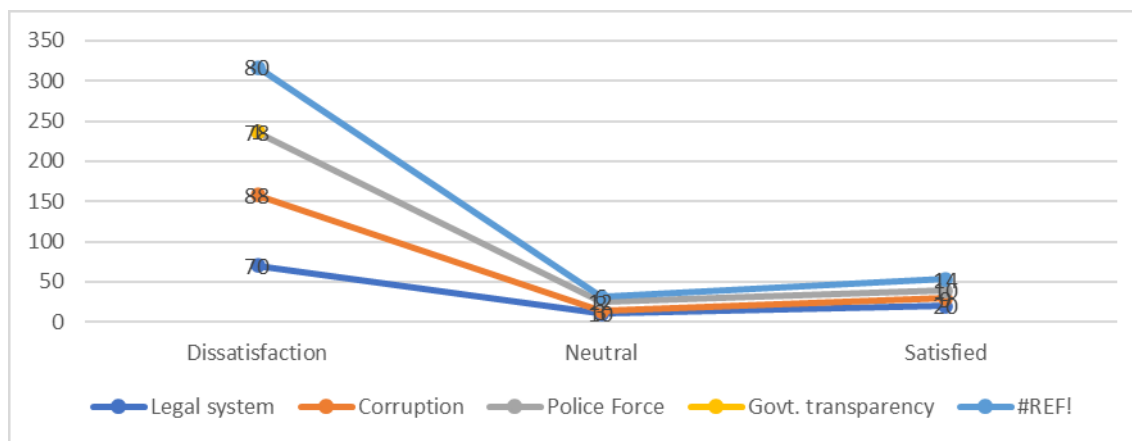


Figure 1: Level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with legal system, corruption, police force and government efficiency in Mozambique

On the economy and government's handling of military insurgency in Cabo Delgado, participants expressed mixed reactions. Although dissatisfaction with state/media relations is high, evidence indicated that most participants (69%) agreed that the economy is heading in the right direction within the context of gas exploration in the north. Over 47% of respondents believe the country will experience an economic boom through its natural resources. According to a participant, "The gas project has brought interest in and investment into our country. We have an opportunity of a life time to use the revenue to fund other national developmental project." Another participant added, "We can jumpstart our modernisation by putting more money into education, good roads and social welfare." According to Figure 2 below, a significant 41% of survey respondents are satisfied with Mozambique's economic trajectory.

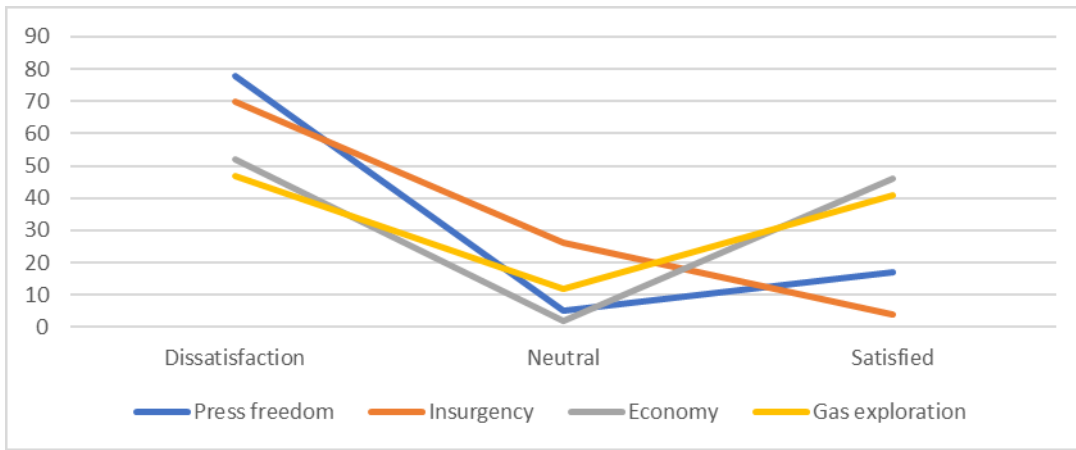


Figure 2: Level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction with press freedom, handling of insurgency, economy and gas exploration in Cabo Delgado, northern Mozambique

As indicated in Figure 3 below, participants expressed significant dissatisfaction with the current standard of living, social welfare benefits, and their future outlook as well as with high unemployment and deplorable health facilities outside Maputo, the capital. A total of 72% participants are very dissatisfied with living standards. A respondent puts it this way, “Very few Mozambicans (less than 10%) have access to the Internet, phones, clean water and steady electricity”. In the health sector, 81% are dissatisfied, with an over 40% infant mortality rate, low quality care and poor service delivery. On housing, 86% are very dissatisfied or unsatisfied. A participant, citing a 2017 report from the Office of Statistics in Mozambique, noted: “that 47% of the population live in huts, 22% lived in mixed housing, 22% lived in basic housing and only 5.8% live in ‘modern-conventional’ housing, the rest (3.2%) live in apartments and other types of housing. 50% of the population live in homes made of grass, 40% in zinc, and only 1. 7% live in houses made of concrete.” Similarly, 86% participants are dissatisfied with the educational system, especially at higher education level.

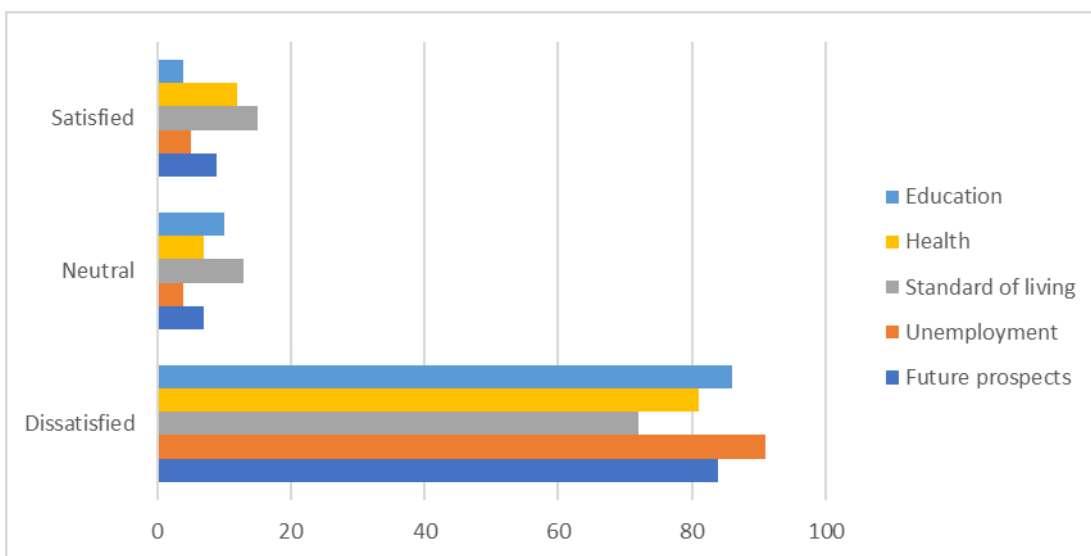


Figure 3: Level of satisfaction/dissatisfaction living standards, future prospects, unemployment, health and higher education in Mozambique.

Discussion

Democratic deficits in Mozambique

Mozambique's democratisation and political arrangement aligns with a US-style presidential system characterised by constitutionally guaranteed press freedom, periodic elections, the separation of powers, an elected legislature and an independent judiciary. Since 1994, democracy has consolidated in Mozambique, evidenced by regular elections and the steady transfer of power at all levels of government; and within the nation's 10 provincial divisions. Although intermittent tensions remain between Mozambique's leading political parties Frelimo and Renamo, a significant majority of participant (91.4%) believe democracy, political freedom and multiparty elections are important and necessary for national development and economic growth. This is especially so, participants noted, as elections remind politicians that power belongs to the people. It equally reminds people that civil war and conflict are not inevitable.

The major deficit in Mozambique's political structure is the overwhelming dominance of one political party, the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo). Since independence in 1975 to date (2020), political authority, especially at the national level, centres on Frelimo. In Mozambique, democracy is government of Frelimo, for Frelimo and by Frelimo. Most participants (73%), believe democracy in Mozambique means elections without change. According to one respondent, "Frelimo will most definitely win the next presidential and other major elections". Others (57.2%), believe Mozambique is not democratic in the true sense of the word. "There is an absence of political plurality. Except in pockets of provinces; what we have is a Frelimo country controlled by the ruling party. A Frelimo-controlled judiciary and Assembly of the Republic (legislature)". In spite of regular elections and Renamo's intent to and agitation for more political offices, Frelimo's grip on power since 1975 is not only unsettling but questionable. As subsequent portions will show, Frelimo's dominance is an unnatural system, perfected through clandestine alliances, control and privilege.

In line with Mozambique's constitution, adopted in 2004 and amended in 2007, extensive decision-making authority is vested and concentrated in the office of the president, who not only appoints his vice-president but also handpicks the prime minister. To date there have been seven presidential and parliamentary elections since democratisation in 1994, and Frelimo candidates have won all elections including the majority of seats in parliament. In 2019, Frelimo's presidential candidate Filipe Nyusi won overwhelmingly with more than 73% majority votes, extending Frelimo's control of power to 2024. His nearest rival, Renamo's Ossufo Momade, got 21% and David Simango of Democratic Movement Mozambique (MDM) party, 4%. Similarly, Frelimo won more than 71% of the legislative votes (184 out of 250 seats); thus continuing a long tradition in which power circulates within Frelimo. Renamo won 60 seats while the MDM got only 6 seats. In an election with 27 political parties, only three parties have elected representatives in parliament. Among the three, Frelimo has an overwhelming bulk. Participants indicated that Mozambique's national assembly (with a Frelimo majority), rather than checking the president; exercises limited influence over the executive arm of government. Frelimo's control of the executive and legislative arms of government helps cement the party's dominance in shaping policies and legislation in their favor. As a consequence, electoral laws, constitutional amendments, appointment of the head of Mozambique's electoral body, budget decisions, revenue allocation, capital expenditure and rules regarding election campaign funding are all controlled by Frelimo and for Frelimo. This imbalance has become entrenched and consolidated.

Within the judiciary, Supreme Court justices and judges in lower courts are appointed by the president, and scrutinised by the Assembly of the Republic. In theory, courts are independent sovereign bodies that administer justice without fear or favour to the extent that compliance with the Constitution, laws and other legal instruments are strictly adhered to; however, in practice, Frelimo's almost absolute control of the appointment process of judges leaves room for foul play.

In 2019, Renamo filed a legal challenge to an election that it claimed was marred by voter intimidation, irregularities and fraud, but the court summarily dismissed the challenge on grounds of insufficient evidence, in spite of claims by Renamo and a section of the press of mountains of evidence. In multiple instances such as in 2016, sections of Mozambique's radical media exposed large-scale corruption of over three billion dollars by top state officials, but the government's panel of inquiry set up to unravel the fraud and bring perpetrators to justice rarely convicted or persecuted senior officials. Most interview participants (61%) are very unsatisfied or dissatisfied with the legal system due to endemic corruption. A significant 80% believe the justice system is rigged. An interview participant observed that "rather than being the last hope of the people, we see miscarriage of justice everywhere and politicians are beneficiaries of the system. They use their influence to shape laws and determine the outcome of cases".

Frelimo's influence is not only limited to the three branches of government; across the public sector, political consideration and appointments overshadow meritocracy so much so that "it is who you know that determines what you become." A participant noted that, "Faithfulness to the party is a sure path to job security and promotion. If you are not part of the party, you are not part of the party-funfair." Another participant observed that, "It is hard if not impossible for a non-Frelimo to occupy any important position in government!" Frelimo also penetrates deep into Mozambique's security apparatus. The national army as well as other branches of the nation's intelligence community have their roots in Frelimo's resistance forces that developed during the anti-colonial liberation struggle and endured all through the civil war years. Today, top leadership within the army remains loyal to Frelimo! Within the mass media, Frelimo's influence is all encompassing. The state owns the most popular newspapers: *Noticias*, *Savana*, *Diario de Mocambique* and *Domingo*. In addition to ownership, the state employs funding and advertising revenue as a means of controlling private, pro-government media platforms, blogs and independently-owned newspapers. Similarly, across the broadcast media, radio and television, state ownership is also prevalent. State-owned *Radio Mozambique* and *Televisao de Mocambique* are most popular. As is often the case in one-party dominated political systems, the media is often recruited as propaganda agency for the incumbent government. In Mozambique, comments from a significant percentage of participants indicated this. Although opposition newspapers are increasing in numbers and influence, attacks on critical journalism are equally on the increase. Mozambique's constitution guarantees freedom of the press and freedom of expression, but when news organisations, civil society groups or journalists work on political corruption and/or state incompetence, they are threatened, detained or imprisoned. As observed by Amnesty (2020), attacks against critical voices such as one carried out by an unidentified group who attacked Canal de Moçambique, a Mozambican independent weekly newspaper that publishes investigative stories of public concern, pose a serious threat to freedom of expression. RSF (2020) country report on Mozambique indicated that press freedom is in retreat, demonstrated by a steep regressive decline from 66 out of 180 countries in 2012 to 103 in 2019 in the global press freedom ranking.

Frelimo furthers its political power and economic dominance by singlehandedly controlling financial aid (nearly half Mozambique's annual budget) from international donors. This unilateral control without constitutional oversight by the National Assembly allows the party to strengthen its stranglehold on the state and cement its political monopoly. Without transparency and accountability, Frelimo claims to channel donor budgetary support towards poverty alleviation projects, but defunds civil society groups, grassroots groups, the electoral commission and other independent advocacy groups. Donors are also aware of their enormous influence on Mozambique's economy and are willing to use aid as a bait to influence internal affairs within the state. Although donors have focused on budget support since 2009, their impact on democratic institutions and policy processes cannot be seen as influence-free. For example, between 2014 and 2016, donors withdrew funding after a secret loan by the government was brought to light.

The immediate consequence was a near collapse of Mozambique's GDP, that fell from 8% annual growth to 3.8% in 2016 and 3.6 in 2017 respectively. It is therefore naïve to think that donor interest will always align with public interest. When multiple interests conflict, it is complicated for any government to satisfy all interests. Stella Conshello: "as long as 49% or more of Mozambique's budget originates from donor aid (the largest in sub-Saharan Africa) it is fair to assume that its economy will continue to be weak and unsustainable as it is dependent and vulnerable to foreign currency which indicates possible interference as well as state manipulation" (Manning and Malbrough 2012).

In a liberal system such as Mozambique claims to be, political monopoly defeats a central democratic pillar – competition. Monopoly makes a mockery of principles of separation of powers and checks and balances among the three arms of government. They sweep aside constitutional norms and restraints to consolidate power and weaken democratic institutions. According to Walshe (2020), political monopolists everywhere use similar strategies: seize control of information and then institutions. They degrade public discourse, demonise oppositions, perfect their propaganda machine, muzzle the judiciary and independent government agencies, manipulate elections and politicise the civil service. These systemic loopholes in Mozambique's democracy only further extenuate the nation's corruption profile as evidenced by the 2016 clandestine loan episode in which the state took a credit facility in a non-transparent matter. Due process was overlooked and/or openly disregarded by the political class. When the loan was exposed, aside from a few arrests of low-cadre staffs, not much happened in terms of arrest, prosecution and sentencing. In the end, it was a case of Frelimo's clandestine loan investigated by Frelimo-appointed detectives in a Frelimo-controlled judicial system by a Frelimo-run government. Corruption is so prevalent that over 80% of interview participants believed that "Mozambique's government is not accountable, not transparent and not efficient."

Implication of democratic deficits in Mozambique

Frelimo's political monopoly has broad ideological, economic and security implications. In Mozambique, evidence indicates that natural resources may lead to economic growth but does not translate into sustainable social transformation and human development. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is also not a guarantee for holistic socio-economic improvements, and increased GDP does not always trickle down. State incompetence fuelled by cronyism; dependence on foreign aid and deep-seated corruption, among others, kills equal economic opportunities. Mozambique's economy revolves around its extractive industries: coal, aluminium and natural gas. Export-oriented, mega-projects built around these natural resources have had limited positive impact on the local economy in terms of employment and interdependence. According to a participant, "Frelimo's recklessness of state resources, especially revenue from natural resources as well as overseas development aid is a missed opportunity for change and progress. Rather than invest in the nation's future, Frelimo uses state revenue to buy or maintain patronage and support. They reward party-faithfuls and settle allies with grants and contracts." Most participants agreed that small-scale agriculture that engages over 80% of the population has little forward and/or backward linkages with the extractive industries and as such, the economy lacks productive integration. Agriculture, based on subsistence farming, only contributes 20% of total GDP. According to an interview participant, "Government is yet to set out a clear masterplan that will transform agriculture into mechanised farming. Indeed, economic policies and government action to integrate key sectors of the economy are mere political campaign slogans." As a consequence of the above, today, over 50% still live in poverty. While the capital city reflects some measure of economic growth, rural households, especially in the poorest province of Zambezia, earn a fraction of the national disposable income average. The majority of Mozambicans still live in shacks and huts. More than half the population have no access to electricity and Internet connectivity. According to a respondent, "If democracy is about

economic and social progress, what we have are the means (election, political parties ...) but not the ends – development.”

Similarly, a large proportion of participants (65%) do not believe that revenue from gas exploration will lead to significant changes in living standards across the country, though many agreed that the project will generate immense revenue for the state. As expressed during interviews, there is also considerable discontent regarding the labour component of the gas project, as higher-ranking positions with sizeable monetary compensation and benefits, especially among third party contractors, generally seem reserved for foreign labor. Skilled locals are often neglected and/or extremely underpaid. An interview participant stated that “people are not waiting for the government to ensure more and more Mozambicans are engaged in high paying jobs in the mines and gas plants. They are looking elsewhere.” Although this suggests a move towards entrepreneurship, high tax rates and low state support constitute an unavoidable setback to small and medium-scale businesses. Additionally, the capacity of these businesses has been heavily challenged since early 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country. According to the National Institute of Statistics, Mozambique’s private sector is set up as follows: big-sized companies constitute 3% of sector, hiring 56.6% of the population and generating 76.7% of business volume. Medium-sized companies constitute 3.9% of the sector, hire 10.1% of the population, and generate 4% of the business volume. Small-sized companies make up for 53.5% of the sector, hiring 28.7% of the population and only generate 18.6% of the business volume. Lastly, micro-sized companies occupy 39.6% of the sector, hiring 7.5% of the population and only generate 0.7% of the business volume. With the outbreak of COVID-19 in Mozambique in 2020, 49% of the big sized companies’ business were affected, 70% of the small-sized companies, and 66% of the medium-sized companies. However, large companies register a higher volume of losses, corresponding to 55% of the total compared to small and medium companies which register 45% from the point of view of lost revenue volume. However, these larger companies are better equipped compared to SMEs. Moreover, foreign interests benefit significantly from government tax breaks, easy access to capital and other incentives.

Insecurity in northern Mozambique will continue to escalate, threatening not only political stability but the gas project as well. Following recent terror attacks in Cabo Delgado, within close proximity (less than 5km) of Total-led Mozambique LNG Project camp in Afungi, the French oil and gas company was forced to evacuate part of its 3,000 work force and suspend its activities until further notice. Participants indicated that the growing attacks across the region could spread to neighbouring provinces like Niassa, west of Cabo Delgado, where officials have expressed concerns over a possible spillover of the armed conflict. In what began as a small-scale attack on a local police station in 2017 by unknown gunmen, over 70% of participants expressed displeasure with government’s handling of the issue, which participants believed allowed the crisis to fester. Since 2017, attacks on civilian targets and military installations have grown in frequency and intensity, with more sophisticated weaponry in use. The insurgents, identified by participants as *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama*, are reportedly allies of Islamic State. Government response has been coercive and brutal, with reported human rights abuses, further entrenching local discontent. The insurgents on their part have over time demonstrated sophistication and a determination to take on government forces. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2020) report, at least 570,000 people are estimated to be internally displaced in Cabo Delgado especially in recent months. Attacks on district capitals have particularly aggravated the displacement crisis. In total, there have been 490 organised violent events, 1417 reported fatalities and 920 reported fatalities from civilian targeting. The site of confrontation is in close proximity with gas installations near the country’s huge offshore gas reserves. Most participants believe that both the state and its media are concealing the full extent of the insurgency due to the strategic economic importance of Cabo Delgado. Some even noted

that escalation of conflict in Northern Mozambique is “the most challenging issue in the country and will definitely shape the future of the country.”

Ideologically, Mozambique experienced numerous doctrinal shifts within short periodic gaps since independence: nationalism in the 70s, socialism in the 80s and democracy in the 90s. These changes are believed to have limited the full development and implementation of any one ideology. Although multiparty politics was adopted in 1994, after a change from revolutionary Marxist-Leninist rule adopted a decade earlier, today Mozambique’s version of democracy has strong socialist principles (with limited economic and individual freedom) intertwined with Western-styled practices. For instance, the state monopolises control of the economy, except in the energy and mining sectors, where international capital and foreign technical expertise are quintessential. Though Mozambique has transformed into a capitalist state, the nature of social relations between governments and the governed suggest otherwise. The official rhetoric is capitalist, but the character of the state centralises control of the means of production in state-owned and managed enterprises. Frelimo’s determination to stay in power at all cost makes it difficult for members of the opposition party or anyone with different ideological or political beliefs to enjoy the same freedom as party-followers.

Finally, Mozambique is a natural disaster-vulnerable region. Over the past year its socio-economic stability has also been challenged by a series of cyclones threatening the lives and livelihoods of its citizens. Historically, in 2019 “two strong tropical cyclones have hit the country in the same season”. What later came to be known as Cyclone Idai and Kenneth affected the provinces of Zambézia, Sofala, Manica, Tete and Inhambane (50 districts in total), leaving 2.5 millions of people in need of humanitarian assistance, of which 1.3 million were children. There were 603 deaths, 1,641 injured, 223,947 homes destroyed, 160, 927 people displaced and 93 health facilities affected. Most recently, (January 23, 2021) Cyclone Eloise left parts of central Mozambique in flood. According to Mozambique’s National Institute of Meteorology (INAM), there have been four fatalities so far caused by the cyclone which received 250mm (10 inches) of rain within 24 hours. Over 1,000 houses have been destroyed in the process and 3,000 severely damaged leaving 160,000 people directly affected by the cyclone. As a result, until policies and more effective preventive measures are put into place by the governing body and its partners, the livelihood of citizens will most likely continue to be challenged and ranked unsatisfactory considering other socio-economic development indicators.

Conclusion and recommendation

Resource-rich, democratic Mozambique remains one of Africa’s most underdeveloped nations by reason of significant deficits in her political structure. Specifically, the dominance of Frelimo (main political party in power) since 1975, concentration of political and economic control in the party and a president with wide-ranging discretionary powers; weakness of parliament to exercise checks on the executive branch of government; and poor linkages within the economy significantly hinders socio-economic growth and human development in multiple ways: multidimensional poverty, insurgency and instability in the northern region, economic mismanagement and overdependence on international donors. In its current form, Mozambique is locked into being a resource-cursed, periphery economy. Its democracy is an end in itself, not a means to human development or a transformational tool for good governance. The paper recommends two things. The first is the passing of a Freedom of Information Bill as a means for civil society and the media to open up the country’s political space, thus facilitating transparency in government, political competition and de-escalation of tension between Frelimo and Renamo. The second recommendation is for the state to assist local firms and indigenous entrepreneurs transition into more diversified, productive industries: a shift from low-productivity business models to high-productivity manufacturing and modern servicing sectors that will enhance local businesses and their ability to compete favourably across the continent. The moderate number

of participants in this study, a consequence of COVID-19 and the resultant national lockdown and other restrictions, did not compromise the validity of key findings presented in this paper. More importantly, without urgent restructuring and reform, resistance, insecurity and insurgency at Cabo Delgado may fester and plunge Mozambique into deeper civil unrest and political instability, with devastating consequences on her economy and masses. Democracy must remain a means to an end and not an end in itself.

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