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All and Nothing: Capital's Wager in Mozambique

THIS ARTICLE TAKES A BRIEF LOOK at the two economic bets for reducing misery in Mozambique, one of the world's poorest countries, showing the complete schizophrenia between them: capital on one side and labor on the other, with capital coming out on top, as always.

Located on the east coast of Africa, Mozambique has been wracked by crisis since the 1970s, with economic, social, cultural and political consequences. It currently has one of the lowest rankings on the Human Development Index (HDI) formulated by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). On the HDI ranking for 2002 (published in 2004), Mozambique placed 174th among the 177 countries listed. Of the 36 countries with low HDI, 32 are in sub-Saharan Africa. Of the 50 African nations listed, 32 have an HDI considered low, 17 have a medium level, and one (Seychelles) has a high index.

Since so many African countries have weak human development, and most of these were colonies until well into the twentieth century, it is logical to assume there is colonial complicity in the Mozambique's plight of today. This colonial action in Africa was a way for capitalism to ensure cheap labor and to transfer wealth to the mother countries. The reasons why countries formed by colonialism in the twentieth century now face

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similar macro-structural economic, social and political situations are the same when viewed in the light of exploitation and modernization, these countries are in similar critical situations.

The modernization of Mozambique, including the establishment of a national state and the implementation of socialism, occurred belatedly in the world context (in the 1970s): when nation-states began to lose weight in international relations and found their margin for maneuver and sovereignty constrained.

The late 1980s saw a shift to neoliberal policies and programs, aiming to revive the economy, which had been burdened with debt and unstructured during the period of developmental modernization, its productive capacity reduced to only one-third of its previous level. The process of economic modernization in Mozambique occurred very slowly during the colonial period, but with consistent signs starting in the 1960s. This modernization banner, though totally reformulated, was taken up again by the socialist Frelimo government, constituted after independence from Portugal. The crisis of modernity in socialist molds was particularly felt in Mozambique. But the reasons for the crisis cannot be laid on socialism alone, because the majority of African countries also faced this crisis and only some of them adopted the socialist model. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the socialist experience in Mozambique was the deepest and most lasting on the continent (1976-86).

After the Second World War, when the new cycle of capitalist economic growth accelerated the process of independence in the European colonies, Portugal held back in letting go of its colonies. In the case of Mozambique, this delay resulted in ten years of armed struggle for national liberation. The struggle was led by the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo), headed by Samora Moisés Machel, its second president (the first, Eduardo Mondlane, was assassinated by the Portuguese Secret Police –PIDE– in 1969). Mozambique finally won its independence on June 25, 1975, after a short period of transitional government initiated on September 7 the previous year, during which the Portuguese colonial government shared power with Frelimo, with Joaquim Chissano acting as prime minister. When independence became official, Machel became the first president of Mozambique, under a single-party regime and a socialist constitution. The Front was transformed into the Frelimo Party in 1977.

With an economy dependent on neighboring South Africa and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), at the time under racist governments supported by the United States, Mozambique suffered the effects of a war of destabilization undertaken by these governments, causing incalculable losses. Nevertheless, Frelimo went forward with its projects to modernize the economy and the social relations begun by the Portuguese in the 1960s, by creating a strong state-owned sector and putting workers on the public payroll. The destabilization war started to become internalized in the 1980s, because of the failure of government projects to assure production, the absence of "traditional" values in the power structure, the abandonment to which domestic society was relegated (defined here as the great majority of the rural population with its own social organization predating colonialism, which still exists today), and above all, the rearguard and substantial military and economic support given to the MNR (later Renamo) by South Africa[1].

By 1983, the social, political and economic situation had deteriorated to the point of making Mozambique extremely vulnerable and dependent on humanitarian aid to alleviate the affects of the war, natural disasters and economic difficulties. That year the government made a non-aggression pact with its neighbor South Africa (which did not succeed), and another agreement with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (which did succeed), moving away from its socialist policies.

The economic problems faced were of different orders. There were internal factors resulting from the gap between the goals of Frelimo's projects and its capacity to achieve them. This mismatch between what it wanted and could really attain was linked to historical factors. It was fruit of the socialist modernizing proposals, within the progressive framework of the reigning world system. But it also ran up against external factors provoked by the destabilization war, which aimed precisely to debilitate the country's economy.

At the end of the 1980s, Frelimo promoted a series of changes, including in the constitution and establishing a multiparty government. It abandoned the centrally planned model and shifted over to a market economy. In 1992 Frelimo and Renamo signed a peace accord, and direct elections were held in 1994, with Frelimo winning and Joaquim Chissamo being elected president, a post he had already occupied since 1986 when as minister of foreign affairs he replaced President Machel, who died in an airplane crash (possibly sabotage) in South Africa. He

1 MNR stands for the Movement for National Resistance, later called the Mozambique National Resistance. It was founded in 1976 by the racist government of Ian Smith in Rhodesia, and supported by diehard colonialists. With the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, it transferred its staging areas to South Africa and made incessant bloody raids into Mozambique territory. Only later, with the adhesion of dissidents from Frelimo, did it become a political party under the Portuguese name *Resistência Nacional Moçambicana,* or Renamo, led by Afonso Dhakana, still its head today. It now has parliamentary representation and runs some important cities.

was reelected in 1999. Frelimo also won the 2004 elections, under its new standard-bearer, current President Armando Guebuza.

Peace has effectively been established throughout the country since the 1992 accord, despite the lingering effects of the long years of strife. The political situation has been stable, without the former climate of belligerence. The existing social and institutional violence is fruit of the *normal* process of capital accumulation between those who own and do not own goods and properties, with police and private militias imposing order. The effects –besides the psychological trauma caused by all the deaths and disappearances, the uprooted (data indicate over 4 million had to flee their homes, in a country of 16 million), wounded and crippled– are the disorganized social structures, which are recomposing slowly, the return of capital and old production relations from South Africa and Portugal, with the same accents and strict control, and the same impunity required for the action of capital, as well as the protection of the powerful, only now of all colors.

If the present is nothing to brag about, the future holds little promise. The most optimistic forecasts envision it will still take decades to reach the 1973 level of economic output, Mozambique's best. To face this situation, the Ministry of Planning and Finance starts from the premise that:

> Without economic stability, there is no climate to stimulate economic growth, without which there is no way to reduce poverty. [...] economic stability is fundamental for economies to grow. Stability is normally measured by variations in price levels, interest rates and exchange rates. These variations are determined, in general, by policies that affect demand in the economy. These policies are monetary, fiscal and exchange rate policies, which are generally determined by governments (Franco, 2000: 215-6).

In 1950, Mozambique's population was around 6.5 million people. From there it took off, reaching 7.6 million in 1960, 9.4 million in 1970, 12.1 million in 1980, 14.4 million in 1991 and 16.9 million in 1999. It is the fourth most populous country among the 14 that make up the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

In 1997, the country's GDP was calculated at between 2.4 billion and 3.4 billion dollars, varying according to the source (UNDP or World Bank). In 1998, its GDP had reached roughly 3.9 billion dollars, of which the northern region contributed 21%, the central region 31% and the southern 48%. According to government reports, nearly 70% of the people live in abject poverty, represented by both material and cultural privation, not to speak of privation of life itself. Indeed, the country's Human Poverty Index is the highest in the entire southern cone of Africa.

In overall terms, the economic results since the start of the current decade continue to show concentration in the country's southern region, with nearly 51% of the people and 49% of the production, the standout being the capital of Maputo, which is responsible for nearly 36.9% of the country's output. The central region contributes 27.7% of production, while the northern figure is only 21.3%.

The national yearly per capita GDP reached 200 dollars in 2000. The importance of agriculture in Mozambique is shown, above all, by the fact that it occupies 80% of the people, although it only contributes 30% to the GDP volume, while approximately 70% of aggregate export revenue derives from agricultural products and renewable resources.

Agriculture continues to be the activity with most weight in the economy, both at the national and regional level. But its participation has been declining over the years in favor of other sectors, such as industry and commerce. In 1997, agriculture accounted for 24.9% of GDP, while in 2000 its total share of the economy had fallen to 22.9%. In the same period, in contrast, the manufacturing sector racked up a solid gain, rising from 9.9% of the economy in 1997 to 13.6% in 2000.

Life expectancy in Mozambique is 42 years, against 48.9 in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the organizers of the UNDP Report, the data could have been "even more positive":

> Had in not been HIV/AIDS, certainly captured by the birth and death trends of the population recount of 1997, and if the rate of economic growth had maintained the trend of recent years, the results would have surly been more positive. The results renew the hope that although there is still far to go, Mozambique is, in purely relative terms, ready to take important steps to reduce the needs of its population (PNUD, 2000: 21).

The literacy rate of the adult population is 39.6%, meaning that only some 6.4 million of the 16.1 million Mozambicans know how to read and write. The percentage of people attending school, from the elementary through college level, increased from 29% in 1997 to 36% in 2000.

Until 1975 Mozambique had colonial-style capitalism, with the strong presence of Portugal's Salazar regime[2]. With independence, socialist modernization was imposed, conceived as a system to produce manufactured goods supported by a strong state, formally different than capitalist models. Starting in 1992, a capitalist, democratic and liberal system was instituted. People, goods and capital could circulate freely throughout the country, from Rovuma to Maputo. The legal system was adjusted accordingly, readying the country for its new international insertion, to the liking of big investors. However, never before did the country face such misery with so little autonomy. After all the contribution to the production of wealth for the world system

2 Referring to António Salazar, Portugal's dictator from 1932 to 1968.

in the twentieth century, the country was basically abandoned on the junk pile of the new world order.

Against this backdrop, in general lines, two economic policy proposals were formulated at the end of the century by the Ministry of Planning and Finance, with the direct help of international organizations and respected university experts. They were presented as complementary, to form the main productive base for eliminating poverty.

The Mega Projects

Foreign direct investment (FDI) is one of the pillars of economic policy, used by large business groups, usually in partnerships, in planning their productive actions on a worldwide scale.

African countries have received scanty foreign investments, while suffering large-scale capital flight, "as the holders of assets transfer them to more secure places" (MacPherson, 2002, p. 134). For this reason, the Ministry of Planning and Finance sought to carry out institutional reforms to attract foreign capital, creating a scenario in which the return on private investments had risks proportional to those available abroad (might this be called the "Mozambique risk", to keep capital properly nourished?).

In 1997, FDI in Mozambique totaled 65 million dollars, but in the following two and a half years this skyrocketed after the government approved a huge undertaking to produce aluminum worth 1.34 billion dollars. This was the Mozal Project, which started operating in June 2000. According to the *World Investment Report* (2000) from UNCTAD, this investment put Mozambique in sixth place in the ranking of African nations receiving FDI, behind only Angola, Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa and Morocco. In 1999, Africa as a whole received FDI of nearly 10 billion dollars, a paltry sum compared with the 106 billion dollars that went to Asia and 90 billion dollars invested in Latin America.

Since Mozambique's GDP in 2000 was only about 4 billion dollars, projects of this nature have a profound impact on the country's accounts. And other mega-projects are on the drawing board: doubling the capacity of Mozal, which will involve expanding the Cahora Bassa hydroelectric facility; construction of a new hydropower project at Mepanda Uncua; the Temane and Pande natural gas project; the project for an iron and steel foundry in Maputo; the heavy sand corridors project to exploit titaniferous mineral sands; and the Dobela Port project, to build a deepwater port in Maputo, among others.

Studies carried out for the Ministry of Planning and Finance by consultants from Harvard University reveal that these mega-projects will have a large impact on the country's GDP and trade balance, but not on national income and the balance of payments, because of the return financial flows for debt service payments and repatriation of profits. Since the projects are capital intensive, a good part of the cash flow will go to pay off foreign creditors and for profit remittances. The impact of these projects on the creation of local jobs will be small, due to their technical characteristics. Only five thousand direct jobs would be created in six mega-projects, with another fifteen thousand support jobs. This works out to over a million dollars for each job created.

It took two and a half years to construct Mozal. In 1998, 220 million dollars was spent on land grading and buildings, followed by another 875 million in 1999 and 245 million in 2000 to acquire equipment. Only 6% of the project's value was spent on goods, services and labor in Mozambique. A key reason for this low remuneration of local factors was the fact that the subcontractors largely called on foreign resources.

The total annual production capacity is 245 thousand metric tons of aluminum, all for export, worth an estimated 400 million dollars. A yearly total of 500 thousand tons of alumina and 96 thousand tons of coke are imported, at a cost of 90 million dollars, besides the intensive use of electricity, supplied by Motraco, a new company with transmission lines running through South Africa, at a cost of 60 million dollars. Additional costs are 80 million dollars for imported services, 2 million for local services and 4 million for value-added taxes. The project employs about 650 Mozambicans, with salaries adding to 5 million dollars a year (an average of about 7,700 dollars), along with 90 foreigners. Other jobs are being created, such as for security services, food supply, etc.

The financial structure consisted of 38% equity capital, 50% senior debt (nearly all from South Africa, in the form of an export loan, with that country being the supplier of electricity) and 12% subordinated debt. The equity investment was 520 million dollars, divided among Billiton (47%), Mitsubishi (25%), IDC (24%) and the Mozambican government (4%). The government's part, 20 million dollars, was financed by the European Investment Bank. The annual debt service (interest and amortization) of all the loans is 80 million dollars, and the direct domestic aggregate value is approximately 160 million dollars a year. The project's production has an impact on GDP of slightly more than 5%, but the direct effect on national income, that is, the extra income earned by Mozambicans, is only 18 million a year.

Profits are around 65 million dollars a year, with the government's share (4%) being 3 million. The contribution to the trade balance is positive 160 million dollars (400 million in exports less 240 million in imports), but the overall effect on the balance of payments is small, because all the profits are being repatriated except the government's 3 million. Thus, only the 4 million dollars in value-added taxes and the 3 million in dividends accrues to the government. To this another 1 million dollars can be added in payroll taxes. Because it is a duty free zone, Mozal is exempt from indirect taxes.

Phase 2 of the project, concluded in 2004 (but for which data are not available at this writing), was planned to double output. However, projections were that only 2,650 new jobs would be created for construction, and that the number to maintain production would only be 1,300.

Other mega-projects are on the cards with the same size and output characteristics as Mozal. In other words, there will be a strong impact on GDP, some on the trade balance, less still on the balance of payments and very little on the value aggregated to the local economy in terms of job and income creation. Since all output is earmarked for export, as is nearly all the profit, what these projects amount to is extraction of value from Mozambique, not because of its cheap labor supply, but instead because of the existence of abundant electric power (particularly important to make aluminum in the case of Mozal), along with a political climate accepting highly polluting industries and easy profit repatriation.

The government sees these mega-projects as important, because they are export oriented and "bring benefits by linking Mozambique to the international economy". Besides this, it is believed that "international trade has proved to be particularly important as a channel for development and diffusion of technology". (Andersson, 2002, p. 553). Only time will tell how justified is the optimism that Mozambique will benefit from aluminum production technology. But to continue with the Harvard consultant working for the Ministry of Planning and Finance, in defense of the mega-projects:

> The projects are showcases of the possibility of investments in Mozambique. They improve infrastructure and spread many benefits to the citizens. They provide opportunities for the Mozambican labor force to learn skills. The mega-projects are also linked to Mozambique's large natural resource base. Beyond this, Mozal, MISP [Maputo Iron and Steel Project] and the Sands Corridors all require huge quantities of electric power, and the availability of cheap energy has been important to their location decisions. An important aspect to Mozal has been the treatment received in Mozambique on the part from the European Union under the Lomé Convention. The aluminum produced in Mozambique will be imported into the EU with tax exemption.
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> The mega-projects, however, will not resolve the unemployment problem in Mozambique. All are capital intensive and only a limited number of direct jobs are being create (Andersson, 2002:553).

The overall impact on GDP of the six mega-projects together will doubtless be large. If they are realized, they can cause GDP growth by 2010 of around 37%, but only a 7% increase in national income, with 20 thousand new jobs. In this same period, it is estimated that another 3.7 million people will enter the country's labor market. What will be done with these potential workers? The experts have the solution. Alongside these big capital-intensive projects, they propose labor-intensive ones, also aimed at the export market, the so-called labor-intensive manufactured exports (LIME) investments. These are discussed below.

Labor-Intensive Manufactured Exports (LIME)

Labor-intensive manufactured exports should be a central element of a "pro-poor" development strategy, according to Soumodip Sarkar, an expert working for the Ministry of Planning and Finance, who feels that Mozambique has everything to attract investments of this type. In contrast with the mega-projects, which generate very few jobs, LIME industries can create them quickly. As an example, he cites the case of three factories built with Taiwanese capital in Vietnam that make sports shoes as Nike subcontractors, generating 45 thousand jobs. He also mentions Lesotho, which generated 19 thousand jobs in the apparel and footwear industry with annual export revenues of 100 million dollars. In this case, it must be remembered that these are values exported, not values aggregated to the country. He goes on to say that many of the so-called "Asian tigers", such as South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, and even Vietnam, triggered their industrialization based on these types of industries. He also cites Mauritius, which transformed itself from a poor exporter of cotton to a rich country with diversified exports. And finally, he proposes that because of

> the high level of FDI inflows in recent years, and the abundance of cheap labor in Moçambique, one would expect that the country is ideally suited for labor-intensive manufacturing operations in areas such as apparel and textiles, agro-processing, leather goods, toys, sporting goods and electronic assembly. Moçambique's fundamental comparative advantage and favorable geography place her in an advantageous position for attracting LIME investments as an engine of sustainable growth and job creation. In addition, the tax environment is highly favorable, and the creation of export processing zones (Sarkar, 2002:475).

But I ask how one can intend "sustainable development" to rest on an industry practically devoid of fixed capital, one that can be transferred to another country quickly in function of fluctuations, such as lower wages in another country or a domestic wage increase?

Later the planner confesses: "Recent large increases in the minimum wage, if continued, will also threaten to undermine Moçambique's competitive advantage in labor-intensive industries". (Sarkar, 2002, p. 476). As can be seen, even before starting the process, there is already the looming risk of a possible increase in the minimum wage.

And this is in a country (attested in the same Ministry of Planning and Finance document) whose priority is to reduce absolute poverty and whose minimum wage is under 40 dollars a month... Either the proposal for industrialization through LIME is not serious, or the intention to reduce poverty is not serious. I believe the latter is most likely.

According to the proposal, there are several advantages of this type of industrialization, namely: (i) passage of the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act by the U.S. Congress in June 2000, opening the American market to these types of products; (ii) the "flying geese" phenomenon, in reference to the flight of investments from countries such as Mauritius, where wages have increased (when they rise, it's all over...); (iii) the new SADC trade protocol, which facilitates these transactions; and (iv) the existing preferential trade agreement with Europe.

These industries, it cannot be forgotten, are generally based on individual or family labor, using means of production (sewing machines, glue, etc.) belonging to the workers, who receive the raw materials and only provide their own intense physical input, in a process of cutting, sewing and assembly, depending on the product involved. The company employing them does not have capital in the country, brings in its own raw materials for a piecework cycle carried out locally, and obtains a finished product to be sold in the international market. These goods are the world's designer label pants, shirts and ties, the branded athletic shoes, and in a slightly more sophisticated process, the electrical, electronic and computer products. This, then, involves individualized labor processes that permit extra exploitation.

Individualization of work is the process by which the contribution of

> labor in the productive process is defined in specific form for each worker and because of each worker's contribution, whether in the form of autonomous or individually contracted work, based on a highly deregulated market (Castells, 2002:97).

This process, utilized in exports of labor-intensive manufactures, is one of the aspects of acute exploitation, responsible for exclusion of various countries and regions, and can be defined as indicating labor relations

> that permit capital to systematically retain the payments/allocation of resources or impose more rigorous working conditions on certain types of workers, worse than are considered the norm/rule in a given labor market in a determined time and place. This refers to the discrimination against immigrants, minorities, women, youths or other categories of marginalized workers, in a way that is tolerated or sanctioned by regulatory bodies.
> A significant trend in this context is the emergence of paid child labor in various parts of the world, under conditions of extreme violence, exploitation and defenselessness, reversing the historical pattern of social

> protection of children, existing not only in the last industrial stage of capitalism, but also in industrial statism and traditional agricultural societies (Castells, 2002:97).

The proposals of the IMF, the World Bank and big capital (the LIME alternative), which have been accepted by various governments, such as that of Mozambique, a country where 70% of the population lives in absolute poverty, differ little, not even in cynicism, from the welfare programs for Africans in the colonial period.

From a novel perspective, the mega-projects act in the old Mozambican picture with much dead labor and nearly no live labor, while the LIME initiatives act with much live labor and nearly no dead labor.

At the current moment of neoliberal globalization, there is no convocation of the population, as defended by Frelimo in the 1970s and 80s, for participation and integration in the economy, either as workers or as consumers. Integration in the globalized world is through a production process and not through a labor process. Much has been invested in Mozambique in the mega-projects, aiming at exporting and using little local labor. But capital does not extract now income from domestic society. The high value added extracted comes from the high composition of capital that exploits little labor. Furthermore, these ventures pay few local taxes, and do not produce for internal consumption. The integration in the globalization process is in practical terms the rent that big international capital pays to the government, for a space where it produces for the benefit of outside capital itself, along with a small local elite.

To occupy the population, then, they propose labor-intensive manufactured exports. These enterprises are not based anywhere because they are inherently volatile. They are an itinerant way of international exploitation that is part of the so-called globalized world.

Nevertheless, Mozambique's exclusion is not only social. Above all, it is economic. And political exclusion is a condition for economic exclusion. Mozambique has unconditionally adhered to all the letters of intention with the IMF and impositions of international lenders. It established the peace process with Renamo, democratized the country with direct elections, freedom of political parties, the press and circulation of capital, and above all, it brought good governance, permitting high profits and their repatriation.

The proposal of the IMF, World Bank and big international investors, endorsed by the government, to attract mega-projects and LIME –in a country with 70% of the population living in abject misery– puts a new face on exploitation, but continues with the same colonial political objectives of despoiling the Mozambican people. The exploitation and humiliation the people suffered during colonialism were justified as a mission to assimilate and civilize the natives for work and consumption, with the myth of development. Now, in the neoliberal policies, exploitation and exclusion are presented with the objective of diminishing poverty and misery...

The absence of effective alternatives permits the flowering in Mozambique of Mafia-style and paternalistic relations, known as perverse integrations. These are relations that did not exist in the country and now dominate the drug trade, arms smuggling, the actions of "protection groups", etc., occupying leading positions in the world of business, politics and society in general. They correspond to the forms of labor practiced in the criminal economy, generating their own profits, which by the legal rules are considered criminal. These relations are in full flower in Mozambique and give a particular dynamic to social exclusion, in articulation with global capital.

In the final analysis, the bets of capital for Mozambique are translated into mega-projects, with much dead labor and nearly no live labor, and the efforts to generate exports from labor-intensive industries, with much live labor and nearly no dead labor. This is the essence of the current economic policy, which takes advantage of the reigning misery to increase the gains of big capital, borne on the bandwagon of democracy, peace, security and good governance. In this context, perverse integrations multiply in the breast of the people, without capital and without work, but other seeds are also being sown among the multitude, which will grow into future rebellions.

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