1 War and Gropings towards Peace
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ORIGINS OF WAR

Traditionally, the onset of civil war in Mozambique has been explained in terms of first Rhodesian, and then South African, destabilisation. Although to a large extent this explanation is true, it is important to recognise that the conflict gathered a new internal dynamic as the post-independence regime quickly became associated with excess revolutionary zeal in the policies adopted, both at home and abroad, and the manner in which they were carried out.

LIBERATION

In clear contrast to the liberation war in Angola, there was only one movement in Mozambique which contested Portuguese colonial rule: FRELIMO (Frente de Liberação de Moçambique). The movement was born out of the merger of three anti-colonial organisations in exile, MANU, UDENAMU and UNAMU. Although FRELIMO began the liberation struggle in the 1960s through the mobilisation of peasants in the north of the territory, it was not until the early 1970s, when it began to attack the ‘settler zone, the lines of communication and the Zambezi hydro-electric project’, that the Portuguese authorities really began to experience severe problems.¹ For all of the internal rifts within the movement, FRELIMO succeeded in attaining its main objective. This task was also facilitated by the April coup d'état in Lisbon that saw the rise of a left-wing military element intent on urgent decolonisation. Since no other movement of any remote political significance appeared during the liberation struggle to contest FRELIMO’s right to assume sole responsibility for post-independence government, in September 1974, FRELIMO and the Portuguese revolutionary authorities signed the Lusaka accord under which FRELIMO set up a transitional government which assumed full powers on the agreed date of independence, 25 June 1975.

¹ S. Chan et al., War and Peace in Mozambique
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FOREIGN INTERVENTION: RHODESIA

FRELIMO's revolutionary idealism was not restricted to freeing Mozambique alone from the fetters of foreign domination and capitalist exploitation. The movement's ideals were to be continued in the international realm and embodied in its post-independence foreign policy orientation.

First, there was the new regime's manifest desire to forge closer ties with the Soviet bloc. The ideological affinities between Moscow and Maputo were reason enough for the development of closer relations between Mozambique and the Eastern bloc. But behind FRELIMO's orientation to the East lay another important rationale. The Mozambican leadership regarded closer relations with the East as an urgent imperative if the country was to overcome what Maputo believed was the exploitation and subservience which stemmed from the country's integration within the Western capitalist system. In essence, FRELIMO held the view that total liberation and real development would only be possible once the country reduced the fetters of capitalist influence.

Second, the movement's commitment to liberation translated itself immediately into another important component of early Mozambican foreign policy. Upon independence the new regime quickly allied itself very closely with the black liberation struggles going on at the time in UDI Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa. However, failure to assume a more moderate and realistic stance directly threatened not only the building of FRELIMO's internal socialist vision but also the very existence of a sovereign and independent Mozambican nation-state.

Relations between Robert Mugabe's ZANLA and FRELIMO dated back to 1970 when the former began to take advantage of the latter's liberation areas to wage its war against the white UDI Salisbury regime. Upon Mozambican independence, ZANLA began to use Mozambique more extensively as the rear base for its liberation struggle. In 1976, FRELIMO, already then responsible for governing one of the poorest countries in the world, initiated a head-on collision with Salisbury. In March of that year, Maputo sealed its borders with land-locked Rhodesia in order to enforce the international sanctions in existence against the UDI regime. In economic terms alone this move cost Maputo some US$ 550 million in lost revenue from cargo entering and leaving Rhodesia through Mozambican ports. The revenue obtained from this activity had been one of the mainstays of the pre- and post-independence Mozambican economy.