

## Reshaping Mozambican Representative Democracy: Could it be the Way-Out for its Democracy?



Savio J. R. Malope

Phd candidate at University of Zimbabwe

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9310-2644>

**ABSTRACT:** If there was a referendum in Mozambique today, an overwhelming majority of the people would vote against their government having anything to do with the current model of democracy. They know all too well that there has definitely been a considerable welfare reduction *to them* as a result of the way this thing called “*Representative Democracy*” has been being played out in their country during the past decade. There is no doubt that the overwhelming majority of the Mozambican people if not, most African governments would prefer to see fundamental changes in their countries’ relations with this Western model of democracy. There is a virtual consensus among the general public, vocally expressed in the local media, as well as among officials, who naturally prefer putting forth their views in more private settings, that the relationship between citizen and the democratic institutions has been detrimental to the country, that far from helping it to become politically and economically viable, these institutions have been capitalising on, exacerbating and perpetuating Mozambique’s crisis. The research was based on participant observation, and it also involved a bibliographic review of relevant documents in the area of political participation, philosophy and other documents such as the 2004 Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique, Mozambican legislation, reports and research already published by other organizations.

**KEYWORDS:** Democracy; Political Representation; Candidate; Political Party; Election; Monitoring

### INTRODUCTION

Probably the biggest challenge facing Mozambique, if not Africa and beyond, in establishing a stable, democratic government is the growing dominance exercised by political parties alone in its political system. Bobbio (2000) identifies the many points of crisis in present-day democracy, one of which is the failure by the representative model of democracy to respect the will of the people. This prompts us to want to investigate the authenticity of Bobbio’s claims and the feasibility and functionality of the concept of representation in Mozambique. Therefore, as important as the guarantee of free and fair elections is the fight for the maintenance and deepening of both internal and external transparency in the entire process, from the candidate’s appearance among the competing parties to the citizen (elector) whether he is non-partisan or not. The goal is not to be polemic for polemic, but rather to contribute to the creation of a culture of debate on advances and constraints in the construction of democracy and the political participation of citizens and civil society in general. The research was based on participant observation, and it also involved a bibliographic review of relevant documents in the area of political participation, philosophy and other documents such as the 2004 Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique, Mozambican legislation, reports and research already published by other organizations. These two sources of information, apart from the fact that the author of the essay is a native resident of the country under analysis, give the essay a certain weight of objectivity and credibility. It reflects the reality of what is happening in the Mozambican territory, not only in other countries on the African continent, but in the world as a whole. For the essay is based on the assumption that there is an individual responsibility of the citizen and the collective responsibility of institutions in the development process and that no one substitutes for the other. Individual citizens are responsible for their own development and for society as a whole. Institutions have collective and social responsibility. The State has its responsibilities. All of them establish a relationship of cooperation and complementarity. This is how the essay refers both to the action of political parties, government authorities as well as the balance of candidates. The essay takes care, once the root of the problem has been found, to present some proposals and suggest alternatives, without imposing solutions on anyone. It is hoped that each reader will have enough time to choose and reflect on this useful and transformative proposal.

#### 1. What truly needs to be done?

As a solution, Ngoenha (1993:79) proposes, the conception of democratic models that match the cultural and historical dynamics of

## Reshaping Mozambican Representative Democracy: Could it be the Way-Out for its Democracy?

the African continent. In his articulation, he is, of course, aware that each of the countries of the African continent has its specificities.

Ngoenha does not, however, address a specific type or form of democracy in his argument. Neither does he tell his readers which type of democracy Mozambique has adopted and the ensuing problems therein. We believe that the problem with Mozambique is more than just looking at the issue of adopting a Western model of democracy, as Ngoenha would have us believe, but that the problem is that the concept of *representation* in representative democracy needs to be re-examined in light of the socio-economic dynamics in present-day Mozambique.

Joao Pereira (2009:3) has discussed the impact of democracy in Mozambique but at the level of policy and ethics. He has posed questions such as: Does democracy help or hinder Mozambique's economic performance? Does it increase accountability and citizen participation in policy formulation? Does democracy create opportunities for the citizens to express their dissatisfaction with the government? Although Pereira tries to address some of these questions, he does not explicitly address the problems associated with the idea of *representation* as it relates to representative democracy in present-day Mozambique.

Although the four authors seem to be of the view that democracy is the right path towards the progression of any nation, they differ in their views about how this game is to be played out. They do not focus on the concept of representation in the Mozambican context, which we think explains the lack of efficacy and effectiveness in Mozambican democracy.

It is part of the Eastern tradition that, whenever one intends to criticize something, one has to first decide what one will give as a positive alternative to it. What Mozambique lives and assumes as its "Representative Democracy" and which, by the way, resembles almost all other representative democracies around the world, seems to some extent to lack some improvement in its execution process. We are making this claim because, in a scenario where one must choose an individual to lead the destinies of a municipality, this (candidate) must be made before the citizens with a programme, plan, an agenda, or "manifesto," as Marx preferred to call it, made up of a set of proposals on how to conduct the destinies of the municipality. This is how we have been witnessing this supposed "Representative Democracy" being played out, from when it has been implemented in the country.

There are those who say that the proposal presented to the citizens during the pre-electoral period is not a product of the candidate's creativity alone, but that of the entire party machinery that endorses him, except in scenarios where the candidate presents himself/herself as an independent. But it will be necessary to remember that both the agenda of the political party as a whole, as well as that of the candidate, whether or not he/she is independent, can ever constitute the entirety of the citizens' wishes. In the case of a proposal (manifesto) that is the result of a private exercise of the candidate assisted by his/her political party, this proposal should not in any way be seen as the will of the people as a collective, although the people have voted for that candidate, persuaded by the proposal presented by him/her during the pre-election period because, in more logical terms, this situation can be interpreted as a simple game of persuasion.

Since there is no opportunity for the will of the people to be manifested, there is nothing genuine. One cannot propose that the people choose/pick from the various alternatives presented to them. Rather, the people should be given the opportunity to draw, to write, to indicate, without any kind of pressure, what they wish to see materialized. The people should be given the opportunity to meditate and then answer the question "where do you want to go?", and to their representative the question "what better way to use to get where you want to go?" The systematic mistake made in Mozambican Representative Democracy is that the proposed candidate wants to be responsible for offering answers both questions, since he/she views himself/herself as the best "interpreter" of the wishes of the people that he/she claims to represent.

### 2. How to make this Happen?

The body created by the Mozambican State, Mozambique Electoral Commission (MEC) which is responsible for the entire electoral process, rather than starting by merely registering potential voters, should perhaps be responsible for collecting what potential voters assume to be their will (what they would like to see realized by the post-elected candidate). Such data would, in turn, be made available by Mozambique electoral Commission to all candidates, who in their turn would draw their (manifesto) proposal based on this data. . Therefore, the candidate would not be required to invent anything, but to systematize, select, prioritize what would be feasible from his/her point of view (given the conditions within the municipality and the country in general).

The candidate must be an individual with the capacity to marry the will of the people and the material conditions on the ground. Contrary to this, what we are going to see will be what we have seen since the introduction of democracy in 1994, to the present day is "the representation of what the representative supposes to be the will of the people, not necessarily the will of the people." At the time of rendering of accounts, we always see a dissatisfaction of the people at not seeing their will reflected in the actions carried out by their "alleged representative." It is worth noting, moreover, that once this philosophy is adopted, we cannot say that those represented will no longer be dissatisfied, at least it will no longer be as magnified, as it has been so far. If there is dissatisfaction, the responsibility will not be attributed to the representative but rather shared among all citizens.

## Reshaping Mozambican Representative Democracy: Could it be the Way-Out for its Democracy?

John Keane (2010) describes the current phenomenon of democracy, or rather, the current stage in which democracy finds itself, no longer as the period of "representative democracy" but as that of "monitorial democracy." It is the period in the history of human civilization in which leaders / representatives are subjected to a contracting monitoring and it is done by all citizens.

### 3. The required new attitude on the part of the citizen and the candidate

Fortunately or unfortunately, changes in the way of doing things always entail some attitudinal change in people responsible for making such changes happen. Citizens would be required to adopt a new behavioural posture as a candidate, to change in some way, as their "way of conducting themselves" is influenced by other philosophies, because the socio-political context requires it. The citizen should not make the mistake of proposing the materialization of the impossible. By way of example, we might cite "the suggestion of a 50% pay raise in a scenario where your country would only be able to give a 15% wage increase given the resources available." Therefore, the citizen must be able to look at the outside world and seek to understand the logic of the international market. He/she should be particularly aware of its influence on the domestic economy of his country, not only on the financial market, but also on political issues, since these two phenomena always go hand in hand. The swings in the international market have a direct impact on the political/economic situation of their country, since countries do not exist in a vacuum and are all interconnected within this geopolitical scenario.

As for the candidate's virtues, one of them would be integrity. He/she would be an honest, genuine, and incorruptible individual, someone who makes fulfilling his/her proposed "agenda" as his/her number one priority. Someone who assumes from the moment he/she is elected, that he/she becomes a public servant; someone who seeks to serve and not to be served or to serve him- or herself. Only then would we do away with this scenario that has been characteristic until now: of the "Represented" living in misery while the "Representative" living in abundance, as if they were in two different worlds. In that case, the gains of this partnership between the "Represented" and the "Representative" would only benefit the representative.

## CONCLUSION

The choice/imposition of governance models dichotomy is false. The national choice, over the years, was just a "rhetorical mirage" that the traditional powers found to blame the Mozambican ills on the local elites and, at the same time, appear that this is the result of self-determination. The choice would have to presuppose the possibility of denials, as discussed in the essay, the possibility of denying the unfair and unequal division of labor, which has not been presented as an option for the African continent. Even the "new models" that emerging powers say they are applying on the African continent are limited in their scope to transform the governance of African countries. Policies such as "technical cooperation", "massive participation in politics", "debt forgiveness", among others, despite presenting new characteristics, do not bring major changes in relation to their main logic: one of the faces of hegemony is the perception (by African countries) that both sides (Africa and emerging countries) are reaping positive results from the adoption of the democratic model of governance on the African continent.

By reflecting on the way that the idea of *representation* is played out in Mozambique, this study will help the authorities to realise the shortcomings of the concept of representative democracy and the need to urgently address the problem. The study seeks to influence the Government of Mozambique to put in place policies and procedures that will ensure that the general populace is represented in the truest sense of the word. Our view is that genuine *representation* must benefit the interests of those who are represented more than it benefits the representative. We also believe that elections, in addition to giving citizens equal opportunities to consent to power, also give them equal opportunities to partake in government activities that will improve their welfare. This point is in line with Aristotle's view that the citizen's participation in deliberation and decision-making processes means that he or she is part of a group that discusses the advantages and the disadvantages, the good and bad or just and the unjust aspects, and then laws are passed and judicial decisions are reached based on this deliberative process Aristotle (2010). In our view, Aristotle is simply saying that there is no way a citizen can be left out when it comes to decisions that affect their welfare.

This study is a wake-up call for the Mozambican authorities to consider re-examining the weaknesses of representative democracy, especially given the fact that it appears to have been a burden to the electorate.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1) ABRAHAMSEN, R (Abrahamsen a). (2000). *Disciplining democracy: Development discourse and good governance in Africa*. London: Zed Books.
- 2) ASSMANN, Hugo et al. (1990). *A trilateral: nova fase do capitalismo mundial*. 4ª ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 215 p.
- 3) ARISTÓTELES. (2001). *Ética a Nicômaco*. 4 ed. Brasília: UnB.
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_. (1997). *Política*. 3 ed. Brasília: UnB.
- 5) BOAVENTURA, Souza Santos de. (Orgs.). (2005). *Democratizar a democracia: os caminhos da democracia participativa*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira.
- 6) Bobbio, Norberto, tradução de Marco Aurélio Nogueira. (2000). *O futuro da democracia*. 10ª ed. São Paulo: Paz e Terra.

## Reshaping Mozambican Representative Democracy: Could it be the Way-Out for its Democracy?

- 7) CROZIER, Michael J.; Huntington, Samuel P.; Watanuki, Joji. *The Crisis of Democracy. Report on the Governability of democracies to the Trilateral Commission*.
- 8) Constituição da República popular de Moçambique, aprovada a 20 de Junho de 1975, publicada no Boletim da República, Série, no. 1, de 25 de Junho de 1975.
- 9) Eleições Autárquicas – Dhlakama apela ao respeito pelos resultados do pleito’, notícias, 20 de novembro de 2008, disponível em <http://www.jornalnoticias.co.mz/pls/notimz2/getxml/pt/contentx/281909>, acessado em 26 de Março de 2008.
- 10) Em conformidade com o organograma encontrado em Eduardo Chiziane, *Participação da Sociedade Civil no Processo de Governação e Desenvolvimento Local*, Foprosa, 2007.
- 11) Macamo, E. (2006). *Political Governance in Mozambique*, Final Report, DfID.
- 12) HABERMAS, Jürgen. (1975). *Legitimation Crisis*. Boston: Beacon Press. Habermas, Jürgen. 1992. *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*.
- 13) KEANE, John. (2009). *The Life and Death of Democracy*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- 14) LOCKE, John. (2011). *Dois Tratados sobre o Governo*. S. Paulo, Editora Jacy Monteiro.
- 15) NGOENHA, Severino Elias, (1993) *Das Independências as Liberdades*, Filosofia Africana, Porto: Edições Salesianas.
- 16) PEREIRA J. (2009). *The impact of democracy in Mozambique. (the Kellong project)*