



# Is Mozambique, definitely, condemned to have an authoritarian regime?

## Abstract

When the world celebrates on the 15th of September, the international day of democracy, it is worth remembering that the inauguration of democratic regimes in the so-called third wave of transitions, did not result as a gift to the people by the powers that be. It was the result of a resolute struggle by the opposition elites, civil society activism and mass action against political regimes that, irrespective of their varied political and ideological leanings and social and cultural characters, they all failed, equally, in their most celebrated agenda of national unity and rapid modernization. In this way, a new order was inaugurated based on the compromise and consensus by the political elites over the new norms and rules of the political game. Thus, it must be ensured that this *praxis* is secured so as to avoid the irrevocable return to the old authoritarian political orders.

It was an almost general consensus among theorists of democracy – and for a very long time – to contend that the majority of countries of sub-Saharan Africa, given their objective conditions, were unlikely to move from authoritarian into democratic regimes. Fundamentally, the analytical tools used in these genre of predictions were related to three main conceptual bases: the nature of the modern state, the influence of industrial capitalism and the consequences pertaining to the prevalence of a rational bureaucratic organization. Let us see, briefly, the meaning of these analytical tools – and their implications – for the establishment of a liberal democratic regime.

First of all, for Max Weber, the modern state is, mainly, a nation-state that has the capacity to monopolize the legitimate use of violence within its territorial borders, that engulfs itself in conflictual relations with other nation-states, but never against armed segments of its own population. Though the use of physical force is not the only means – not even the most normal – to exercise the power of the state, the use of force is specific to the state to the extent that,

state is the relation of domination of men over men (and, more often than not, of domination of men over women!), a relation that is secured by means of legitimate violence. Effectively, all the web of government agencies and institutions find its ultimate sanction in the claim to the monopoly of coercion and, the political order becomes vulnerable to crisis only, in the final instance, this monopoly erodes.

Nevertheless – and according to Max Weber – the state is not only based on the monopoly of violence: it must be a monopoly of legitimate physical coercion, that is, founded on the belief of the legality of that monopoly or its justifiable character. It is not by habit or tradition that people find legitimate a certain political order, nor by virtue of charisma or personal appeal of that societies' leaders, but yes based on legal rationality. Thus, the activities of the modern state take place within the boundaries of the "Primacy of Law" – or Rule of Law – a complex process of constraints. This mean that the Rule of Law is the basis of the modern state and, where there it is absent, it does not make much sense to speak of the possibility of establishing a democratic liberal order.

Secondly, and according to Max Weber, the modern state preceded and promoted the development of industrial capitalism. And *industrial capitalism* was, beyond its dominant characteristic as a generator of societies of ever increasing affluence, the creator of a specific ethics of "rationalization" in society. Essentially, the capitalist economic organization is, forced by competition for market domination, to irrevocably embrace innovation and technical rationalization. A logic that, slowly but surely, begins to permeate all domains of human activities in society, in an ever increasing process of adoption of the "ethics of rationalization". *Rationalization*, meaning, "...the extension of calculative attitudes of a technical character to more and more spheres of activity, epitomized by scientific procedures and given substantive expression in the increasing role that expertise, science and technology play in mother life" (Held 1996, based on Giddens, 1972).

Therefore, where this *rationalization* is prevalent there are profound implications that result in the erosion of credibility of all belief systems that pertain to offer a unique interpretation of the "meaning of life". Religious beliefs, as well as political and philosophical doctrines, advocating for a static order of human affairs give way to a more fluid view of things. As a consequence, people become progressively more "intellectualized", in the sense that they are freed of the teleological and metaphysical illusions. However, and on the other side, rationalization comes with "disenchantment" for the majority of people, since in a world progressively dominated by technical and scientific reasons it ceases to exist world-views that, legitimate and immediately, are capable of commanding collective consensus. Thus, the traditional basis for resolving the confrontation between the vast array of possible attitudes to life becomes, irrevocably, weakened. In such a context there is no other legitimate justification for human action beyond *individual choice*. Therefore, it is up to the people, individually, to choose among the gods in contention those that people should serve and which values and ideals to preserve. So, where rationalization does not have a place or where it is largely surpassed by deference to authority then, and equally, it would not make much sense to foresee the triumph of a democratic liberal order.

Third and final, and as argued by Max Weber, industrial capitalism gave an enormous impetus to private and public life by providing an expansion to rational administration, that is, the type

of bureaucracy that is based on legal authority. It is important to stress that the idea of bureaucracy for Max Weber it is not restricted to the civil service or to the bureaucratic apparatus of the state. For Max Weber the concept of bureaucracy refers, more generically, to all types of large-scale organizations, encompassing states, industrial corporations, labor unions, political parties, universities and even hospitals. And bureaucracy, in all contexts, present three denominators: (1) it is inherently antidemocratic, because bureaucrats are rarely accountable to the majority of people whose life is affected by their decisions; (2) the problem of bureaucratic domination, in all contexts, is pervasive and almost the norm; and (3) the best way of transcending bureaucratic domination is by the effort of limiting the spread of bureaucracy itself.

Therefore, if bureaucracy is unavoidable – though intrinsically antidemocratic – and is present in all large-scale organizations existing in society then, it is of vital importance, that it follows the logic of a rational administration, that is, founded on the "Primacy of Law". The following are, according to Max Weber, the characteristics of a bureaucratic organization inspired by the praxis of industrial capitalism in a modern state:

- 1 Office hierarchy ordered in a pyramid of authority;
- 2 The existence of impersonal, written rules of procedure;
- 3 Strict limits on the means of compulsion at the disposal of each official;
- 4 The appointment of officials on the basis of their specialist training and qualifications (not on the basis of patronage);
- 5 Clearly demarcated specialized tasks demanding full-time employees; and
- 6 Significantly, the separation of officials from ownership of the means of administration (Held, 1996, p. 165)

If in a certain political context, the existing bureaucratic organization does not live up to these standards then, it is possible to assert without hesitation, that such a society is not ready, yet, for the inauguration of a democratic liberal order. In other words, a liberal democratic order – even in its minimalist connotation, i.e., in its proce-

dural conception – it implies, fundamentally, the presence of a governing mechanism based on the competition of values and ideals and freedom of individual choice in a rationalized world<sup>1</sup>.

In the opposite direction of this sort of reasoning there are various other theorists of democracy who developed their theses within the so-called “third wave of democratic transitions”. Significantly, arguments to be used here were taken from the collective contribution of David Potter, David Goldblatt, Margareth Kiloh and Paul Lewis as advanced in their collective book of 1997: *Democratization*, by Polity Press.

These authors, though they recognize that countries of sub-Saharan Africa present significant differences in terms of their political processes, historical experiences and including, in relation to the pre-colonial period, they nevertheless, perceive important similarities among them. Historically speaking and given European imperialism, the majority of these countries were left with a legacy of multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity that makes the basis of national identity inherently fragile, their social and economic conditions are underdeveloped and specially the rural areas are particularly disadvantaged and the sort of state-class relations developed in the post-independence period were neither conducive to development, nor to the establishment of a viable political order or even less for democracy. So, in what pertains to the prevalence of social and economic conditions – those that in the structural and modernization theories are deemed most conducive for the establishment of democratic regimes – such conditions are considered absent in these countries. Nevertheless, these authors assert that, even in the absence of such favorable conditions, it is possible the establishment of liberal democratic regimes in countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

This “possibility” is conceptualized, essentially, as a specific product of the combination of two category of factors: those of domestic order, and those from the international milieu. Concerning international factors, the following

are paramount: (1) the collapse of the former Eastern Soviet Block and the subsequent demise of the cold war; (2) the practice of “conditionalities” in external aid and investments followed by Western governments – in the ambit of bilateral cooperation – and by the institutions of Bretton Woods, i.e., the World Bank and IMF; and (3) the diffusion of democratic ideas propelled by the third wave of democratic transitions worldwide. At the domestic level, the factors alluded to were the following: (1) a vigorous pressure from opposition elites; (2) muscular interventions by civil society groups; and (3) varying from contexts, mass action. In this sort of affairs, internally, the establishment of democratic regimes resulted, mainly, in the search for an internal mechanism for elite accommodation and in order to ensure the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

The biggest problem with this optimistic reading of the fate of countries such as Mozambique, resides in the fact that the habituation phase after the transition period – as described by Dankwart A. Rustow (1924-1996)<sup>2</sup> – that which must rest on the permanent maintenance of consensus between and among the political elites over the new rules of the political game it seems, to all concerned, a delusion, absolute fantasy. In effect, and in the case of Mozambique, Frelimo and Renamo are the political forces that went through the trajectory of *confrontation-negotiation-compromise* until the design of a new set of norms and rules that made possible the transition from an authoritarian into a democratic regime beginning with the 1992 Rome Peace Accord: an exercise through which they decided, jointly, to relinquish their power – individually – and invest it in a cluster of norms and rules that would, subsequently, guide the political governance of the country as well as the national democratic process.

However, as experience demonstrates and history continues to register, Frelimo starting from the first instant, always oriented itself in the direction of the consolidation of its power including the intent of preventing whatever possibility of losing it to Renamo. It strengthened its

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1 A discussão acerca da democracia moderna conceptualizada na vertente de “elitismo competitivo” nas perspectivas de Max Weber (1864-1920), Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950) e Anthony Giddens (1938 - ) está baseada na obra de David Held (Agosto 1951 – Março 2019) *Models of Democracy*, Polity Press, 1996.

2 Rustow, D. (1970) “Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model”, *Comparative Politics*, 2 (3), pp.337-63.

hold on the countries' political institutions, have the commanding heights of the economy firmly in the hands of its militants and party leaders and, most importantly, the prevailing system of government ensures that the center of power gravitates around the President of the Republic even though the country is in a context of creating spaces for decentralized governance and devolution.

Renamo, on the other hand, always deemed its chances of assuming power via the electoral process as basically far-off and, to a certain extent, all the additional advantages that it managed to obtain – money, privileges, concessions – were often the result of frictions and intimidations as well as ensuing from Frelimo's fear of the escalation of serious crisis and conflicts such as those that arose following the contested electoral processes of 1999, 2009 and 2014. Given these facts, Renamo's political interventions have mainly been oriented towards the following two senses: substituting Frelimo or sharing with it the governance of the country regardless of the electoral process, or obtaining substantial economic advantages that would leave the party in a privileged position to fight for and win power

in the future.

This political *praxis* is frontally contrary to the fundamentals of the new democratic order – especially that born out of authoritarian regimes and where the celebrated social and economic prerequisites for the transition to democracy are absent – since, mainly, what is required is, the practice of compromise and consensus between and among the main political forces in relation to the norms and rules of the political game. Corruption and state capture by a syndicate of white collar criminals, the *erratic* functioning of the organs tasked with the direction and management of the electoral processes, the structuring of political pacts that makes *tabula rasa* of the historic of negotiations accumulated since Rome – the flagrant of which is the Mariano Nyongo phenomenon which challenges the collective euphoria around the latest peace accords of 2014 and 2019, despite the stoic and paradigmatic roles played by the Swiss Ambassador Mirko Manzoni – all of these epitomize the fact that in Mozambique, if not for decisive mass action and a determined activism by civil society groups, the country will be condemned, irremediable, to erect and sustain an authoritarian regime.



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