

# Tenuous Belonging : Citizenship and Democracy in Mozambique

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**Abstract:** This article examines changing ideas of who constitutes a 'deserving' and 'full' citizen in Mozambique, from independence in 1975 to the present. I argue that the leadership of the ruling Frelimo Party attempted to occupy a position above society where it could determine the practices and behaviors that made one a loyal citizen and, conversely, those that made one an 'alien' or enemy. The adoption of liberal democracy in 1990 undermined the party's right to define what a 'true' or 'good' Mozambican is, but not the underlying structural grammar. Thus, the meaning of citizenship is increasingly a floating signifier. To be designated an 'outsider' is to be an enemy, but it is no longer clear who has the power to define who is a 'true' Mozambican and who is not.

**Keywords:** belonging, citizenship, Frelimo, inequality, liberal democracy, minorities, Mozambique, socialism

The question of who qualifies as a full citizen of the new nations of the post-colonial world is at the heart of nationalist and democratic struggles. Since the end of the Cold War, the liberal conception of citizenship, based on voting and election rights, the legal status of belonging to a specific nation-state, and a political subject being guaranteed certain rights, has become common in many countries (Chipkin 2007; Lazar 2012). This includes Mozambique, where official mechanisms such as the Constitution spell out who is a citizen and what rights and obligations this entails. However, as noted by Chipkin (2007: 10): "A distinction must be made between a citizen as such and an authentic national subject. So, even if citizenship is founded on principles of universal human rights, ... some citizens are more authentically members of the nation than others." Arguments over whether an 'authentic' citizen in the popular imagination and political discourse is to be defined by race, role in the colonial project, ancestry,

place of birth, or a combination of factors have created fault lines that can be exacerbated by political and economic changes (ibid.).

This article examines changing ideas as to what constitutes 'true' citizenship in Mozambique since the end of socialism and the establishment of multi-party democracy. It is based on fieldwork conducted since 2002 in the capital, Maputo, and the economically important northern city of Nampula. In particular, I focus on Mozambican whites and Indians, numerically insignificant groups who make up around 0.06 percent and 0.08 percent of the population respectively.<sup>1</sup> While the vast majority of Portuguese settlers left Mozambique at independence, members of the small number that remained took high positions in politics and the professions. Additionally, many Mozambican Indians were able to fill the mercantile niche left by the departing Portuguese and became a powerful force in the economy. Members of both groups have access to party-dominated networks and occupy places of privilege in the current social order.

During the 1990s, after political experiments in Marxist-Leninism and 15 years of civil war, Mozambique became a model of post-war reconstruction and capitalist multi-party transition. The country boasts an annual economic growth rate that averages around 7.5 percent and has survived three presidential elections without a full-scale resumption of hostilities since the end of the war. These achievements, though, have coincided with growing inequality and with the ruling Frelimo Party (Liberation Front of Mozambique) gradually marginalizing the opposition and currently presiding over what is basically an elected single-party state.

Frelimo was formed in 1962 as a broad front comprised of three nationalist organizations. Its early history was characterized by schisms, purges, and internal tensions that increased after the onset of the liberation struggle in 1964 (Hall and Young 1997; Opello 1975). The primary conflict revolved around a conservative faction, who defined the struggle largely in terms of race, and a younger, more radical faction (comprised of blacks, whites, Indians, and mulattos), who defined the struggle more in terms of class and saw it as the first step to a wider social revolution (Hall and Young 1997; Newitt 1995; Opello 1975). After the assassination of the party's first leader, Eduardo Mondlane, by the Portuguese in 1969, the radical faction, led by Samora Machel, assumed control and gradually purged its remaining major opponents (Hall and Young 1997). Machel's victory led to the beginning of a formulation of 'true' Mozambican citizenship. According to one of Frelimo's leading theorists, Sérgio Vieira (1977: 25), the 'authentic national subject' would be based on science, 'rationality', and collective labor, but this subject was still in the process of being born. This conception of citizenship was based on an idealized vision of life in Frelimo-controlled liberated zones during the anti-colonial struggle where, under the direction of the party, militants from all backgrounds overcame their differences by working together to free the nation and build a new society (Hall and Young 1997). Thus, 'true' citizenship was a process in which, through an individual act of will, one joined the wider collective under Frelimo's leadership. Those who refused this definition ran the risk of being labeled 'enemies of the people' (Machava 2011).

In 1990, after the official abandonment of socialism, previous conceptions of citizenship and belonging were now challenged, both from the opposition and more populist currents within the party itself. Whether the new democratic 'authentic' citizen would continue to be based on a modernist subject, as with socialism, a form of revitalized 'tradition' or something new was an open question. During this period, Hama Thai, a Frelimo veteran, fought to have the meaning of 'Mozambican' changed in the Constitution. Quoted in O'Laughlin (2000: 6), he argued:

If I were to define who is of Mozambican origin, I would put it this way: the original Mozambican is anyone who in the colonial period was known as a native (*indígena*). Of Mozambican origin is anyone who in the colonial period paid the hut tax. Of Mozambican origin is anyone whose ancestors or descendants were deported to São Tomé and Príncipe, to Angola and to other unknown places. And I would say more, of Mozambican origin are all those who did forced labor (*chibalo*), all those who after Gungunhana's defeat in 1895 were deported with him to Fourth Island or Third Island or whatever it was exactly, to die there far away, separated from their wives, never more to father children of Mozambican origin.

Thai's definition of a Mozambican is tangentially connected to place of birth, but it reserves full citizenship for those (especially men) who suffered the most under colonialism. Such a definition is reminiscent of the party's earlier schism and casts doubts on the citizenship of Mozambicans who held a privileged position under the colonial regime, including whites, Indians, mulattos, and *assimilados* (members of a black elite who were explicitly defined as 'not native'). Ironically, it is members of those groups who occupied much of the Frelimo leadership (Mateus 1999), and Thai's argument did not prevail.

The original 1975 Constitution bestowed citizenship on all those born in Mozambique who did not opt for another nationality, and it was amended in 2004 to allow Mozambican women who married foreigners the same right as Mozambican men to pass their nationality to their spouse.<sup>2</sup> Citizens were officially defined in the liberal conception as individuals who are entitled to political and human rights by virtue of birth. However, as with every other country, in practice the law favors the powerful, and Thai's comments demonstrate that the question of who would be privileged and who would be suspect in the new order was unclear. Thus, citizenship has become a 'floating signifier' (Lévi-Strauss 1950), a symbol with no fixed meaning, although the underlying grammar of citizenship and the structures, social practices, and beliefs that made this ideology possible have survived into the current era. Hence, the current definition of citizenship has resulted in confusion, as it contradicts many of the practices associated with the socialist version. While the latter may have been brutal, it was also based on a transformative project, popular mobilization, and a moral vision of leadership. As demonstrated by Newell (2012) in Côte d'Ivoire, while the popular classes may redefine official notions of citizenship that undermine the legitimacy of the elite, new conceptions are built on the remains of their predecessors.

The ambiguity concerning what citizenship now means in Mozambique has a wider resonance than political debates alone. In 2008, I was at a café in Maputo with Angelica, who is white. We were speaking about her grandfather, who was a high-ranking member of Frelimo's security services during the socialist period. She was telling me that his name inspired horror in Portugal due to his actions against Portuguese settlers shortly after independence. According to Angelica, he was a hard man who often threatened to have people who displeased him, including family members, shot. Despite her ambivalence toward him, she is troubled about his legacy. He had devoted his life to the party and the goal of building a new Mozambique, but the present-day reality bears little resemblance to his vision. Instead, she increasingly feels like an outsider. Angelica worries that she will be a target of the growing level of violent crime, and she perceives a general climate of popular hostility toward her. She asked a waiter, who was black, if he had heard of her grandfather, and he replied that he had not. Angelica then asked if he thought that she was a 'real' Mozambican, like him. Whether out of politeness or conviction, the waiter replied: "It does not matter what color you are. If you are born in Mozambique, then you are Mozambican." Angelica seemed gratified with this response, if not convinced.

Members of other minority groups can also be reminded that they do not necessarily belong. Saif is a merchant of Indian descent who lives in Nampula. His family is well-known, and he is a leader of a prominent local mosque and a member of Frelimo since 1997. Saif was telling me about a recent party meeting he attended that was chaired by an official who was a famous general during the socialist period. When asked about some of the major problems facing their jurisdiction, the younger cadres passionately denounced Mozambican Indians, describing them as parasites, exploiters, thieves, smugglers, and aliens who abrogated their rights as citizens. The general put a stop to the attacks by saying that all who were born in Mozambique are equally Mozambican and that the cadres were echoing the mentality of the colonial period. According to him, Frelimo had fought the revolution to put an end to this kind of racism and to create a nation that united all its inhabitants. Saif was deeply moved by the general's intervention, but he did not believe that it put an end to anything. He felt that the cadres stopped speaking for fear of their superior, not because they agreed with him. Saif told me that hostility toward Indians has been increasing. It was always there, but since the end of the socialist period, people were no longer afraid to express it openly. Historically, being legally designated Mozambican with official rights and obligations was not enough. One had to adopt the practices and behaviors necessary to become a citizen; otherwise, one was an 'enemy'. Therefore, it seems that while minorities in Mozambique are nationals, their thoughts about their own 'true' or 'full' citizenship are characterized by insecurity in the face of popular hostility and the feeling that citizenship could be revoked, if politically expedient.

In the following, I briefly examine the concepts of citizenship and democracy and then trace the historical construction of the body politic and its redefinitions in Mozambique from the colonial period up through early independence and

socialism. I then analyze the transformations and continuities that followed democratization and conclude by focusing on the implications of these processes on belonging and exclusion within Mozambique as well as wider issues of democracy in the post-colonial world.

## Citizenship and Democracy

After liberation in 1975, one of the defining characteristics of the creation of full Mozambican citizenship was loyalty to Frelimo, along with a commitment to its vision of the future (Buur 2010; Dinerman 2006). At independence, some groups, including party members, Frelimo soldiers, and the ‘masses’ (not what the members of this ill-defined group actually were, but what they were supposed to become) were, in Chipkin’s (2007) terms, ‘authentic national subjects’, while others were suspect. The party’s goal, though, was based not on an idea of ethno-nationalism but on the construction of a new kind of citizen, the *Homem Novo* (New Man). This was the initial social contract: if one conformed with the party’s image of the ‘ideal’ Mozambican, the state would overcome the divisions and ‘superstitions’ of the past to lead Mozambique into a glorious, modern, and ‘enlightened’ industrial age (Hall and Young 1997; Vieira 1977). Homogenizing tendencies hardened in 1977 with the transition to Marxist-Leninism, and belonging became dependent on supporting Frelimo. The ownership of a party membership card was now the concrete symbol of being Mozambican (Machava 2011: 596). Although the creation of the New Man became ever more difficult to realize in practice, those who committed themselves toward this ideal were citizens, while those who subverted it, or willfully disregarded it, became *o inimigo interno* (the internal enemy) and were outside the moral bounds of the body politic (Buur 2010; Machel 1982; Zawangoni 2007).

In *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation*, Yurchak (2006) discusses how Stalin occupied a structural role of ‘external editor’ that was both constituted by the guiding ideology and outside of it. In this case, Stalin stood outside of ideological discourse and, through his access to the external canon (Marxist-Leninism), was able to evaluate independently whether something was ‘correct’ or a ‘deviation’, while concealing internal paradoxes (ibid.: 13). After Stalin’s death, there was no longer an external voice to conceal the paradoxes within Soviet ideology, a development that contributed to its later collapse. Although Frelimo was much less brutal than Stalin’s USSR, as it lacked the capability to exercise that level of control and never attempted a ‘cult of personality’ as comprehensive, the first president, Samora Machel (1975–1986), occupied a similar role. In many ways, Machel was the living embodiment of the radical faction’s social revolution. He occupied a position above society that attempted to conceal internal paradoxes by determining what a loyal citizen should be and, conversely, what behaviors and ideas would make one an ‘internal enemy’. Unlike the traditionalist posturing of some African rulers, leading cadres portrayed themselves as culturally

‘above’ the wider population, the only ones who could arbitrate between ‘less advanced’ conflicting social groups (Dinerman 2006: 273). This was the underlying legitimation of the self-assigned right of Machel in particular, and the party leadership in general, to determine the meta-narrative concerning who was a citizen. Despite Frelimo’s initial popularity, the party’s role as external editor grew from a nationalism based on the social background of a small elite and was contested both militarily and through the everyday practices of the population (Buur 2010; Dinerman 2006).

Shortly after Mozambican independence, the white minority regimes of Rhodesia and then apartheid South Africa formed and supported an internal rebel group, Renamo (Mozambican National Resistance), in an effort to destabilize their left-wing neighbor (Hall and Young 1997; Newitt 1995). Mozambique was soon facing a full-scale civil war (1977–1992). To build a constituency, Renamo attempted to capitalize on the discontent among some sectors of the population by portraying themselves as the movement of ‘tradition’ and the peasantry against an ‘alien’, ‘creole’, and ‘urban’ elite (Dinerman 2006; Geffray 1991; Hall and Young 1997). Despite Renamo’s military challenge, it did not redefine Frelimo’s ideology of citizenship, but inverted it. For Renamo, all those connected to Frelimo were enemies and, if encountered, were often summarily executed (Hall and Young 1997). This challenged Frelimo’s hegemony but left in place the underlying social grammar. Democratization, on the other hand, while leaving intact many of the central power relationships and the social grammar upon which they rest, has undermined the already greatly diminished role of ‘external editor’. Citizenship remains a powerful symbol, but it is being emptied of specific meaning.

While liberal democracy makes universalistic claims of an all-embracing set of human rights through legal equality, in practice these rights are rooted in national belonging and are dependent on a strict division between insider and outsider, as demonstrated by Mouffe (2005: 39; see also Schmitt 1985):

The democratic conception, however, requires the possibility of distinguishing who belongs to the demos and who is exterior to it; for that reason, it cannot exist without the necessary correlate of inequality. Despite liberal claims, a democracy of mankind, if it was ever likely, would be a pure abstraction, because equality can only exist through its specific meaning in particular spheres—as political equality, economic equality, and so forth. But those specific equalities always entail, as their very condition of possibility, some form of inequality.

The point above has been employed to understand the persistence of structural inequality and exclusion under a regime based on full political equality for groups such as marginalized minorities or the passions raised by seemingly trivial marks of difference, such as the widespread public support in France for the ban on headscarves or in Switzerland for the ban on the construction of minarets on mosques. As argued above by Mouffe, democracy is always based on relationships of inclusion and exclusion. However, democratic theory seems unable to conceptualize its internal ‘political limit’ (see also Chipkin 2007).

Building on the work of Yurchak, Chipkin, and Mouffe, I will explore the ways in which the political limit in Mozambique is influenced by the historical social grammar of structures, ideas, and practices. All political orders are systems of categorization. During socialism, Frelimo conflated political opposition, criminality, and social problems into an all-embracing category of 'enemy' (Machava 2011). To belong was to be within Frelimo's orbit; to be outside was to be a traitor (Buur 2010). The figure of the enemy, constituted by a shifting set of anti-social behaviors, drew the political limit. Nearly 40 years after independence and promises to empower the masses under socialism and to deliver universal human rights under democracy, the vast majority still find meaningful equality elusive, while those who engage in what would have been labeled anti-social behaviors and individualistic greed prosper. Mozambican whites and Indians are groups whose privileges are reminiscent of the long abolished colonial order. The most meaningful contact many members of the majority have with whites and Indians is through social relations that place them in a subordinate position and can be exploitative. Mozambican whites and Indians, although generally privileged and benefiting from full legal equality, are increasingly insecure in the face of rising violent crime and continuing social polarization. This was emphasized by the outbreak of urban riots in 2008 and 2010. The government in general was targeted, but the shops of those who appeared to be 'foreigners' were also attacked (Bertelsen, pers. comm.). Members of visible minorities are far more vulnerable than the party itself to expressions of popular anger. In such a situation, the basis for privilege seems fragile as there is always the danger that one can find oneself outside the political limit of the new order.

In recent decades, anthropologists have repeatedly pointed out that identities are not essentialized but instead are fluid, multiple, and shifting, no matter what our informants may think. While this is true, as Simpson (2006) demonstrates, political boundaries are fortified by social institutions, and even the most 'transnational' among us are categorized by ethnic or national origins. Furthermore, one is categorized not simply by the nation to which one is a member but, in many cases, by the nation that others think one *should* belong to. Neither whites nor Indians in Mozambique form a unified, homogeneous group. Whites, while privileged, tend to occupy positions in the party and/or the professions. Indians are even more diverse, with groups like Goans clustered around the professions and bureaucracy and others tending to dominate mercantile life in the country. Some merchants have produced fabulously wealthy dynasties, while others sell matches and soap from 'bush' shops. Class differences and internal conflict are contained by kinship and an embattled sense of solidarity, yet they are also exacerbated by these ties, as religion and family connections are used to legitimate unequal relationships of dependence. However, whites and Indians are increasingly being categorized as unified members of alien groups by the wider population. Perhaps we should turn to these modes of categorization when trying to understand why the adoption of democracy in much of the world has led to such different results from those envisioned by its promoters (as recently demonstrated by events in Egypt, Turkey, and Brazil).

# Origins and Socialism

## *Origins*

Mozambique's colonial master, Portugal, claimed the longest European colonial presence in Africa, close to 500 years, but the reality of its empire was a ramshackle affair. Unlike the British Raj, the Portuguese did not try to tame and reshape their Indian Ocean empire as much as insert themselves as advantageously as possible into existing networks for much of the colonial period (Metcalf 2007; Newitt 1995). The metropole was financially unstable, with hunger and political strife at home, and there were few resources left over for the colonies. Many of the colonialists were peasants, and while the government strove to provide amenities for poor whites, conditions for even these chosen few were often grim. By the late colonial period, though, society had hardened into a strict hierarchy, with Portuguese officials and those born in the metropole on top and white Portuguese born in Mozambique (*segundos*, lit. 'seconds') occupying the next lower rung on the ladder. These were followed by those who made up the layers at the bottom: mulattos, Asians, *assimilados*, and, lastly, the vast majority of the population.

There has been an Indian presence in Mozambique for centuries due to various Indian Ocean trade networks (Metcalf 2007). This presence solidified at the end of the seventeenth century when Indian capital began to focus more directly on East Africa. Trading bases were set up on the northern island of Ilha de Moçambique, and merchants began to penetrate the interior (Newitt 1995). In the later colonial period, the Indian population was bolstered by settlers from neighboring British colonies, farmers recruited by the authorities, and Goans who were brought to work as administrators and merchants (Gupta 2009; Newitt 1995; Penvenne 1995). While their relationship with the colonial state varied widely between historical periods, and Indians were generally treated as culturally and socially superior to much of the native black population (Newitt 1995).

The colonial system began to solidify its control over the territory that now forms Mozambique following the assumption of power of António Salazar's quasi-fascist Estado Novo (New State) regime in the 1930s. With varying levels of success, the colonial state tried to reshape the numerous forms of social belonging and identification into a pyramidal structure. A myriad of social groups was gradually and incompletely homogenized and refashioned into hierarchical ranks under the overarching categories of white, Indian, mulatto, *assimilado*, and 'native'. After the overthrow of the colonial regime, Frelimo took it upon itself to try to homogenize the population to a degree that exceeded the wildest ambitions of the departing Portuguese.

## *Socialism*

During the liberation struggle, Frelimo attempted to create forms of social categorization that would underpin the new order (Mondlane 1969). For the rank

and file though, the older patterns of racial hierarchy were harder to consign to the dustbin of history, and the education of white and Indian party members made them a valuable commodity, especially since illiteracy at independence was over 90 percent (Hanlon 1990). As one former white militant told me: “I am a white urbanite, and I have no illusions otherwise. When I joined Frelimo, the soldier training me for combat said: ‘Look we are only doing this so that you will know how. You will not be sent to fight, you have other skills. You are not really one of us.’ Really, I was relieved. I did not want to be shot in the bush somewhere.” Even in the revolutionary army, previous hierarchies were present.

For many Mozambican Indians, liberation was a time of uncertainty. Relationships between Indians and Portuguese had deteriorated due to economic competition as the New State encouraged white immigration into the colonies, especially after 1950. Hostility increased after the expulsion of all those holding Indian passports in retaliation for India’s ‘reconquest’ of Goa in 1961 (Newitt 1995). This severely undermined the colonial state’s claim that it protected such groups from majority rule. These factors contributed to a guarded welcome of independence among the Indian merchants whom I came to know, although Frelimo’s leftist leanings were a cause of concern. Saif, introduced at the beginning of this article, was born into a wealthy merchant family on Ilha de Moçambique in the late 1940s. Although Saif was generally sympathetic to the goal of liberation, his stories of the early days of independence are reminiscent of an ‘invasion of the barbarians’. Saif likes to recount an incident when he had to explain to a Frelimo troop commander how to use a telephone. Things were especially bad in the early days when the new government was still struggling to exert control. Since his family was wealthy and his father was well-known, they were frequently a target of ad hoc revolutionary ‘appropriations’. This happened to many Indians, some of whom, according to Saif, “suffered a lot because they did not have much money, but it looked like they did.” For others, though, the party offered new opportunities. João is also of Indian descent. His father had been a merchant running a bush shop that sold matches and soap to villagers. During the liberation struggle, he sided with Frelimo and was awarded a government post after liberation. João joined the party and was briefly a member of the presidential guard. His father was able to take up a position of importance in a provincial capital, and João is now financially comfortable and living in the capital, outcomes that would have seemed a mere fantasy without the liberation struggle.

As Machel assumed the role of external editor, the party attempted to redefine radically the existing system of social classification. Certain social groups, including those who had worked in the Portuguese administration, military, or security services, as well as anyone who could be branded a collaborator, were inherently suspect and often treated quite brutally. But the new system of categorization was based more on behavior than on ‘racial’ classification as such. Inability or unwillingness to adapt to the new society and join the collective was seen as a failure of individual will. However, if being a ‘reactionary’ was based on individual behavior and insufficient will, this highlighted Frelimo’s own dark suspicion that anyone could be a potential traitor, no matter their

background or history (Buur 2010). This uncertainty was especially acute for urbanites. By 1977, Frelimo had transformed itself into a vanguard party and taken on many elitist tendencies. The leadership had deep reservations about the rural population, seeing them as hopelessly 'backward' (Dinerman 2006; Hall and Young 1997). While, the party wanted to build a modern, industrial nation, urbanites were held in suspicion as the embodiment of the 'degradation' of Portuguese colonial culture, and militants were encouraged to be vigilant against 'backsliding' among the population (Buur 2010).

As Frelimo tried to mold Mozambique's fractured population into a unified homogeneous citizenry in their image while surrounded by hostile minority regimes, they enacted draconian measures. Shortly after independence, there was the so-called 24/20 decree. Those in possession of foreign or dual citizenship were ordered to renounce immediately all other ties and apply for Mozambican citizenship; otherwise, they had 24 hours to leave the country and could take 20 kilos of personal possessions with them. In the early socialist period, the party's primary emphasis was on ideology, morality, violence, and punishment (Machava 2011: 594). For those who continued to be 'wicked', acted against the party, or 'flaunted' their attachment to the 'old ways', there was the threat of re-education camps, where the slang term for inmates was 'crocodile food'.

Despite harsh measures, the growing destruction caused by the civil war and the chaos unleashed by Frelimo's own policies made urban areas increasingly difficult to order and control. The party reacted with desperation, probably best exemplified by the now infamous Operation Production in 1983, which exiled all who could not prove residency or employment to the far north to 'build cities in the forest' (Newitt 1995). When spot checks of identity papers on the street failed to produce the desired results, the army conducted door-to-door searches, rounding up supposed vagrants, criminals, and unproductive elements. An estimated 30,000 to 50,000 people were 'relocated' (Buur 2010: 25). Operation Production undermined Frelimo's urban support and created a climate of fear throughout all sectors of the population, demonstrating the price of not belonging. At independence, the party promised a social contract: if one conformed to the ideal of the New Man, the party would lead the nation toward a prosperous, enlightened, industrial future. Instead, civil war raged, the economy teetered on the brink of collapse, and the social contract became, in Nugent's (2010) terms, ever more coercive, as fear and desperation became central to keeping order.

As the situation deteriorated, Frelimo established severe punishments for many forms of what they labeled 'economic sabotage'. In practice, Indian merchants were often singled out under these laws. An infamous example concerned an Indian who was convicted of black marketeering in 1983. His punishment was intended as a public warning. Since there was no national television station before 1987, his execution by firing squad was broadcast live on the radio. Punishments such as public flogging were not uncommon, although the 'enemies of the people' punished in this way covered a wide range of 'crimes'. As the party's control over large parts of the country veered between tenuous and non-existent, the categories of 'friend', 'enemy', 'citizen', or 'other' oscillated continuously.

In practice, Samora Machel was a skillful politician who adapted his positions to changing circumstances. In his role as external editor, though, he was the embodiment of the revolution and of the process of determining who was an 'authentic bearer of the nation'. After his death in a plane crash in 1986, his successor, Joaquim Chissano (1986–2005), found it difficult to assume this role. Chissano was a talented, pragmatic politician who eventually managed to negotiate the peace, but he was less convincing as the embodiment of revolutionary will above society. In the post-Samora period, internal paradoxes became more evident. The promise of an inclusive, modernist citizenry had contributed to the devastation of the country and played a part in turning vast sections of the population into potential enemies. Beginning in 1983, and gaining force after Samora's death, Frelimo moved toward a mixed economy in an effort to boost production and find desperately needed friends and resources in the West (Hall and Young 1997).

The clarity of the party's initial message had also faltered. The goals and practices of the New Man striving for the collective became increasingly impossible in times of economic crisis (Buur 2010). The line between a 'good' Mozambican, an 'authentic national subject', and a 'reactionary' enemy of the people blurred and was replaced by empty formalism. When Naema, a Mozambican Indian and former Frelimo supporter, spoke of the mid-1980s, she recalls: "Everyone had to trade on the black market. My husband was sent to prison for having foreign currency, but my daughter was sick and needed milk. It was the only way we could get it. We still spoke the socialist slogans in public, but it did not really mean anything. Anyone who spoke like that privately would be considered bizarre." When Frelimo officially abandoned single-party socialism in 1989–1990, the definition of citizenship was transformed, but the underlying social grammar of insider friend versus outsider enemy survived into the new era.

## Democracy

During socialism, internal cleavages based on race, ethnicity, or region were taboo in official discourse, as best demonstrated by President Machel's famous statement: "For the nation to live the tribe must die" (Hall and Young 1997). Citizenship was based not so much on what one was, but on what one was supposed to become, guided by Samora in the position of external editor. Beginning with the death of Samora, the party gradually abandoned many of its exclusivist positions in a desperate effort to survive, gradually relinquishing its authority to define what a 'good' Mozambican is. The former Renamo rebels, now the opposition, have refashioned themselves as the party of the peasantry and defenders of tradition against an out-of-touch mixed elite beholden to foreign interests. The government is sensitive to criticism of this kind and has taken steps to address it. Government ministers are now largely black, and, as I was told by a former minister (himself of Indian descent), one of the major goals after the fall of socialism was to create a black bourgeoisie.

Democratization radically changed the social contract in Mozambique. During socialism, Frelimo was deeply intolerant of other forms of belonging outside the nation, but it vowed that when Mozambicans conformed to the ideal of a citizen, the party would build a better world for all. Democratization promised individual rights, but the socialist period's goal of radical transformation gradually evolved into trying to keep the majority out of absolute poverty. Outside the party elite, it is not clear who will be privileged, as Frelimo has made a bewildering series of alliances with foreign investors, donor countries, Pentecostal churches, Islamic brotherhoods, and other groups that can bolster the party's position. Currently, Samora Machel has become a nostalgic icon for the disaffected, a symbol of the supposed moral purity, egalitarianism, and transformative mission of the early independence period. Especially in Maputo, young men wear T-shirts emblazoned with his image and revolutionary slogans. I have been told by street vendors that sales of his speeches are brisk, and even fiercely anti-government musicians, such as the former hip-hop star Azagaia, have appeared in concert wearing a uniform based on that of Samora. Despite political transformations, many aspects of older hierarchies seem to have solidified. Whites almost uniformly occupy privileged positions in society, and this continuation of privilege has not gone unnoticed. As Marta, a black woman in her twenties, was telling me: "Many people still think that whites are the clever ones and that they know what is going on."

Many Mozambican Indians have prospered in the post-socialist era, often in close alliance with the party. Merchants have benefited from political protection and preferential access during the privatization program, in turn allowing Frelimo to make use of the capital and transnational connections at their disposal (Pitcher 2002). An obvious example is Mohamed Bachier Sulemann, the owner of Maputo's largest mall and a large contributor to Frelimo. He has been named as a major trafficker of heroin by the American embassy but still operates with impunity inside Mozambique. In fact, he publicly claims that his financial support was crucial to Frelimo's last national election victory (Buur et al. 2012). However, allegations of corruption, racism, and exploitation of the majority population have led to widespread resentment of Indian merchants. People of Indian descent have tended to be structurally over-represented in the mercantile sector in East Africa, and Mozambique is no exception. This economic role has caused conflict with majority populations who often interact with African Indians through a racialized system of debt (Brennan 2012). The rumors of illegal dealings, combined with exploitative practices and supposed social aloofness, make many Indian merchants appear to be the epitome of anti-social accumulation, which, during socialism, placed one outside the political limit.

Naema, mentioned earlier, is of Indian descent. One day, after a particularly unpleasant encounter with the police, which she was convinced came about due to anti-Indian prejudice, she told me: "Black people are black in their skin and their hearts, and the only way to fix the problem would be to shoot all of them. The problem of racism is very serious in Mozambique, and it is primarily directed towards Indians. Black people still think that whites are the

*patrão* [master], and therefore they act differently towards white people.” She recounted conversations where people had accused her of not having a country or homeland because she, and other Mozambican Indians, even those whose families have been in the country for generations, are not from anywhere else, but they are not from here either. I have heard similar sentiments many times in Maputo. Varyna, a black friend of mine, said: “I think this is because Indians are insecure. This is not really their home, but they have nowhere else to go.” Another black woman in her thirties told me: “The Indians, they have all the businesses, but there is always someone from the party behind them. They [Indians] can be kicked out at any time, like the Portuguese.” The Indians’ sense of insecurity has probably increased since the riots of 2008 and 2010. Mozambique’s current president, Armando Guebuza (2005–present), has invested heavily in rural areas, causing urban discontent. This has also created a double bind. Members of the grand Indian families, such as Bachier Sulemann, appear to be untouchable and to enjoy the full protection of high-ranking party members. Others, whose situation is far more humble, lack such immunity and fear that the party will try to placate popular anger by turning on them.

Mozambican Indians do not act together in a unified bloc. There are conflicts between long-established Indian families and more recent arrivals. Furthermore, many speak darkly about the business and allegedly criminal activities of their compatriots. Saif, mentioned earlier, was born to a wealthy family that took poor kinsmen in as dependents. One of Saif’s cousins, who used to live in the servant’s shed in the garden, is now one of the richest men in the country. When I asked Saif how his cousin became so rich so quickly, he replied: “It’s not difficult to understand. He smuggles heroin. That is why I am not rich. I would never be involved in something like that.” In the face of wider hostility, though, a siege-like sense of solidarity tends to overcome internal differences, at least when dealing with the wider population.

Many of the promises of the transition to democracy are unfulfilled, causing hostility from the vast majority that has been left behind. As I was told by a white Mozambican professional: “There is a lot of racism towards whites now. During socialism, Samora pretended that race did not exist and the struggle had solved all problems. However, everyone knew he was advised by some leftist whites in the party. The people blame us for what happened during socialism. We did comparatively well while they suffered, and we did not even have to fight in the army during the civil war.” For members of minorities, such as whites and Indians, it appears that they are reaching the political limit and that constitutional guarantees do not mean that they belong. Angelica told me how, as a teenager, she spent two years in a Portuguese school, where she was ostracized and mocked by her classmates due to her Mozambican accent and mannerisms. In Portugal, she was called a ‘monkey’ and was considered far too Mozambican to belong properly. But now she feels that she appears far too Portuguese in her home country to be considered ‘authentically’ Mozambican. Angelica thinks that many of the highest positions are barred to her because she is white. As a white friend of hers once said: “How can we be in the elite? We are not black.”

## 'Authentic' National Subjects?

Since the fall of socialism, the meaning of a 'true' Mozambican has become a floating signifier. While this is most obvious for members of minority groups, such as whites and Indians, as with many other African nations, shifting definitions have been used to attack the powerful black politicians as well. In 2008, the *Zambeze* newspaper published a piece calling into question the status of the then-prime minister, Luisa Diogo, with the sensationalist headline: "Is the Prime Minister Mozambican?"<sup>3</sup> Luisa Diogo is married to a foreign-born man, and under a clause of the 1975 Constitution (later revoked) women who married a foreigner lost their citizenship. In reality, it turned out that the *Zambeze* journalists had not done their homework: Diogo's husband had become a Mozambican citizen in 1977 before they married. However, Frelimo took the charges surprisingly seriously, and state prosecutors not only sued *Zambeze* for libel but also invoked an obscure law dealing with state security to demand that the journalists pay 10,000,000 meticaís (around £268,000) in damages, a claim rejected by the judges.<sup>4</sup> The fact that the party leadership overreacted to an ill-founded charge without any basis seems to demonstrate just how seriously the former position of external editor has been undermined.

Democratization in Mozambique promised a new dispensation, although it was to be presided over by former champions of socialism. However, if citizenship under democracy is simply rights bestowed to an individual by virtue of birth, instead of a process of collective uplift, it is not clear what exactly it is that binds the diverse population together. For the majority, it seems that the primary benefit is grinding poverty and continuing subservience, while 'suspect' citizens, such as whites and Indians, are becoming rich. As the symbol of new inequalities, these groups are far more vulnerable than a political party that can claim only 2.7 million members out of a population of around 23 million (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2012).

In recent years, a new party, the Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM) whose leader, Daviz Simango, split from Renamo, is becoming the dominant political opposition. Simango is the son of one of the founders of Frelimo, Uria Simango, who was the leader of the party for about a day before being purged by Samora's faction during the liberation struggle and later shot as an 'enemy of the people'. Beginning in his power base in the city of Beira in central Mozambique, Simango has built strong support, especially in the center of the country, where many have long felt excluded from power. While the rise of Simango has caused considerable excitement in some sectors of the population and his party champions a marginalized region, the MDM has not appeared to redefine the practice of politics so much as to insert itself within it (Nuvunga and Adalima 2011). While some of his supporters hope Simango will initiate radical change, he shares the same social background as the leading Frelimo families, having spent his youth in special Frelimo schools for the children of high-ranking party cadres. Simango calls the current president 'uncle', and he is deeply immersed in the structures of power that dominate

the country. Although it is still too early to tell, it appears that the MDM may follow a similar underlying social grammar.

If Mozambican socialism ignored race to focus on a vision of class struggle, it now seems that the inequalities of class are hidden by a growing focus on race and poverty as a technical problem. Both Mozambican whites and Indians have economic, social, and religious networks that extend throughout Mozambique, South Africa, Portugal, and the Indian Ocean. Yet many consider themselves Mozambican: it is the country they were born in, it is where their families live, and it is where they hope to end their days. However, their visibly different economic role and prosperity make them a target of widespread resentment. The growing hostility of the black majority is often fully reciprocated in a vicious downward spiral.

In 2012, Jorge Rebelo, a former minister, made a speech at the 10th Frelimo Congress, warning of possible dangers to national unity. Rebelo, himself of Goan descent, claimed that leading figures in the party were using a discourse that “posed ‘genuine’ Mozambicans against ‘non-genuine’ Mozambicans.”<sup>5</sup> According to Rebelo, in the time of Samora “minorities were not manufactured in this country ... I do not know whether I am genuine or not ... Is it because of the color of one’s skin?”<sup>6</sup> For many years, Frelimo’s principled non-racialism made it the exception when compared to its settler colony neighbors, where race was deeply politicized. It appears that this is beginning to change. As one Frelimo cadre told me in despair: “After so many years of struggle, I guess we are just another African country now.”

## Conclusion

A few years ago I struck up a conversation with a man while watching a demonstration make its weekly march through Maputo. The demonstrators were people who had been sent to work in East Germany during the socialist period. The former minister of labor allegedly stole the vast majority of their wages, and they were protesting for redress. The man told me that he had been one of the workers sent to East Germany and that the minister had stolen his wages with impunity. I asked him whom he voted for, and he said: “I will vote for Frelimo, of course. If they lose, I will never get my money back. Anyway, I am from Gaza [a southern province that is a Frelimo stronghold]. Renamo did terrible barbaric things during the war there that cannot be imagined. Dhlakama [Renamo’s leader] said he will deport the people from Gaza to South Africa, because, according to him, we are not real Mozambicans.”

Despite the transition to democracy and constitutional guarantees, simply being born in Mozambique does not necessarily make one a full citizen in the popular imagination. Instead, it is believed that the moral community of the nation is an explicitly political vision and that leaders can declare entire social categories as ‘internal enemies’ whose rights to the nation are suddenly null and void. Many Indian merchants in Nampula have told me that they are convinced that, were Renamo ever to win, they would be deported en masse, as Idi Amin did in Uganda.

Originally relying on Samora Machel's ability to demand loyalty to Frelimo's vision of citizenship by occupying the place of the external editor and defining what a 'true' Mozambican is, the nationalist ideal is now vulnerable to political and economic changes. If the party is no longer an enlightened vanguard that monopolizes specialist knowledge but is to be a servant of the people, it poses the question, who are the people? If Frelimo is responsible to their voters, why are the vast majority of Mozambicans so poor? If whites and Indians are a tiny and increasingly unpopular minority, why are they so rich?

One of the major differences in Mozambique, following the adoption of democracy, is that a government once obsessed with creating a homogeneous national citizenry as a bulwark against ever-multiplying enemies is now constructing difference. In their works, Chipkin (2007) and Mouffe (2005) describe the political limit inherent within liberal democracy as that which divides full, rights-bearing citizens from those outside this political community. As argued by Mouffe (*ibid.*: 39), one of democratic theory's primary weaknesses is the inability to conceive properly of this limit. In practice, the implementation of a liberal democratic system appears to focus on holding multi-party elections and writing a constitution. However, efforts to create liberal democracy in Mozambique are being grafted onto what came before—in this case, a system that defined itself against a supposed enemy. As Mouffe sees it, universal human rights are never eternal and inherent; rather, they are the products of existing political hegemonies (*ibid.*: 4). In Mozambique, as with many places in the post-colonial world, formal democratization occurred simultaneously with spiraling inequality, rendering many of these rights an abstraction. While the forms of capitalism introduced may be directly responsible for new inequalities, democracy's ambivalence in recognizing its own political limit renders these inequalities all the more intense.

Mozambican whites and Indians benefit from their social position and access to party-dominated networks to occupy places of privilege in the current social order, although their relationship to the body politic is ever more tenuous. Former relationships of reciprocity are being dismantled, and wealth is being concentrated in both the upper levels of the party and numerically insignificant minorities. In some ways, this creates convenient scapegoats, allowing the inequities of the system to be viewed through a radicalized prism while deflecting blame. On the other hand, members of the vast majority of the population are, by default, authentic national subjects, with full claims to the rights and obligations promised by the state, yet they remain mired in poverty. In Mozambique, democracy has created a strange paradox. Most of its insiders are impoverished, while many of its beneficiaries, such as Mozambican whites and Indians, occupy a structural position similar to that of medieval Jews in Europe: they may be rich, but they remain alien.

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## Notes

1. For this data on the Mozambican population, see the 2012 CIA World Factbook at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mz.html>.
2. See [http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file\\_id=179636](http://www.wipo.int/wipolex/en/text.jsp?file_id=179636) (accessed 3 June 2012).
3. "Press Freedom," *AIM Reports*, no. 135, 3 September 2008.
4. *Ibid.*
5. "10th Frelimo Congress," *AIM Reports*, no. 202, 1 October 2012.
6. *Ibid.*

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