



Mozambique — Va-PoReg Country Report

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03/01/1505 Start Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Portugal]: It is often argued that Mozambique became a Portuguese colony on 03/01/1505. However, the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama only established a trading post on this date. While Portuguese influence gradually grew, its authority remained restricted and was primarily wielded by individual settlers and officials who enjoyed considerable autonomy.¹ In 1907, the Portuguese government created the Colony of Mozambique, which was administered by a governor-general appointed by the Portuguese crown. The colonial administration was responsible for all aspects of government in Mozambique, including law enforcement, education, and infrastructure development. The Portuguese also established a system of forced labor, which required Mozambicans to work on plantations and other colonial projects. Much of the administration of the Portuguese Province of Mozambique in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was carried out by chartered companies, the Niassa, Mozambique and Zambezia Companies. Until the termination of their charters in 1929 and 1942, Each company independently governed its territories, managing tax collection, publishing official gazettes, and overseeing nearly all aspects of administration except for judicial matters within their respective concessions. Notably, the Zambezia company, lacking a charter, had its region directly administered by the Portuguese (Herrick et al. 1969). The administration of Mozambique was reorganized in 1907. Initially, it was restricted to completely pacified regions and areas not under the authority of the Mozambique and Niassa chartered companies (Henriksen 1978). The New State abolished the notion of provincial autonomy with the Acto Colonial of 1930, reverting the designation from ‘overseas provinces’ back to ‘colonies’ within a ‘Portuguese Colonial Empire’. It reintegrated the African territories into an administrative framework where ultimate authority resided in Lisbon, ending administration by private companies and replacing the office of High Commissioner with the more subservient post of Governor-General (Henriksen 1978). When Portugal redesignated its possessions in 1951, Mozambique’s status changed to overseas province (Henriksen 1978).² According to LIED no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held. Both LIED and V-Dem’s PCLI classify political liberties as absent. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem’s JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, while V-Dem’s LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent. The Organic Law for Overseas Territories of 05/02/1972 created a 50-member Legislative Assembly in Mozambique, of which 20 members were to be elected and 30 appointed by the colonial administration. The elections, held in March 1973, took place in the absence of political parties, which were formally banned, and candidates could only be nominated through the regime’s official People’s National Action movement or civic associations aligned with it. As a result, these elections had little substantive meaning beyond providing a façade of limited participation within a tightly controlled colonial framework. The precise date of the 1973 election remains unclear, as existing sources refer only to „March 1973” without specifying the exact day. Because the colonial administration retained ultimate authority and the new assembly did not represent a genuine transfer of power to local elites, this episode is best interpreted as a continuation of a direct rule colonial regime rather than a transition to indirect rule colonial regime.³ Portugal is said to never have had intention to grant self-government to Mozambique (Herrick et al. 1969). According to LIED multiparty executive and legislative elections were held in 1972, from 1973 onward only legislative elections, which were not multiparty, were held. Universal suffrage was

achieved in 1975 (LIED). Political liberties were absent according to LIED and V-Dem's PCLI. Therefore, this period is coded as colonial rule. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent.

06/25/1975 End Direct Rule Colonial Regime [of Portugal, Liberal Democracy]/Start Communist Ideocracy [as independent country]: On this date, Mozambique gained independence as the People's Republic of Mozambique. The Portuguese handed power to the Liberation Front of Mozambique (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, FRELIMO) that had led the struggle against Portuguese colonial rule since its establishment in 1962, „a phase characterized both by creative experimentation and demoralizing setbacks” (Isaacman/Isaacman 1983). Since 1975 the party more and more leaned towards communism. In 1975 universal suffrage was introduced. FRELIMO began establishing a one-party state (Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 79). On 09/25/1977 ate elections of FRELIMO-sponsored candidates to local, district, provincial, and national assemblies were held in 1977 (Lansford 2021: 1129). FRELIMO was the sole legal party. RENAMO opposed FRELIMO's attempts to establish a socialist one-party state and was heavily backed by the anti-communist governments of Rhodesia and South Africa who supported them as a proxy to undermine FRELIMO support for militant nationalist organizations in their own countries. Over one million Mozambicans were killed in the fighting or starved due to interrupted food supplies; an additional five million were displaced across the region during the Mozambican Civil War.⁴ In what seemed to be a relaxation of its adherence to Marxist centralism, the government-initiated measures in the early 1980s to distinguish between government and party officials. Nevertheless, a government restructuring in March 1986 reinstated party control, as the Council of Ministers was divided into three sections, each overseen by a senior member of the Frelimo Political Bureau (Lansford 2021: 1129). Frelimo abandoned its commitment to Marxism-Leninism in July 1989 and a transition started. According to LIED only legislative elections, which weren't multiparty, were held. For the given timeframe, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is also classified by us as indicating that political liberties are absent. From 1975 to 1985, according to Polity5, during this period, the executive's constraints fell into Intermediate Category 1, between unlimited authority and slight limitations. Since 1986, as per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was subject to minor institutional constraints during this time. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent.

11/30/1990 End Communist Ideocracy/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: In 1990, negotiations directly involving Renamo representatives commenced in Rome, Italy. Subsequently, on 11/02/1990, after thorough deliberation in the parliament, a new pluralistic constitution was adopted (Lansford 2021: 1129). The civil war in Mozambique ended in October 1992 with the signing of the Rome General Peace Accords, initially facilitated by the Christian Council of Mozambique (Council of Protestant Churches). Peace was restored in the country with the support of a United Nations peacekeeping force.⁵ According to our observation no multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which contradicts the observations of LIED. According to LIED only legislative elections, which were not multiparty, were held. For this period under consideration, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as pointing to an ambiguous state in 1991 and that political liberties were somewhat present from 1992. As per Polity5's classification, the executive's authority was subject to minor institutional constraints during this time. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust in 1991 and otherwise robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were moderate in 1994 and otherwise absent.

10/29/1994 End Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start Electoral Hybrid Regime: For the first time the country held multi-party elections for president and the parliament between 10/27 and 10/29/1994. The elections were accepted by most political parties as free and fair although still contested by many nationals

and observers alike (Harrison 1996). Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. In addition, LIED considers the elections as competitive until 2008. Ever since that year no electoral competitiveness is scored. V-Dem's CEI indicates ambiguous cleanliness until 1997. For the remaining years no real clean elections were held, except for 2020 and 2023 when no cleanliness is achieved. Moreover, V-Dem's EF&FI declares somewhat free and fair elections conditions from 1994 to 1998 and 2004 and 2008. The other years, ambiguous election conditions are given. Regarding political liberties, they are absent for the entire time according to LIED. Whereas V-Dem's PCLI scores somewhat political liberties. From 1995 to 2012, according to Polity5, the executive's constraints were categorized as Intermediate Category 2, between slight and substantial limitations. Since 2013, based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive encountered substantial institutional limitations on power. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust from 2000-2018 and 2020-2022 and otherwise moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited in 2020 and 2023 but otherwise moderate. FRELIMO maintained control of the country's political system, winning both elections.⁶ It has maintained an electoral advantage since 1994 by using public resources to fund campaign activities and dominates all branches of government ever since.⁷

10/15/2019 End Electoral Hybrid Regime/Start Electoral Autocracy: The presidential and parliamentary elections held on this date marked a turning point. These elections were widely denounced by domestic and international observers as rigged, with reports of ballot stuffing, intimidation, assassinations of opposition figures, and systematic use of state resources in favor of FRELIMO. Following these elections, Mozambique was downgraded by Freedom House to not free. As a result, 10/15/2019 is coded as the end of the electoral hybrid regime and the beginning of an electoral autocracy. By observers and civil society organizations the elections in 2019 were classified as clearly rigged.⁸ The Mozambican general election was held on 10/09/2024 against a backdrop of mounting public frustration and increasing international concern over the ruling FRELIMO party's growing authoritarianism. On election day, despite the presence of international observers, rival parties immediately alleged widespread fraud. They claimed that their representatives were denied access to many vote-counting centers. This conduct fueled suspicion and led the opposition, particularly Mondlane's PODEMOS party, to conduct and publish a parallel vote count claiming victory for their candidate. Although the Constitutional Council officially validated the results, declaring Daniel Chapo and FRELIMO the winners, the outcome was heavily disputed. The disputed result quickly ignited deadly protests across the nation, with reports of hundreds of demonstrators killed by police and army forces.⁹ Based on the constant FH score of 9, we interpret the entire regime period as rather not free. Electoral Autocracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Qualitative Sources: (Lorch/Bunk 2016)

Notes

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Mozambique

² <https://uca.edu/politicalscience/dadm-project/sub-saharan-africa-region/portuguese-mozambique-1951-1975/>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1973_Portuguese_Mozambican_Legislative_Assembly_election

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozambican_Civil_War

⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mozambique#History>

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1994_Mozambican_general_election

⁷ <https://freedomhouse.org/country/mozambique/freedom-world/2022>

⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2019_Mozambican_general_election

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_Mozambican_general_election

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