

Programme Aid Partners in Mozambique: a textual analysis ¹

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The social, economic and political context of African societies in the wake of various European intrusions has set the scene for post-independent western-African relationships. The purpose of this paper is to examine the intentions and policies of developed countries and international agencies to the third world, using as an example a report evaluating aid to Mozambique. A textual analysis of the report will further explore the relationship between aid policies and western-Mozambican relationships. It will be argued that however destructive pre-independence relationships with colonial powers were for African societies, post-colonial demands by western powers in return for aid were far more intrusive, requiring more total subversion of traditional economies to western neo-liberal economic models.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine the intentions and policies of developed countries and international agencies to the third world, using as an example a recent report evaluating aid to Mozambique. Aid is a major way in which such intentions are articulated. The report in question is intended to provide insight into a particular instance of recent aid policies to a developing country. The paper also explores whether a textual analysis using ideas principally from Foucault, Fairclough and Derrida will uncover further meanings in the text about how aid policies impact on western-Mozambican relationships.

It is proposed to analyse or 'deconstruct' a report commissioned by the 'Programme Aid Partners' in Mozambique and supported financially by the UK DFID (Department for International Development) and by the Swiss SECO (State Secretariat for Economic Affairs). The report was published in May 2005 and was directed to the Programme Aid Partners and the Government of Mozambique.

The social, economic and political context of African societies in the wake of various European intrusions such as the slave trade and colonialism will be discussed first to set the context for post-independent western-African relationships, particularly the relationship between western aid donors and Mozambique as a recipient. It will be argued that however deleterious colonial relationships with western countries were for African societies,

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post-independence demands by western powers in return for aid were far more intrusive, requiring more total subversion of traditional economies to western neo-liberal economic models.

Political background

From the end of the 'middle ages' when European technological developments and enterprise allowed explorers and later traders to treat with other countries until the present, European companies and countries have by various means, some more humane than others, acted principally to their own short term political and commercial advantage. In the case of sub-Saharan Africa, particularly foul means used include the slave trade, in which it is estimated that well over the ten to fifteen million slaves who arrived in the Americas were seized and removed from their homes (Hoogvelt 1976).

Colonialism made further inroads into African social, political and economic life. The British, it may be judged, wisely tried to conduct their administration through existing traditional chiefs; respected traditional laws and courts which continued to exercise judicial authority in lower level cases; and to a greater or lesser extent left existing economies alone.

However where there was a conflict of interest there was interference in African arrangements, some of which had a drastic effect on African societies (Roberts 1986).

Where new western industries needed labour, particularly in the mines, a tax was placed on males in African households. This had the effect of forcing all able-bodied males to work in western industries (McCracken 1986). Later more and more people moved to work in European businesses and household to earn cash that became increasingly enticing and status enhancing as a way of acquiring western goods. The effect of this on traditional African agriculture was in some instances disastrous, as the strong young men were not there to do the heavy work required in certain seasons.

In Mozambique this effect was particularly serious as labour for western mines and plantations involved forced labour as well as taxation. All men had to work as labourers for six months each year. By the 1940s a third of the population, or 790,000 families were involved in forced cotton cultivation (Wield 1983). Forced labour intensified with the expansion of monopoly companies until 1962 when it was banned because of pressure from the increasingly powerful independence movement, Frelimo.

In areas with a substantial white population greater inroads were made into African agriculture. Africans were moved off the most fertile and accessible land, which was reserved for European farmers. This happened most severely in South African and what was then Southern Rhodesia (Curtin *et al* 1978), and has now become a major issue for resolution in both countries. In Mozambique the position was different in that large tracts of land were awarded to commercial companies where plantations and mines were developed for which the forced labour was used. After World War II there was substantial Portuguese immigration into Mozambique, giving those Europeans substantial economic benefits too. (www.historyworld.net/wrldhis/PlainTextHistories.asp?historyid=ad29)

All these had effects on traditional social and political life. The new wealth and power exhibited by European colonial society, and the contact the indigenous population had with it, to an extent weakened tradition culture. This was exacerbated by the fact that non-

traditional 'chiefs' were appointed by the colonial authorities where traditional rulers were unwilling to co-operate or where there had never before been any chiefs (Curtin *et al* 1978). However, African traditional societies were, with provisos such as those above, left largely to their own devices, albeit more impoverished by less labour, in some instances by poorer land though sometimes richer in western goods

In Mozambique the inroads into traditional economies were far worse. The numbers involved in forced labour were high and traditional economies were devastated. The Bishop of Beira described the impact of forced labour for the cotton plantations:

“I know a region which used to be a granary for lands afflicted with hunger. After the cotton campaign was begun there the fertile lands ceased to supply food for the neighbouring population and the people of the region itself also began to feel hunger.” (Anderson 1962 cited in Wield 1983:78)

In the north, although family peasant production was continued - mainly by women - their economy was still distorted because of short term male contract labour (Wield 1983).

Current globalisation policies

Development and globalisation theorists have long explained and linked the relative wealth and well being of people in the advanced economies with the exploitation and underdevelopment in the third world:

“...the historical development of the capitalist system ...[has] generated underdevelopment in the peripheral satellites whose economic surplus was expropriated, while generating economic development in the metropolitan centres which appropriate that surplus – and, further, that this process still continues.” (Frank 1971:27)

Western policies have in recent decades intensified the economic colonisation of many third world societies in the south. Some writers have subscribed to the 'hyperglobalist thesis' that 'contemporary globalisation represents the triumph of an oppressive global capitalism' (Held *et al* 1999). 'Aid' can take the form of benefitting the donor rather than the recipient country in trivial (though not inexpensive) ways. The Guardian of 29th August 2005 reported that hundreds of thousands of pounds earmarked for aid to Malawi were paid to American consultancies (termed 'phantom aid' by Action Aid and the World Development Movement). More than £700,000 of a £3 million budget was spent on hotels and meals for US workers.

More far reaching consequences for countries in the Third World have resulted from the imposition of neo-liberal economic policies. In Africa such policies have extended to hitherto untouched areas such as public utilities. Under Clare Short's leadership in what is now the DFID Ghana had to agree to the privatisation, or part-privatization of its water industry in order to receive aid (The Guardian, 23rd August 2003). It is within this political and economic framework that the report under consideration is analysed.

The report

The text is a report by independent consultants about the performance of certain European countries and western institutions in their aid programme to Mozambique. The 'programme aid partners' include 14 western countries, with the EU, the World

Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the G-20 (an NGO umbrella organisation) in the background. (Interestingly, nothing further is said about the NGO group.)

What the text clearly shows is the unequal power relationships between the partners and Mozambique. These inequalities are manifest in the content of the text, in the discursive way the text has been written, in the assumptions made and in silences in the text. The authors of the report, consultants Killick *et al*, are clear about this inequality. When deciding on performance criteria for the Mozambican government in the light of donor expectations, they state bluntly that:

‘it was stressed to us that capabilities and power relations between donors and government [i.e. the Mozambican government] are clearly asymmetrical in favour of donors. Thus, negotiations are not taking place on a level playing field.’ (Killick *et al*, 2005:35)

One way that this was demonstrated was through fundamental economic policies establishing the direction of the aid and ultimately of the Mozambican economy and society. There was very little overt resistance to the crucial question of which economic frameworks were to be used, the authors speculated, because local officials did not expect to be able to change such policies or trust the evaluation exercise to be open to opposing ideas.

‘Mozambique appears like many...aid-dependent countries, with the government apparently believing that its undoubted reliance on assistance means that it is not in a position to insist on its own priorities.’ (Killick *et al*, 2005:50)

Similarly when it came to assessing the partners’ performance, the consultants declared themselves

“uneasy about the extent to which the PAPP [Programme assistance partners’ performance assessment] processes are seen largely as matters for the donors, with the GoM [Government of Mozambique] somewhat passive.”(Killick *et al*, 2005:40)

This is in keeping with critical theorists' ideas of prevailing discourses representing hegemonic interests in society. Certain ideas and voices are heard while others are excluded. As shown above, the disprivileged will go so far as to adopt the discourses of the dominant strata in society. Gramsci asserts that while subordinate social groups do have their own ideas about how things are, such a group nevertheless

"for reasons of submission and intellectual subordination, in some instances [may have] adopted a conception which is not its own but is borrowed from another group" (Gramsci 1971:327).

One expression of Mozambican dissent was through its parliament. Though powerless in relation to donor policies and subject to pressures by the government, it made overt its opposition at having to rush legislation through about donor-inspired policies. A major bone of contention was pressure for the ‘large number of privatizations’ put through the parliament (Killick *et al*, 2005:37).

Textual analysis

There are further indications in the report to show the extent of the inequalities of power between Mozambique and its European and American partners. The main purpose of this paper is to explore whether textual analyses of the report can suggest meanings which may be hidden on a superficial reading. This is despite the fact that in recent decades the confidence with which definitive meanings can be decipherable in texts is contested. Some have argued that a text is not in any way an independent work. Once a text is 'out in the open', it can be subject to many interpretations. There is no one fixed meaning that can be attributed to it, as it is a compilation of references from other texts – both for the writer and the reader (Barthes 1977). Some meanings can become privileged and taken for granted over others. Texts can be 'sites of struggle' where different interests will seek to impose their own versions of reality (Mumby & Clair 1997:182). This report will be shown to represent one among other possible interpretations of reality; one which is conducive to the interests of the donors rather than to those of Mozambique.

Technical rationality

Foucault's idea of texts being epistemic – part of the accepted norms of the time as to what counts as knowledge and what is epistemologically valid – is useful here (Foucault 1981). His concept of the 'archaeology' of knowledge includes the idea that specific *epistèmes* are particular to specific epochs. In this modern period there is an emphasis on rationality: dealing with observable, measurable objects that are verifiable – imposed on the knowing subject and prior to all experience. Technical values providing useful knowledge is valued over 'commentaries' (Foucault 1981:55).

Habermas' notion of 'technical' reasoning makes a similar point. It is an instrumental rationality, the focus being on control to achieve required ends as against

"the attainment of a possible consensus among actors in the framework of a self-understanding derived from tradition (Habermas 1968/71:310).

In a balanced system both types of reasoning would operate jointly. Instead technical reasoning is the dominant rationality, aided by

'the empirical-analytic sciences [which] disclose reality specifically with regard to technical control that under specified conditions is possible everywhere and at all times' (Habermas 1968/71:195).

From the start knowledge is pre-determined. What is epistemologically, normatively and ethically acceptable in this epoch is made visible as 'knowledge' (Alvesson and Deetz 1996:200).

The report bears these ideas out in terms of its 'scientism'. It is based on 'aggregated responses of...questionnaire responses' designed around a performance assessment matrix, on the study of relevant background documents and on interviews with 'relevant' parties (Killick *et al*, 2005:4). The authors acknowledge the superficiality of their conclusions because of the brief time available to conduct the interviews. This is manifest in the vagueness of the information obtained, despite the technical language and graphs, designed presumably to demonstrate scientifically acceptable, measurable and verifiable information.

Scientific discourse, is used to assess the partners' contributions to Mozambican aid in terms of the range of 'aid modalities' - principally general budget support and project aid. Their share of aid to each modality was calculated and from this a table produced showing the amount given by each country (Killick *et al*, 2005:6, Graph 1). There follows another table in which the sectors to which aid is given are mapped, based on the reports of the various donor countries (Killick *et al*, 2005:7, Graph 2).

The report then contains 'future perspectives' for the overall portfolio of aid. These future intentions contain statements as vague as 'some increase' for 6 countries (not quantified in every instance), 'increase as a possibility' for other countries and a decrease (with no quantification) by one donor (Killick *et al*, 2005:6). On the basis of this information and statements of the donors' future intentions, predictions are made about aid effectiveness in the future. One can argue that even in its own terms this report is deficient in detail and the classifications not refined enough to be meaningful.

Excluded knowledge

Where information is entirely lacking is about how the aid was implemented, its effects on the local population and their views on it. Local views are generally not there. The few official Mozambican views there were, as suggested earlier, are not necessarily reliable. People may have felt intimidated or disempowered to disagree with an evaluation by the donors. A whole category of 'other' knowledge germane to an assessment of the effectiveness of the aid is absent. The views of the urban and rural populace are outside what are considered relevant parameters for the knowledge required in this context. The report uses inadequate and, some might argue, spurious statistics about aid; it completely ignores questions of effectiveness on the ground and the views of its recipients. The report is nevertheless considered legitimate as an official document, as an appraisal report and as a valid basis for future action.

Foucault has described what we call the division between true and false knowledge, as the 'will to truth'. He claimed that what has governed our will to know is a system of exclusion - 'a historical, modifiable, and institutionally constraining system' (Foucault 1981:54). He argued that this knowledge is reinforced institutionally and by a range of practices to do with the production and dissemination of knowledge. It sets the parameters of that knowledge, its procedures, classification and ordering as well as the doctrines and assumptions on which that knowledge is made valid - the 'order of discourse' in which the knowledge is formed and produced (preface to Foucault 1981:48).

This is an epistemological analysis about what counts as knowledge, how it is acquired, and its relationship with prevailing power structures. As well as legitimating what does count as knowledge, it determines what can be ignored. Foucault argues that prohibitions on discourse are powerful. We do not have the right to say everything, and some are excluded from the right to say anything. Identities are wrought and strengthened through discourse and its silences - in other words, through who is speaking and who is not. Despite apparent respect and freedom for discourse, fear results in prohibitions, barriers, thresholds and limits set up to remove the most dangerous aspects of the richness of discourse and to order and control it (Foucault 1981).

‘There is a rarefaction...of the speaking subjects; none shall enter the order of discourse if he does not satisfy certain requirementsnot all the regions of discourse are equally open and penetrable....’ (Foucault 1981:61-62).’

Foucault describes these parameters and prescriptions as a 'violence that we do to things, or in any case a practice that we impose on them' (preface to Foucault 1981:50). He described knowledge as ritualised discourses, with excluded knowledge as 'buried significance'.

Secret knowledge

There is an issue regarding exclusions in terms of the powerful as well as the weak. In this report there seem to be two key players who are not as visible as the other players. Firstly, the World Bank, which did not figure prominently in the evaluations of donor performance and which was reported as having only a few joint procedures with the other partners or with the Mozambican government (Killick *et al*, 2005). Yet we are told that in 2004 a late 'large up-front World Bank disbursement' rescued the level of aid, which had been 'limited' for the first two thirds of the year (Killick *et al*, 2005:34). The IMF is barely mentioned. It was not one of the partner institutions but is mentioned in the report as having 'a large area of common interest...as regards macroeconomic management' and there being 'substantial efforts' to co-ordinate its programme assistance with the partners (Killick *et al*, 2005:43). No details of such co-operations are given in the report.

Stiglitz has written about the secrecy of the IMF and its lack of accountability for policies that have affected much of the world's population. Far from being transparent, the IMF has operated to prevent citizens from participating in discussions on economic policies the IMF was demanding, and has also denied them knowledge of what agreements were being made. Stiglitz (2002) claimed that this secrecy extended to withholding information from the World Bank, their partners, as well as from the US Congress.

Fairclough & Hardy address issues of secrecy in terms of a text's transparency. Has it been written making the actors and processes visible, or have these been hidden through abstraction? Are how things happen, who drives them, the successes and importantly the failures, masked? The authors have called this style of abstraction 'nominalization' and emphasise that it is a way of concealing power relations in the concepts, policies and events a text is describing (Fairclough & Hardy 1997:148).

In the text in question there are countless examples of nominalisation, which hide who is responsible for decisions. In the summary at the beginning of the report, for example, abstract nouns are employed in the text, hiding the processes and the actors involved. The authors write that they found 'clear and strong support' for increasing the share of direct budget support in total aid with regard to Mozambican perceptions (p1). We do not know who in Mozambique had this awareness; was it only those interviewed or were more widely held views represented, and were there any reservations about the support or conditions attached to it?

We are also told that there 'was awareness of some risks...and the desirability, therefore, of a gradual transition' (p1). Again we do not know if these are the same people who supported it

initially, or whether they are different people. One of the consequences of this type of discourse is that the sense of process gets lost. What also gets lost is the power dynamic: who has been influential over whom; what arguments have been won and lost and with what consequences for the donors and for Mozambican institutions.

Binary oppositions

Theories by Derrida, drive home further the imbalance of power evidenced in the text between Mozambique and its western donors. Derrida has also contested the notion that texts have single, fixed meanings. His concept of 'supplementarity' attacks the way binary opposites are treated in western writings in that they are always posed as a positive and negative - good/bad; strong/weak; male/female. The positive is always regarded as the strong factor - the driving force which determines what happens. Derrida has shown that with a 'patient and minutely philological *'explication de texte'*' this is not always the case (Culler 1983:23). Sometimes it is the negative, supposedly 'weaker' factor that is more powerful and is driving the 'stronger' one, showing a different, covert meaning in the text (Derrida 1972/81). This can result in changes in the meaning of the situation or concept and in the terms themselves. An extreme interpretation is that 'because meaning is not fixed, all textuality is infinitely interpretable, and all texts are composed of an endless freeplay of meanings...' (Wolfreys 1998:66).

However, it can be argued that there is very little 'freeplay of meanings' from the point of view of Mozambique. The disempowerment of Mozambique seems to be outside Derrida's concept of supplementarity as there do not appear to be any strengths in its weak position. A closer analysis might uncover some, but there seems to be a situation here of almost complete weakness on the one hand, and strong, unmitigated power on the other, exercised as the report shows, in capricious and self-serving ways.

What is clearly portrayed in the report are two negatives - each acting as a driving force in favour of the donors and against Mozambique. This is apparent when the question arises as to whether the donors should give more of their aid in direct budget support to the government of Mozambique, or whether there should be more aid through bi-lateral agreements. The authors of the report are in favour of more aid in direct budget support in order to achieve more harmonisation among the donors and greater control over them. Where donors act independently, planning is hindered because donors do not list their contributions in full detail and because the predictability of disbursements was 'still unsatisfactory' (Killick *et al*, 2005:33).

From the point of view of the Mozambican government, the options constitute a double-edged sword. If the government chooses bi-lateral aid, it is more subject to the vagaries and different interpretations of common agreements by each donor country (Killick *et al*:10). This would seriously hinder its planning for the future, more than would harmonisation, which itself has been shown to be unreliable and indeterminate (Killick *et al*:34). Another disadvantage would be an increased administrative burden on the government which it can ill afford (Killick *et al*:17).

More aid in the form of direct budgetary support might be of more help to the Mozambican government in terms of planning and negotiation, despite continuing lack of co-ordination among the donors. However there was

'a perceived danger of "ganging up" by donors, as greater coordination among them strengthens their already powerful bargaining capability.' (Killick *et al*:33)

They could stop disbursements if they felt that Mozambique was not performing adequately, which would do nothing to mitigate the existing asymmetrical power position. One risk mentioned for the donors was that of 'fiduciary risk' - that the aid fed into the general budget would not find its way to previously agreed targets (Killick *et al*:40). However this is a different order of risk from the ones facing a society dependent on outside aid.

It is clear that Mozambique is disadvantaged whichever option it takes. The consultants' solution was one that would not change the situation substantially. They recommended that the country retain a mixed portfolio of aid modalities but under the rubric of certain principles previously agreed (Killick *et al*:46-7). In one paragraph, however, the consultants try to justify the situation. Having acknowledged that power relations were 'clearly asymmetrical in favour of donors', they argue:

'Nevertheless [sic], there was recognition that the performance indicators for the government are related to desirable reforms, and to other activities that the government has to learn to do better.' (Killick *et al*:35)

Rather than trying to find a serious solution to this disempowering situation for Mozambique the consultants justify the position by blaming the Mozambican government for its inadequacies. Mozambique is thereby made accountable to the donors rather than the other way round.

The accountability of weak nations to strong western institutions has been highlighted by Stiglitz (2002). For the IMF, that the strength and scope of the global market system had turned the concept of accountability on its head. Third world countries had in many cases been afraid to question IMF policies that were wreaking economic devastation and poverty on their economies, in case they lost funding. Rather, it was they who had to be accountable to the IMF in order to acquire or keep their funding. Ethiopia forfeited IMF funds because it would not follow the IMF's 'formula', despite the fact that the economic policies implemented by the Ethiopian government made sense in terms of raising the living standards of its people in a situation where there were droughts and starvation (Stiglitz 2002).

Deconstruction of 'aid'

Derrida's concept of '*différance*', (the ceaseless differing from and 'deferral' of the meaning of any word or phrase to other words and phrases in the same and in other texts) may be more applicable in the case of Mozambique. Like Barthes he argued that *différance* offered limitless possibilities for interpretation (Derrida 1976). In 1992 Derrida, basing his ideas on a short story by Richard Jefferies titled 'Snowed Up', analysed the term 'gift', and what it entailed in the particular social context of the story (Wolfreys 1998). Derrida showed that the giving of the gift was never just a giving. Implied in the act was a structure similar to other forms of economic exchange. In the act of giving

“there is suggested and already in place the possibility, the implication of a necessary return and of indebtedness” (Wolfreys 1998:82).

This is an apt analogy to the term ‘aid’ here. Deconstructing ‘aid’ in this context shows a complete submission by Mozambique to western hegemonic institutions. It includes acceptance of the lack of consultation and feedback from the recipients. Policy is not even on the table for discussion. The only permissible discourse appears to be based on a 'neo-liberal' economic global system. The authors regard it as 'positive' that there is no serious controversy about the direction of development policy, and recommend that the government should take the lead in working out an assistance strategy with its donor partners (Killick *et al*:51).

They appear to ignore earlier statements about Parliament's opposition to legislation rushing through a large number of privatisations, particularly with regard to the cashew nut industry (Killick *et al*:37-40). The authors ignore their own reservations about the reasons for Mozambican officials' lack of disagreement about the policy orientation of the partner institutions. Most telling from the authors' standpoint is the admission that their brief was about implementation rather than about policy, and that they therefore 'did not ask specifically about such possible conflicts' (Killick *et al*:38).

This total acceptance of a neo-liberal economic policy, including privatisation, is a different kind of silence from the silence of Mozambican voices. The lack of the need to discuss policy matters is a kind of 'violence' - a violence to the consideration of alternative ideas about economic policy, and the exclusion of other, possibly more valid knowledge (Foucault 1981:50). One reason why the consultants could not find a strong solution to overcome Mozambique's difficult position *vis-à-vis* the partners, may have been their over-arching assumption of what were and were not permissible ideas - Foucault's concept of 'rarefaction' (Foucault 1981:61-62).

Stiglitz would support such a ‘deconstruction’. He argues that the ideology of the free market was strengthened throughout the world in the 1980s under the regimes of Reagan in the US and Thatcher in the UK. Powerful international institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank imposed these ideas on third world countries. Possible disagreements between the IMF and World Bank were minimised by a purge of economists at the World Bank who had had as their main goal the elimination of poverty. They were replaced by those believing that the solution for developing countries was free markets. The ideological fervour with which this was pursued militated against free discussion. Stiglitz describes how when he first dealt with the IMF he saw how their policies were imposed on countries without considering the effects on those societies.

"Rarely did I see thoughtful discussion and analyses of the consequences of alternative policies. There was a single prescription. Alternative opinions were not sought. Open, frank discussion was discouraged- there was no room for it. Ideology guided policy prescriptions and countries were expected to follow the IMF guidelines without debate" (Stiglitz 2002: xiv).

Conclusion

The report reveals the continuing disempowerment of a country in sub-Saharan Africa at the hands of western countries and global institutions. In colonial times, traditional economies and social and political systems were subverted in colonies where white settlers were competing economically with African farmers, where African labour was needed for European industry or where traditional rulers would not accept colonial rule. Disruption to indigenous societies was particularly strong in Mozambique because of the forced labour policies to man foreign-owned plantations. Outside these imperatives, traditional systems were left alone, although indigenous economies suffered because of a lack of able-bodied males.

What this report has shown is a more encompassing 'colonisation' by the continuing ascendancy of western institutions and their overwhelming ability to call the tune because of the aid they distribute. Disturbing for those concerned by oppressive aspects of neo-liberal economic policies is the assumption that this is the only possible way forward for the country and for the aid policies on which it is dependent.

Unlike many other texts, the discourse in this report is less equivocal than either Barthes or Foucault have argued. Foucault's argument against the independence of authors in the face of epochal epistemological conventions and the subservience of knowledge to hegemonic interests seems to be incontrovertible here. Derrida's deconstructive ideas work in relation to what 'aid' means, but his concept of 'supplementarity' does not seem to be translatable to a situation where the strong are overwhelmingly so and the weak utterly powerless.

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