

Nkomati Accord finally at a dead end?

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ne Frelimo Government signed the accord largely because it believed it would end South African aid to the rebels and that without this aid they could either be defeated or contained.

It has surprised almost everybody that the rebels have remained as effective as ever — with weapons and supplies captured from the government forces and received secretly from their other foreign backers.

Frelimo might well take the view now that if the MNR can operate effectively without South African aid there is no point in maintaining the Nkomati Accord, the signing of which damaged its prestige in the rest of Africa and the Third World.

It might as well allow the ANC to resume operations from Mozambique and get back into good international standing.

But if it did so South Africa would probably again launch anti-ANC raids across the border. More important, South Africa would have an incentive to resume and even increase its support to the MNR in an effort to topple Frelimo and install a government it could rely on to keep the ANC out.

The Frelimo government believes South Africa would like to see it replaced by an MNR regime that could be influenced from Pretoria, failing which it will continue to destabilise the Frelimo one.

South African analysts, however, think Pretoria's attitude is basically that it doesn't care what government is in charge in Mozambique as long as it bars the ANC. It would, in addition, like that government to be politically friendly and economically co-operative but that is not a prerequisite.

The South Africans argue that there can be no military solution in Mozambique, only a political one. They say they have been trying to bring the two sides together for talks aimed at such a settlement.

They might well take the view that imposing an MNR government on Mozambique would solve nothing, for Frelimo would simply take the MNR's place as the guerillas in the bush.

And they would probably be even more effective at that than the MNR, for they would have wide international support and safe bases in friendly neighbouring countries.

Pretoria could hardly relish the prospect of aiding an embattled MNR government in these circumstances.

While the Nkomati Accord remains sidelined, so do the benefits that were foreseen in the euphoria of its signing.

South African businessmen who flocked into Maputo in search of investment opportunities have largely stopped going. Apart from a hesitant South African interest in a tourist project at Inhaca, the expected tourist flood has not materialised.

Little private investment from South Africa has followed the Nkomati Accord, and there has been not much more from the Government. Pretoria has given some help in the running of the Mozambique transport system, but the country's vital railways and harbours continue to operate far below their former capacity.

A feasibility study has been done on a major project for upgrading the Maputo harbour — which now handles only about one-sixth of the goods that passed through it before independence — but finance for the scheme is lacking.

What is holding up this development is what is retarding the country as a whole — the war with the MNR. No private investors outside Mozambique and few governments or international institutions want to put money into projects that stand little chance of success as long as the fighting continues.