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## Swaziland: In Transition to What?

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The tiny kingdom of Swaziland, sandwiched between apartheid South Africa and revolutionary Mozambique, is in the midst of a fratricidal power struggle that threatens the delicately balanced legacy left the country by King Sobhuza II, the astute monarch whose 61-year reign ended with his death in August 1982.

The battle for supremacy within the royal family is being fought against a backdrop of intrigue, power, and tradition. It has been a conflict marked thus far by the dismissal of a prime minister and the ouster of the acting head of state; the removal of several cabinet members and the detention of lawyers, civil servants, and various members of the royal family; and the emergence for the first time in years of an active if still embryonic opposition movement. Bhekimpi Dlamini, a conservative, is the current prime minister, but the real power appears to be Prince Mfanasibili, a traditionalist and masterful political operative. As the struggle continues, the country Sobhuza left in peace is wracked with internal dissent and, more ominously, a cloud hangs over his successor, young Prince Makhosetive.

### A Unique African State

When the continent of Africa was carved up at European bargaining tables in the nineteenth century, Swaziland was the rare exception to the general pattern of creating political entities by splitting and combining various ethnic groups. The Swazis' common language and culture have bound them into a genuine nation freed of the tensions of tribal conflict which have affected so many other parts of Africa.

The Swazis were part of the great migratory wave of Bantu-speaking Nguni people that swept down from central Africa during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. They initially settled in an area between the Lubombo Mountains and the Indian Ocean near Delagoa Bay in Mozambique, which they shared for nearly two

centuries with the Tembe people. As clans broke away from the parent group, they would take the name of the clan leader. One of the earliest to do so was that of Dlamini, the forefather of the present Swazi royal family. Dlamini and his people lived around the Tembe River near what is now Maputo. His immediate successors conquered many of the other clans along the Lubombo Mountains and began to spread south and west, eventually settling near what is now Nhlanguano in the southwestern part of present-day Swaziland. The tribe was then led by King Ngwane III, and today the Swazis refer to themselves as "bakaNgwane," the people of Ngwane. Sobhuza I ruled from 1815 to 1840, and by the time of his death Swaziland stretched westward to what are now the South African cities of Ermelo and Carolina, east to the Lubombo Mountains, and south to the Pongola River.

Sobhuza was succeeded by Mswati II. When the Europeans arrived, they called the territory "Swati's Land," and later Swaziland. During the reign of Mswati, the Afrikaners, who in 1836 had trekked north to establish an independent government free from British influence, began to move into the Swazi territory. South Africa claims that in 1846 Mswati reached an agreement with the Afrikaners ceding the ownership of a large portion of Swazi territory, including the present-day districts of Lydenburg, Middleburg, Barberton, and Carolina. Whether Mswati actually signed such a document remains in dispute.

This was a period of bitter struggle between the Afrikaners and the British, and each side attempted to gain strategic leverage over the other by seizing territories belonging to the various indigenous people of the area. The Swazis maintained a cordial but cautious relationship with both groups, but considered the British to be the lesser evil. Desperate for an outlet to the sea, the Afrikaner government of the Transvaal Republic eventually laid claim to the entire Swazi

kingdom in the hope of developing a rail link from Pretoria through Swaziland to Kosi Bay along the Natal coast.

When the British annexed the Transvaal in 1877 and subsequently undertook to govern Swaziland as a protectorate, the Swazis obtained assurance of their independence through an unusual episode. One of the tribes in the area, the Bapedi, refused to acknowledge British authority, and positioned themselves in an almost inaccessible stronghold deep within the mountains. Unable to dislodge the Bapedi, the British called on the Swazis, who were renowned for their fighting skill. Following the defeat of the Bapedi by the Swazi warriors, the British gave a written guarantee of independence to the Swazi nation. The agreement did not establish, however, precisely how much territory the nation would include.

The British seizure of the Transvaal was soon countered by a powerful Afrikaner counteroffensive, which culminated in the Convention of Pretoria of 1881, and the restoration of the Transvaal Republic. The Convention was the product of intense negotiations between the British and the Afrikaners. It contained 24 articles, the first of which defined the boundary between the Transvaal and Swaziland. The British position was based on the recommendations of a Royal Commission which had been appointed in 1879 to explore the boundary question. The Komati Valley, constituting what is now the South African homeland of KaNgwane and vast tracts of land north and west of the homeland, was the most disputed area. Although the commission allowed the Swazis to present their case, it eventually pressured King Mbandzeni to accept a less-than-favorable Swazi-Transvaal boundary. The areas of Komatipoort, Barberton, Carolina, and Ermelo—comprising nearly half of what had historically been considered Swazi territory—were now declared part of the Transvaal. In addition to the land lost, the Swazi community was severed almost in half, with the portion permanently residing in South Africa cut off from its cultural roots.

Despite the Convention, the Swaziland issue remained a source of friction between the Afrikaners and the British. The Afrikaners, still seeking to establish access to the ocean, continued to press the British for the incorporation of Swaziland into the Transvaal. Even when the British eventually agreed (in 1895) to hand over the administration of Swaziland to the Transvaal government, they denied the Afrikaners a coastal outlet by unilaterally proclaiming the areas of Sambane and Mbikiza to be parts of Zululand and thus under the administration of the British colony of Natal. Sambane and Mbikiza are located in what is considered the Ingwavuma region of KwaZulu, and descendants of the first Swazi people have lived between the Ingwavuma and Pongola rivers ever since the main body of their people moved into what is now Swaziland. Aware that the tribes in the area were Swazi by origin and had paid allegiance to the Swazi kings since the arrival of the Dlaminis, the British, in previous discussions with the Zululand and Transvaal administrators, had intimated that the terri-

ories should be returned to Swaziland. Their change of posture in the 1895 agreement added a troublesome issue to the agendas of future Swazi-British discussions.

Meanwhile, something far more ominous was occurring within what remained of Swaziland, as a stream of white settlers persuaded King Mbandzeni to grant mineral or land concessions. Between 1886 and 1894, the majority of the country was turned over to concessionaires in the belief that no titles or rights were being passed with the concession grants. Since the Swazis regarded land as belonging to the whole nation, they had no concept of private ownership. Accordingly, they did not consider that land concessions might be regarded as a grant in perpetuity. Pressure from the concessionaires, both English and Afrikaners, led the British to issue an Order in Council in 1903 and a subsequent Land Partition Proclamation (1907) which divested the Swazis of title to 67 percent of the land area of Swaziland. Thus, by 1910 the nation of Swaziland had been virtually dismantled as a consequence of treaties, proclamations, and concession agreements, and the Swazis themselves were confined to 32 "native areas." Moreover, as the move to form the Union of South Africa began, a recurring agenda item was the incorporation of all the British protectorates into South Africa.

### Sobhuza's Vision

In December 1921, Sobhuza II became the Ngwenyama (Lion) of Swaziland, beginning the longest reign of any monarch in the kingdom's history. His vision from the beginning was to reestablish Swaziland's political independence, reunite the Swazi people artificially divided by the boundary decisions of the 1880s, and undo the pattern of land ownership inside the country which gave non-Swazis virtual control over Swaziland's economic destiny. Toward these ends, Sobhuza led a deputation to London in 1922 to meet with King George V, but the British government indicated that it was not prepared to reopen the land issue. Undaunted, Sobhuza then decided to initiate legal action to challenge the validity of the original partitioning of Swazi territory. His appeal to the Privy Council was dismissed on the grounds that the Order in Council under which Swazi land was expropriated had the same force "as an Act of State, which cannot be questioned in a Court of Law." Following a 1940 appeal by Sobhuza to King George VI for more land for his people, the British government decided to purchase various concessions to be known as the "Swaziland Land Settlement." Beginning with this half-loaf, the Swazis established the "Lifa Fund" to buy back more land. Slowly, Sobhuza began to regain his lost kingdom.

After the Afrikaner National Party won control of the South African government in 1948 and introduced the policy of "apartheid" and ethnic homelands for the African population, the Swazis living in the Transvaal were assigned to the KaNgwane homeland which abuts the northern and western boundaries of Swaziland. Although the Afrikaner government continued to

press the UK for the rights to all of Swaziland for another decade, the British instead made Swaziland an independent state in 1968.

### The Border Controversy

By 1968, Sobhuza had achieved two key goals: Swazi independence and the restoration of much of the land that had been lost to concessionaires. Now he turned his attention to adjusting his borders with South Africa. In the 10 years that followed independence, Sobhuza raised the issue of border readjustments with South Africa on numerous occasions. By 1976, for reasons that had little to do with Sobhuza's entreaties, South Africa had decided that in order to legitimize its homelands and thereby divest itself of its African majority, the homelands should be given "independence."

By the end of 1979, the homelands of Transkei, Bophuthatswana, and Venda had been granted nominal sovereignty, and South Africa had begun discussions with Swaziland concerning the feasibility of transferring the homeland of KaNgwane to Sobhuza. Although such a transfer could be the realization of his last and perhaps most cherished dream, the King balked. If, Sobhuza mused, South Africa was sufficiently committed to its homeland policy to return KaNgwane to Swaziland after occupying it for nearly 100 years, why should it not also return the Swazi territory in Ingwavuma? South Africa indicated that discussions would have to be held with Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, the leader of the KwaZulu homeland in which Ingwavuma was located. In late 1979, Buthelezi said that he was prepared to review the issue "for the sake of good neighborliness," and proposed that a tripartite meeting be held to discuss the Swazi claim.

On June 14, 1982, South Africa's minister of cooperation and development, Dr. Pieter Koornhof, announced to the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly that the Ingwavuma district in the north of KwaZulu and the entire homeland of KaNgwane would become part of Swaziland, and that the people in the affected area would become Swazi citizens, as soon as a written agreement could be finalized. It was, Koornhof said, an unprecedented case of "bringing together what belongs together." The transfer would nearly double Swaziland's area and would increase its population of 600,000 almost threefold. Even more important to the Swazis, Ingwavuma offered the kingdom access to the sea and a potential harbor at Khosi Bay. It also would make possible the revival of a deeply significant ritual—the collection of water from the Indian Ocean for the iNcwala festival, the celebration of the first fruits of the harvest.

Koornhof's announcement, and the proclamation four days later abolishing the KaNgwane Legislative Assembly and excising the Ingwavuma district from the KwaZulu administration, unleashed a firestorm of criticism that extended far beyond southern Africa. At the heart of the controversy was the belief that Swaziland had turned its back on the liberation struggle and the principles of the Organization of African Uni-

ty, and had become a willing accomplice in South Africa's effort to divest its black population of its South African citizenship.

Throughout the developing fracas, the position of the OAU was most curious. Libya's Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi, designated to succeed Kenya's President Daniel arap Moi as the chairman of the organization, was facing the potential embarrassment of not being able to secure a quorum at the annual summit scheduled to take place in Tripoli in August 1982. Abd al-Ati al-Obeidi, Libya's secretary for external relations, was dispatched to Mbabane (the capital of Swaziland) and indicated that Libya supported Swaziland's efforts to incorporate the disputed territories. The Libyan position was transparently designed to ensure Swaziland's attendance at the summit meeting, but it also exacerbated tensions within the OAU. Somalia, which has for decades been locked in a struggle with Ethiopia for control of Ethiopia's Somali-inhabited Ogaden area, also backed Swaziland, as did Morocco, which seeks to incorporate the former Spanish Sahara. Although the inviolability of colonial borders is perhaps the most important principle of the OAU, the organization remained mute on the proposed land transfer. (See "Where Does the OAU Go From Here?" in *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 3, September 1, 1982.)

For its part, Swaziland argued that the issue was one of unification rather than incorporation and that the ceding of KaNgwane and Ingwavuma was simply the recognition of historical fact. The official position of the Swazi government was that the OAU recognized the special relationship between South Africa and Swaziland and that the organization "does not and cannot, under its charter, object to any contacts and dealings with South Africa that are designed to improve the lot of the Black man."

Not all in Swaziland agreed that the land transfer was in the country's best interest. King Sobhuza and Mabandla Dlamini, the Swazi prime minister, clashed over the issue and its implications for the nation shortly after the South African proposal was announced.

### The Sobhuza Era Ends

On August 21, 1982, King Sobhuza met with his ministers and advisers who were returning from their various missions to other African states in an effort to garner support for the land deal. Suddenly the King asked everyone to leave except for his doctor, the minister of health. "I am going," the King said. "Where are you going?" the doctor asked. The King smiled, raised his hand in a gesture, and died.

Until the very last, Sobhuza was obsessed with reclaiming Swaziland's lost kingdom. According to the King's senior liaison officer, Sobhuza sometimes worked all night without sleep, writing with his own hand a thick volume of information on the border issue. "The pace at which he was working made it look as if he knew he was about to leave us," the officer said. "It was as if he was working to complete a program with a deadline."

Sobhuza's body, wrapped in the skins of freshly

slaughtered oxen, was buried in a mountainside cave in the vicinity of Lobamba royal palace in an area known as Sheba's Breasts. An official mourning period of indefinite length was ordered.

Under Swazi custom, the Queen Mother acts as regent following the death of a king until a successor is chosen and comes of age. Dzeliwe, Sobhuza's most senior wife, had been named the Ndlovukazi (Great She-Elephant) shortly before he died. Thus, she became the Queen Mother and acting head of state. The elders of the Swazi nation then began to deliberate over who was to become the future king.

### Early Transition Stresses

Swaziland had long been regarded as one of the most stable, yet fragile, governments of Africa. Sobhuza had carefully steered the country between the siren call of rampant modernization and the hypnotic lull of traditionalism. Yet, despite his efforts to ensure an orderly transition, the Swazi ruling elite began to unravel after his death as the inherent contradictions between the traditionalists and the moderates in the power structure became more obvious. While in broad terms the struggle was between conservative and progressive elements, it also involved class factionalism, institutional conflict, and generational differences.

The current crisis can be traced back to November 1979, when King Sobhuza shocked the nation by appointing Prince Mabandla Dlamini, then an obscure plant manager with no previous political experience, as the country's new prime minister. Sobhuza initially felt that Mabandla's inexperience would be an asset, reasoning that the country needed a prime minister who was apolitical and had a reputation for integrity. The patronage system of traditional Swazi life had given rise to pervasive corruption. Mabandla's appointment was intended to introduce modern managerial skills into the governing process. Mabandla, however, approached his duties in a far more conscientious way than anyone had anticipated. Soon after taking office, he established a commission of inquiry with a broad mandate to search out corruption in government and the various parastatals.

Mabandla's appointment and his establishment of the commission of inquiry were popular with most Swazis, but the new prime minister's actions upset elements within the ruling class, particularly when his probe began focusing on the dealings of certain key figures. At first, Sobhuza supported Mabandla with public statements emphasizing that corruption and other abuses of office caused military coups. But when Mabandla began to investigate Prince Mfanisibili, a powerful member of the Liqoqo (the King's inner council of advisers) and then sought to subpoena the files of Tibiyo Taka Ngwane (the Swazi Development Fund), the prime minister became a problem. Tibiyo is the principal vehicle for capital accumulation in Swaziland. It is the depository for all monies received from mining royalties, real estate holdings, and various joint venture arrangements. Despite Tibiyo's enormous accumulation of wealth, none of the revenue accrues to the ministry of finance; instead, it is main-

tained for the royal family. Tibiyo is not accountable to government, nor are its operations public.

Mabandla's investigation of Mfanisibili and Tibiyo meant that he had to take on Sishayi Nxumalo, Tibiyo's ambitious and well-connected managing director. As head of the single most important Swazi enterprise in the country, Nxumalo was regarded as "the second most powerful man in Swaziland." Nxumalo is reported to have told the King that if the latter did not control the commission, it would "pluck out the hairs of your testicles one by one." Subsequently, Sobhuza curtailed the investigations on the grounds that the commission "acted like the police." It was a major setback for Mabandla, and raised doubts in Sobhuza about the prime minister. Mabandla now found himself a reformist with very little support from within the power structure; he was cut off from the King and surrounded by very powerful enemies steeped in the art of Swazi political infighting. Tensions already existed in the Liqoqo, and while Mabandla was not a member, he managed to exacerbate those tensions by failing to understand the limitations on his power. The King realized the need for change, but he was also extremely conservative and not inclined to permit his largely untested prime minister to undo the traditional base of Swazi society.

Yielding to the pressures of his advisers, and looking for ways to rein in a prime minister who seemed to be marching to a different drum, Sobhuza made two important decisions. In June 1980, he appointed as foreign minister one of Mabandla's principal opponents, Richard Dlamini, a key member of the Liqoqo, and later, in June 1982, he formalized the role of the Liqoqo (which until then had been an informal family advisory council to the King), making it the Supreme Council of State and giving it virtually unlimited power "to overrule any law or decision in the national interest." Under the new dispensation, all significant policy decisions are made by the Liqoqo. Members are appointed by the King or the Queen Mother, apparently on the recommendations of other Liqoqo members. In addition to advising the King, and establishing policy, the Liqoqo may also implement its own decisions, thereby effectively circumventing the prime minister, cabinet, and parliament. No issue seems to fall outside the scope of the Liqoqo and once a decision is taken, getting it reversed is virtually impossible.

What ultimately led to the formalization of the Liqoqo and the eclipse of Mabandla was the prime minister's opposition to the South African border adjustment offer. Mabandla argued that the land deal would increase the country's economic burden and complicate its international relations. At one point the discussions between the prime minister and the King became so heated that Sobhuza told Mabandla that he should resign if he did not favor the incorporation of South African territories. Mabandla did not resign, but he was mortally wounded politically.

With Sobhuza's death, it was inevitable that the friction between Mabandla and the Liqoqo would erupt into open conflict. The Liqoqo took the first step, forc-

ing Dzeliwe, the Queen Mother, to confirm the Liqoqo as the Supreme Council of State and to appoint Prince Sozisa as the "Authorized Person" to act as head of state in those instances where she could not. Both moves were designed to reduce the power and status of the Queen Mother and the prime minister. Behind the scene directing each step was Minister of Justice Polycarp Dlamini, an old and powerful member of the Liqoqo.

Mabandla could sense that the end game had begun, but he was determined to fight. Seeking to weaken and divide the Liqoqo, he proposed that Polycarp be appointed ambassador to the United States and persuaded the Queen Mother to endorse the plan. After a few days of uncertainty, the Liqoqo struck back. Alleging that the prime minister was attempting to circumvent its authority, the Liqoqo forced the Queen Mother to rescind Polycarp's appointment. Meanwhile, it was rumored that a coup attempt aimed at ousting Mabandla failed in early February 1983 when police loyal to the prime minister cordoned off Mbabane to prevent arms from entering the city. Although Mabandla denied that a coup had been attempted, his indefinite suspension of parliament and his last-minute cancellation of a scheduled appearance at a major economic development conference in Mbabane fueled speculation.

Whether there had been an attempted coup or not, Mabandla had different reasons for suspending parliament and cancelling appointments. He was hard at work on an address which the Queen Mother was to issue when parliament was reconvened. Mabandla hoped to use the power and prestige of the Queen Mother to reduce the authority of the Liqoqo and confer governmental supremacy on the prime minister and the cabinet. Then, a series of bizarre incidents began to occur. A leopard, something not seen in Swaziland in years, was shot on the grounds of the prime minister's residence. On succeeding nights a buck and a baboon were also shot. Many Swazis considered the appearance of wild animals in a populated area to be a bad omen. The leopard's skin was brought before the Queen Mother as an indication that the prime minister was tainted and that further association with him was dangerous.

The day before parliament was to reconvene, two members of the Liqoqo intercepted Mabandla's draft of the Queen Mother's speech as it was en route to her. The speech was rewritten, and the address given on the Queen Mother's behalf at the opening of parliament by Prince Sozisa, the Authorized Person, confirmed the Liqoqo as the Supreme Council of State. Outraged, Mabandla had Prince Mfanasibili and Chief Maseko, both key members of the Liqoqo, arrested on charges of issuing seditious statements in the presence of the Queen Mother and three other Liqoqo members. To prevent any collusion between the Liqoqo and the two arrested members, Mabandla refused to allow the chief justice to release Mfanasibili and Maseko on bail pending trial. Mabandla hoped to split the Liqoqo by having members give evidence against each other.

In the end, however, Mabandla overplayed his

hand. No member of the Liqoqo could afford to be seen associated with a frontal attack on the integrity of one of the basic institutions of the Swazi monarchy. Led by Dr. George Msibi and Prince Gabheni, the Liqoqo confronted the Queen Mother with Mabandla's sins, alleging that he had attempted to seize dictatorial powers by restricting the Supreme Council of State and limiting the power of the court. When she wavered, they purportedly threatened to use the army to remove Mabandla. The following day, March 19, 1983, an announcement appeared in the *Government Gazette* signed by the Queen Mother, "acting on the advice of the Liqoqo," relieving Prince Mabandla of his office. Mabandla at first refused to step down, but when he learned that he might be accused of high treason for seeking to abolish the Liqoqo and when it became obvious that he no longer had the support of his police force, the former prime minister slipped away to South Africa.

Glumly, Dzeliwe summoned the Swazi chiefs to her cattle kraal and sat disconsolate as Prince Sozisa named a more traditionalist figure, Prince Bhekimpi Dlamini, as the new prime minister. Unlike Mabandla, Bhekimpi enjoyed the support of the Liqoqo and was known to be a strong advocate of the land deal with South Africa. He had been among the first to approach Sobhuza about the land negotiations when South Africa left the Commonwealth and became a republic in 1961. He was also the leader of the Swazi delegation to the first constitutional talks in London in 1963.

### The Splintering of the Royal Family

Mabandla's fall from grace was only a prelude. Sobhuza had nominated Dzeliwe to act as regent and to hold the powers of kingship in trust until the new King was installed. According to Swazi tradition, power is shared by the King and the Queen Mother, who are symbolized by two powerful yet complementary animals. The King is known as the Ngwenyama or Lion—male, carnivorous, and fierce. The Queen Mother is known as the Ndlovukazi or Great She-Elephant—maternal, herbivorous, firm, and steady. Between them they rule the nation, each having a particular sphere of influence over the daily lives of the Swazi people. There is no right of succession in Swaziland. The new King is usually a young boy—one of many sons of the deceased—chosen by the senior elders of the tribe. When he becomes King, his mother rules with him as the Ndlovukazi. When the mother dies, the King generally chooses his senior wife to rule with him. On the King's death, the senior wife continues to rule until a new King is installed.

As the reigning monarch, Dzeliwe had patterned her statecraft after that of Sobhuza. Like him, she listened to the advice of the Liqoqo but did not consider herself bound by it. The Liqoqo, on the other hand, regarded the Queen Mother as an interim figure who was essentially expected to carry out its directives. As the Liqoqo grew more and more assertive, Dzeliwe became increasingly uncomfortable with her advisers and began to have serious misgivings about

the dismissal of Mabandla. Stories circulated that the Queen Mother was having dreams in which Sobhuza would appear and say, "I left a prime minister here. What have you done with him?"

The Liqoqo, seeking to consolidate its position following the ouster of Mabandla, confronted Dzeliwe with a document written in English transferring many of her functions to the Authorized Person, a senior member of the Liqoqo. On the grounds that she did not understand English, and that only three chiefs instead of the customary four were present to witness her signature, Dzeliwe refused to sign.

The immediate issue was the upcoming parliamentary elections. Under the Swazi electoral system, the Queen Mother is authorized to appoint 20 of the parliament's 70 members. Dzeliwe stood to gain a majority of supporters in the new parliament unless her powers were somehow diminished. The aim of the Liqoqo was to manipulate the electoral process in such a way as to assure its absolute supremacy over the governance of Swaziland.

When Dzeliwe refused to sign the document divesting her of power, and took steps to have the authority of the Liqoqo revoked, the Liqoqo was forced into drastic action. Dzeliwe's dismissal was announced on August 10, 1983 in a two-sentence legal notice signed by the Authorized Person and placed in the *Government Gazette*. In order to justify its actions, the Liqoqo ended months of speculation and announced that the future King would be Prince Makhosetive, a 15- or 16-year-old schoolboy whose name means "King of the Nation." The Liqoqo argued that, because a minor had been named as the future King, the child's mother was required under Swazi custom to serve as regent and Queen Mother. Since there can be but one Queen Mother, the Liqoqo ousted Dzeliwe, replacing her with Queen Ntombi, mother of Makhosetive.

Dzeliwe's removal splintered the royal family and the Liqoqo. Few could understand how it was possible for the Authorized Person to sign a document deposing the Queen Mother when he was supposed to act on her behalf and take instructions from her. Prince Gabheni, a member of the Liqoqo, denounced Dzeliwe's dismissal as unconstitutional and illegal.

For her part, Dzeliwe declared that she would fight her removal and that she would "rather die than leave my children in the hands of the Liqoqo." She refused to hand over the regalia of her office to her successor, which, under Swazi custom, meant that there could be no legitimate change in the regency. Backed by Prince Gabheni, she then called a meeting of the Swazi elders at the Royal Kraal to challenge her removal. Prince Bhekimpi, the prime minister, banned the meeting and said that anyone who supported Dzeliwe was guilty of treason, because they would be seeking to seize power from the heir apparent, Prince Makhosetive. The power of the Liqoqo was such that few of the elders were prepared to defy the ban.

Dzeliwe then instituted legal action in the High Court of Swaziland, arguing that the Liqoqo had no power under traditional law to depose her and that she remained regent until the official installation of

Makhosetive, which had not occurred. Douglas Lukhele, a Harvard-trained lawyer representing Dzeliwe in court, argued that Dzeliwe had revoked the powers of the Liqoqo before the latter dismissed her, and thus any action taken by that body had no legal validity. Moreover, he pointed out, the period of mourning for the death of King Sobhuza was not yet over, and under Swazi law and custom no transfer of regalia could take place at such a time. The Liqoqo responded that issues involving the royal family were outside the court's jurisdiction and should be heard in a Swazi traditional court if heard at all.

Fearing the court's ruling, Prince Sozisa issued a decree declaring the High Court incompetent to pronounce on Swazi law and custom. Two days before the judgment was due, Minister of Justice Polycarp Dlamini met with the chief justice to discuss the case. On August 24, the court announced that it would deliver no judgment, saying "it would not be in the interests of Swaziland for there to be a confrontation between the courts and the government on this issue."

Lukhele and Arthur Khoza, Dzeliwe's personal adviser and the permanent secretary for agriculture, were both arrested shortly before the court's announcement and remained in detention until March 1984. Prince Gabheni was dismissed from his cabinet post and membership in the Liqoqo in September 1983; his wife and daughter were arrested. On August 25, 1983, some 150 students of the normally placid University of Swaziland demonstrated in support of Queen Dzeliwe; at least 30 were arrested. On August 29, Prime Minister Bhekimpi responded with a speech warning that "children are only sent to school for educational purposes and not for politicization. Political matters are restricted to the duly chosen ones, not even the whole Swazi nation. Our role as a nation is to accept with gratitude the direction which the elders have mapped out for the country."

Initially, Ntombi was reluctant to assume the regency, arguing that she was still in mourning. She eventually accepted, however, and then signed the same document that Dzeliwe had refused. In the general elections that followed at the end of October, the Liqoqo virtually eliminated all opposition and candidates were elected who supported its conservative policies.

### Power Shifts Within the Liqoqo

Although the Liqoqo seemed to have firmly established itself as the supreme power in relation to the rest of the Swazi government, public opinion was another matter. There was a great deal of grass-roots anger at the removal of Dzeliwe. In an effort to legitimize its actions, the Liqoqo brought Prince Makhosetive home from Britain in early September 1983 to be shown to the nation.

The young Prince's visit was shrouded in mystery, however, and rumors circulated of assassination attempts against him and of the appearance of a traditional healer in Dorset (where the Prince was in school) in an effort to turn him against his mother and the Liqoqo. But the most devastating rumor was

that the Liqoqo had sent someone to Dzeliwe's kraal to steal the Queen Mother's regalia. According to the story, the man died of a heart attack as he entered the kraal. Many Swazis considered the incident proof that custom had been violated when Dzeliwe was ousted. Similar murmurings were heard when cyclone Domoina struck the country in January 1984, killing nearly 100 people and causing hundreds of millions of dollars worth of damage. For many Swazis, it was yet another sign that the gods were angry at the abuse of Swazi custom.

In early 1984, the Liqoqo found itself confronted by a growing dissident movement which seemed to be led by or at least have the support of some royal family members. On March 20, a coup attempt by two cabinet ministers, a member of parliament, and one prince was foiled by Bhekimpi and the power within the Liqoqo, Prince Mfanasibili. This reportedly was the third such attempt to unseat the Bhekimpi government.

Increasingly concerned by the growing unrest, the Liqoqo had attempted earlier in the month to placate its detractors by returning to Queen Ntombi the powers of which they had deprived her early in her reign. This step signalled that a power struggle was once again under way within the Liqoqo, and that Prince Sozisa, the Authorized Person, had lost strength. Earlier, in the campaign to remove Dzeliwe, Sozisa had said that, if necessary, he would "take things into my own hands and assume powers I do not have in order to keep this nation on the right path." He had done that in usurping the powers of Ntombi. Now, however, he had seen those same powers stripped from him. Of the three strongest figures in the Liqoqo—Prince Sozisa, Dr. George Msibi, and Prince Mfanasibili—it was primarily Mfanasibili who appeared to be orchestrating the body's activities.

The Authorized Person was not the first to confront Mfanasibili and lose. Both Mabandla and Dzeliwe had taken him on and both had been removed from power. Even Bhekimpi was feeling the heat, charging that some of the "ever so law-abiding Swazis have forgotten as to who is responsible for the monarchy." Meanwhile, a new personality with an old history was emerging—Sishayi Nxumalo, the former managing director of Tibiyo and since November 1983 the minister of finance. When it became clear that Mfanasibili was indirectly behind the collapse of Swaziland Chemical Industries, a major business enterprise which had been riddled with corruption and mismanagement, Nxumalo made his move. Addressing parliament in March 1984, Nxumalo all but named Mfanasibili as the person responsible for the failure of a major corporation and the loss of numerous jobs at a time when the economy was in desperate need of help. As skirmishing between the two continued, many felt that Mfanasibili had met his match. As one source said: "Nxumalo has never lost anything he has wanted."

Then, on June 8, Prime Minister Bhekimpi announced the dismissal, "in the public interest," of Nxumalo as well as Foreign Minister Richard Dlamini, the army chief of staff, and the commissioner of police. On June 11, the Liqoqo issued a statement

saying that the four men had tried to overthrow the monarchy. The next day, Nxumalo denounced the Liqoqo's words as "lies," and said that he had been fired because on June 5 he had ordered an investigation into a customs fraud in which senior members of the Liqoqo were implicated.

The fraud, said to amount to \$10.4 million, related to the Pretoria-dominated Southern African Customs Union, from which Swaziland derives a substantial portion of its income. Nxumalo's version of what had happened was given credence by the fact that on June 9, while in the midst of a crucial diplomatic tour of Europe, South African Foreign Minister Roelof ("Pik") Botha sent a telex to Bhekimpi urging him to agree to the appointment of an independent commission to investigate the fraud.

South Africa's concern may relate to more than the immediate customs union issue. Dlamini and Nxumalo have been on good terms with the Pretoria regime, and have reportedly encouraged the growth of a quiet alliance between Swaziland and South Africa. In particular, they played a key role in the land transfer negotiations, and helped bring into being a 1982 nonaggression agreement with South Africa (see below).

With little doubt, Mfanasibili was behind the dismissals. When Mabandla had once tried to investigate Mfanasibili's activities, he had been fired. After it became clear that Nxumalo knew too much, he too had to be removed. (Prior to his dismissal, the former finance minister had said that logs had been pushed onto a road in an attempt to assassinate him.) Mfanasibili has now emerged as the most powerful figure in post-Sobhuza Swaziland, but even he is vulnerable.

### The ANC Factor

Adding to the tensions in the wake of Sobhuza's passing is the fact that Swaziland has become the first black African nation to take up arms against the African National Congress, the banned South African liberation movement which King Sobhuza helped establish. (A somewhat poignant irony is that one of the King's many sons married the daughter of Nelson Mandela, the titular head of the ANC.) During the early 1980s, as the ANC's military wing stepped up its operations against symbolic targets within South Africa, Pretoria responded with a campaign of cross-border military strikes against ANC bases or alleged bases in neighboring countries (see "Destabilization and Dialogue: South Africa's Emergence as a Regional Superpower" by John de St. Jorre in *CSIS Africa Notes* no. 26, April 17, 1984).

As South Africa's policy became more threatening, Swaziland launched a self-protective crackdown on ANC members in the country. On November 22, 1982, following discoveries of hidden arms caches, Prime Minister Mabandla issued a strong statement appealing to refugees in Swaziland to respect the laws and territorial integrity of the country and reminding them that it was illegal for any unauthorized person to possess arms or to conceal or harbor any person in

possession of arms. Despite the prime minister's admonishment, Swaziland continued to be used as a springboard for guerrilla attacks against South Africa.

On December 9, 1982, South African forces crossed Lesotho's borders in a raid on an ANC "base" in Maseru, the country's capital, that killed 42 people, many of them women and children. General Constand Viljoen, head of the South African Defense Force, stated that the raid was intended to preempt operations planned by ANC guerrillas against South African targets.

Stunned, and fearful that Swaziland was also targeted for retaliatory action, the Swazi government reacted by arresting at least 27 members of the ANC in what a December 21 statement by the office of the deputy prime minister characterized as a step to "ensure the safety and security of those refugees who were in danger of imminent attack from outside our borders." Notwithstanding this official justification, the action caused a severe strain in relations with the exile ANC leadership. By the end of 1982, the Umbutfo Swaziland Defense Force was itself coming under sporadic attacks from ANC insurgents.

Relations with the ANC were further complicated in the wake of the March 16, 1984 nonaggression pact (Nkomati Accord) between Mozambique and South Africa. According to its terms, South Africa and Mozambique undertake to ensure that their territories will not be used as staging grounds for military strikes against each other. On March 31, 1984, the foreign ministers of South Africa and Swaziland announced that their two countries had signed a nonaggression pact similar to the Nkomati Accord in February 1982. One difference, however, was that Swaziland and South Africa had agreed to come to each other's aid in the fight against "terrorists." The reasons the agreement was not made public until more than two years after its signature may have been that Swaziland did not want to be the first African state to sign such an agreement and that the agreement was a carrot for progress on the land question.

As Mozambique began implementing the terms of the Nkomati Accord, many of the ANC adherents forced to leave the country crossed into Swaziland. Following the discovery of a large cache of arms around the beginning of April near Lomahasha, a border post between Mozambique and Swaziland, and the arrest of a number of fugitives on the Mozambican border, the Royal Swaziland Police raided homes near Manzini and detained 10 ANC members, including a high official. A week later, 15 ANC members escaped from police cells at Simunye. As police and paramilitary forces conducted an intensive search for the escapees and other armed ANC militants, a series of shootouts took place in Manzini and Mbabane that reportedly resulted in deaths among both government and ANC personnel. On April 16, Prime Minister Bhekimpi warned that "all aliens will be sought out," and advised "those that are still in hiding [to] give themselves up to the police." Concerned about the seriousness of the confrontations between Swazis and ANC members, ANC President Oliver Tambo flew into

Mbabane on April 15 to discuss matters with Bhekimpi. But many ANC members had begun to see the Swazis as collaborators with South Africa and were prepared to battle with them on the same terms as they dealt with the Pretoria government.

### Looking Ahead

On June 19, South African Minister of Cooperation and Development Koornhof announced the dissolution of the commission of inquiry that South Africa had established to investigate the border adjustment question. The decision meant that the proposed land transfer was all but abandoned, and raised fundamental questions about the soundness and effectiveness of recent Swazi foreign policy. In pursuing the transfer, Swaziland had risked alienating the OAU and had earned the enmity of the ANC by expelling many of its members and concluding a nonaggression pact with South Africa. In the wake of the brief South African announcement, it was uncertain what, if anything, the country would actually gain as a result. Pretoria, on the other hand, had been able to use the mere possibility of a border adjustment to achieve two important diplomatic objectives—a peace treaty and a Swazi crackdown on the ANC—without giving up anything in return.

To be sure, the Koornhof announcement did not entirely close the door on the land transfer. Koornhof subsequently indicated that the shift could go forward if the residents of Ingwavuma and KaNgwane agreed. Gatsha Buthelezi's control over KwaZulu is such that the people of Ingwavuma, the parcel of land especially desired by the Swazis because it offers access to the sea, will almost certainly never accept incorporation into Swaziland. KaNgwane, however, may be another matter. Because it is a given fact (although against OAU principles) that two African nations can agree to alter their borders, the KaNgwane transfer would have allowed Pretoria to divest some 750,000 blacks of their South African citizenship with a degree of legality and international acceptance not attainable simply by declaring the homeland to be "independent." The Botha government may also have reasoned that the economic burden created by the incorporation of a population at least as large as Swaziland's own would lead to a greater reliance on Pretoria by the Swazis, thus fracturing the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) while helping make a reality of the long-held South African dream of a regional constellation of states centered on the Republic.

While there is tremendous opposition within the territory to any merger with Swaziland, there is also sizable support for such a move. Although KaNgwane's chief executive councillor, Enos Mabuza, is opposed to the idea of including the territory in Swaziland, some of KaNgwane's Swazis point out that he is not of Swazi descent and argue that he therefore has no right to dictate the territory's future. A rival for power is Johannes Dlamini, a former chief minister of the territory and a member of the Swazi royal family. Whether he is succeeded by Dlamini or someone else,

in all likelihood Mabuza will not remain in office for long. His dismissal or disappearance would almost certainly mean that at some future point KaNgwane will be transferred to Swaziland. Given the importance of the border adjustment to both South Africa and Swaziland, this is the most likely outcome.

Having publicly agreed to accept the land transfer, the Swazis are not likely to back out of a new deal when only KaNgwane is offered. But if the transfer does go forward, it will destroy forever the fragile cultural base the Swazis have enjoyed. While those Swazis living in KaNgwane paid allegiance to the Swazi King and travel to Swaziland for the iNcwala festival, they are far more sophisticated politically, better educated, and accustomed to a different way of life.

As for Swaziland's internal politics, there is reason to suspect that South Africa has entered the fray in an effort to break Mfanasibili's power and to back Nxumalo in the continuing struggle between the two adversaries. Unlike Nxumalo, Mfanasibili has had little to do with Pretoria and would probably be hard to control if he continues to hold sway in Swazi politics. The evidence is strong that the alleged plot by Nxumalo and three other senior officials to force Queen Ntombi to surrender power did exist and had South Africa's blessing. While Mfanasibili may have won the first round by having Nxumalo and his cohorts in the alleged coup attempt dismissed, the game is far from over. Nxumalo has positioned himself well and has powerful support. His sophistication and political astuteness in seizing the issue of corruption which made Mabandla popular while he was prime minister has provided Nxumalo with a large, visible, and desperately needed constituency. Meanwhile, South Africa has stepped up the pressure by threatening to withdraw from the Southern African Customs Union (taking with it Swaziland's single most important source of income) unless there is an immediate and thorough investigation of the alleged customs fraud. How Mfanasibili handles the demand for an investigation will give some indication of his future. A possible sacrificial lamb is Dr. George Msibi—a U.S.-educated member of the Liqoqo, a close colleague of Mfanasibili, and a former managing director of Swaziland Chemical Industries, whose bankruptcy started the current crisis.

It is some indication of where the power lies in Swaziland that Prime Minister Bhekimpi is regarded as little more than a figurehead in the continuing power struggle. The appointment of a standing committee of the Liqoqo composed of Mfanasibili and

Msibi, among others, would at first glance seem to herald an even more prominent role for the Liqoqo in the administration of the country. There are complications, however. On the one hand, the modernist policies of Mabandla, which Nxumalo has laid claim to, have had a significant impact on the increasingly-educated younger generation of Swazis. On the other hand, the Liqoqo's manipulation of Swazi customs in its effort to dominate Swazi political life has angered many traditionalists. Therefore, despite its power and control, the Liqoqo is precariously balanced and future unrest can be expected. Whatever happens, it is clear that the emergence of the Liqoqo as the Supreme Council of State and the unprecedented removal of a regent mean that the monarchy in Swaziland has probably been supplanted as the center of authority. It is certain that when Crown Prince Makhosetive attains his majority and becomes King he will have far less power than Sobhuza did.

Finally, open conflict between the ANC and Swaziland will continue to fester in the wake of the Nkomati Accord and the belated announcement of the Swazi-Pretoria agreement. Although these agreements will make it more difficult for the ANC to operate as it has done in the past, the physical and linguistic similarity between Swazis and many South Africans means that a continued ANC presence inside the country is likely. Either Swaziland will become a war zone much like Lebanon in which the Swazi defense forces battle the ANC on behalf of South Africa, or Swaziland, for all intents and purposes, will abdicate its sovereignty and permit the South African military free access to the country to deal with the ANC. Whichever scenario materializes, the calm, ordered existence that characterized the reign of Sobhuza will be no more.

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