

The United Nations and Mozambique, A sustainable peace?

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Introduction

The 'new world order', which emerged as a consequence of the end of bipolarity in international relations, stimulated a renewed activism on the part of the international community with respect to inter and intra-state conflict resolution. This is clearly reflected both in the increase in United Nations peace operations since 1988 - nineteen missions in 1988-95, against fifteen in the previous forty-three years of the organisation's history; and in the changing nature of UN interventions with the advent of the so-called second generation peace operations.

Unlike the traditional peace operations, where peacekeepers had a relatively passive role under a mandate of interposition and cease-fire monitoring, recent initiatives have been characterised by multidimensional mandates normally including military, political, humanitarian and electoral components.

These developments have severely tested the United Nations' capacity to act as the guarantor of international security, raising formidable challenges to the traditional theory and practice of peace operations. Current research exposes the inadequacies in the UN decision-making process and in the functioning of its bureaucracy, reveals that the organisation's logistical capacity is overstretched, and points to the urgent need of a new conceptual framework for peace operations.

On the ground, the results of recent UN interventions have varied from the embarrassment in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia, the disappointing inefficiency in Angola, to the successes scored in Namibia, Salvador, Cambodia and more recently, Mozambique.

Mozambique presents an interesting case study of both the complexities of second generation peace operations, and the daunting challenges of post-conflict peace building and democratisation under the pressure of economic structural adjustment. The country's extreme poverty determines that post-conflict peace-building depends heavily on foreign assistance which is normally provided subject to conditions such as political pluralism, economic liberalism, good governance and respect of human rights.

This powerful foreign pressure creates an unhealthy tension between process and product: in the haste to establish the formal symbols of a liberal democracy, the need for Mozambique to develop a correspondent political culture and economic base may be neglected. This is not to deny the need for political and

economic reform. However, democracy stands little chance to succeed if it is imposed from the outside; a democratic state emerge when the Mozambican society has taken possession of the concepts and values that underpin democracy, anchoring them in its own specific cultural, political and social universe. Similarly, economic liberalisation through structural adjustment programmes so far has sharpened, instead of alleviating, the country's economic crisis, since the search for monetary stability and the holding back of public expenditure extract an enormous social cost for the millions of Mozambicans who live in conditions of extreme poverty. As a result, their most elementary security requirements such as access to food, shelter, education, employment, medical care and other basic services, are not satisfied. Invariably this has generated a high level of conflict.

This article examines the involvement of the international community in the process of transformation in Mozambique. It begins with an analysis of the war and of the conditions that have made possible the road to peace; next, it describes and assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) focusing on its peace-building elements; finally, the article explores the impact of economic reform on destabilisation peace-building in Mozambique.