

Book Review: Carrie Manning, *The Politics of Peace in Mozambique: Post-Conflict Democratization, 1992-2000* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 230 pages.

## **Post-Conflict Democratization: Arduous Process in Mozambique and Beyond**

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For close to three decades after gaining independence from Portugal in 1975, Mozambique knew no peace. It was ravaged by a civil war that pitted the incumbent Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo) regime against the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo) guerrilla movement. In 1992, the parties to the civil war finally signed a peace agreement to end the war and commence the process of instituting democratic multiparty politics. It is this dual challenge of transition from civil war to peace and from authoritarian governance to multiparty democracy that Carrie Manning's book analyzes. The book is divided into three parts with a total of ten chapters. Part one is composed of chapters one, two, and three and deals with the introduction, theoretical and analytical framework, and the background of the Mozambique civil war. Chapters four to seven make part two of the book, which focuses on political change and party transformation. Part three of the book is composed of chapters eight to ten and deals with elections and elite habituation to democracy by detailing the norms and patterns of interaction in the 1994 and 1999 general elections.

The rationale for the book is laid out in the introductory chapter. Herein, Manning notes that ten years and two general elections since the signing of the peace agreement in 1992, the case of Mozambique largely remains overlooked by the literature on democratization. She argues that, while Mozambique has been viewed as a qualified success story for UN peacekeeping, there has been little attention to the utility of the case for a deeper understanding of elite habituation to new political rules, conflict management, and the process of democratization in post-conflict societies. It is this gap in the literature that Manning sets out to fill.

The theoretical and analytical framework underlying the dual transition from war to peace and from authoritarianism to formal democratic politics

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is sketched out in chapter two. This chapter raises the key research questions that subsequent analysis seeks to address: Under what circumstances might democratization provide a basis for nonviolent management of conflict in a country that has been ravaged by a long civil war? What are the merits and demerits of peace processes mediated through democratization? These questions are subsequently addressed by focusing on the process of elite habituation to the political settlement and to the concomitant new rules of the political game. Toward this end, chapter three provides the backdrop to the conflict by examining Frelimo's struggle to establish political authority in the immediate post-independence period. It details the social, economic, and political challenges presented by Mozambique's colonial legacy, the circumstances of independence, and the nature of Frelimo's own ambitious political agenda.

Chapters four to six trace the organizational trajectories of Renamo and Frelimo up to the first multiparty elections in 1994. The chapters present new empirical information and fresh insights into the internal dynamics of adaptation as each party prepared for life in a competitive political setting. Chapters seven to nine explore how participation in successive elections has affected the two major political parties and ex-combatants. Together, these empirical chapters examine how the historical experience of each party, as guerrilla movement on the part of Renamo, and as incumbent single party on the part of Frelimo, has shaped its expectations and performance in the new system. The chapters analyze how the two parties' participation in the system has affected the nature and outcomes of democratic politics in Mozambique and the commitment of major political actors toward the postwar political order. Chapter ten, the concluding chapter, returns to the question of elite habituation as a necessary first step in the consolidation of democracy and assesses the character and degree of elite adaptation to the postwar political settlement, and the prospects for eventual democratic consolidation in Mozambique.

Central to Manning's argument in the book is the notion of elite habituation to the new rules of politics as the basis for democratic consolidation and insurance of peace. She defines habituation as the process through which actors come to accept democratic procedures and institutions as first, inescapable, and second, legitimate. "It is also the process through which their own actions determine whether the system is worthy of confidence, whether it is capable of producing outcomes that are not predetermined" (p. 20). The author notes further that successive interactions between political actors and institutions affect the elite habituation process in complex and nonlinear ways. The author addresses this notion of elite habituation from three angles. First, she explores the context of the conflict in Mozambique and the historical development of the two major political parties, Frelimo and Renamo, focusing especially on their efforts to prepare for the transition from the battlefield to multiparty politics. Second, she examines the impact of participation in democratic processes, principally in elections, on the outlook, commitment, and strategies of these two parties

vis-à-vis the political settlement. Third and finally, Manning explores the implications for the quality and durability of Mozambique's postwar political settlement.

The book uses elections as the focal analytical points of Mozambique's post-conflict democratization. The author is careful not to equate elections with democracy and thus manages to eschew the fallacy of electoralism so prevalent in Africanist democratization studies. She convincingly argues that elections are essential benchmarks on the path of political transition, especially where they mark the beginning, not the culmination of the democratic process as is the case in Mozambique and, one may add, in many other post-conflict societies such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, as well as the post-communist societies of Eastern Europe. They offer vital evidence of progress toward establishment of sustainable democracy or the opposite; they provide essential regular opportunities for the potential strengthening or weakening of all the basic concomitants of democracy within the new political system. The importance of elections in new democracies, Manning notes, is that they provide an opportunity for testing, among other things, commitment to key civil and political rights; the authority of essential democratic institutions and the balance of power between these; freedom of the media; and an active and independent civil society.

Manning concludes that the requirements of elite habituation in Mozambique have so far been met through the maintenance of a two-track system for the management of political conflict: one based on principles of negotiation and consensus carried over from the peace negotiations and formal peace process implementation period, and the other based on the principles of formal majoritarian democracy. Close and sustained involvement of the international community, she observes, has been key to sustaining this two-track process. She posits that, although the elite habituation process in Mozambique has been a halting, uneven process, “[b]oth sides appear to be adopting a system that most closely approximates a cross between a formal multiparty democracy and what Rothchild calls an elite power-sharing regime. Allocation of power follows the rules of multiparty democracy, but these rules are not yet fully accepted by all parties. Instead, electoral contests (as well as interaction in other political arenas) are routinely accompanied and supplemented by informal interactions between the ruling party and the opposition” (pp. 214-215).

The author shows that, while Frelimo has emerged victorious at each election, in battles over which procedural norms prevail—formal democratic competition or informal bargaining, majority or consensus—the two sides have been evenly matched. In her view, ongoing, repetitive interactions will eventually produce a formal system to which all political players will have a strong commitment, eventually simplifying elite interactions and producing stable political patterns. In this way, Manning rightly views the process of democratization as an iterative one, with numerous rounds and opportunities for adjusting the power balance. Accordingly, although Renamo has been the

perennial loser in elections, its repeated returns to the playing field suggest the party's belief that it can alter future outcomes by revising the formal procedures or by launching informal bargaining processes that seek to modify the outcomes.

Has Manning lived up to her own set standard? At the beginning of the book, she rightly casts democracy as a process rather than an outcome. In doing so, she asserts, her book intends to move beyond the search for accurate labels to describe and qualify new and problematic democracies. Indeed, she faults most Africanist scholars who conclude that democratization in Africa has often ended in "virtual democracy" or "illiberal democracy," arguing that by framing the problem in this way, "we may be missing important opportunities to inform our theoretical and conceptual understanding of democratization and state-building in contexts in which democracy emerges not as the natural or logical culmination of a long-term process of social, economic, or political development, but as an artificially imposed solution to economic, political, and social ills" (pp. 6-7). Paradoxically, however, Manning falls victim to the same pitfall when, at the end of the book, she concludes that Mozambique is a "hybrid regime" in which the opposition is not yet ready to relinquish the rough parity with the ruling party that it enjoyed as a military adversary and then negotiating partner, and that the ruling party remains loathe to give up its habitual control over all aspects of government, including the management of political competition (p. 215).

By so doing, Manning runs the risk of undermining the logic of her central argument and her optimistic conclusions about the possibilities for democratic consolidation in Mozambique. By labeling Mozambique "a hybrid regime," she, like her fellow Africanists she faults, assumes that democratization is an event that takes place once and for all. Yet, as the more erudite conceptualization of democratization as a process illustrates, transition to democracy is an iterative process, replete with advances and reversals as the key political actors strategize and engage in maneuvers and counter-maneuvers to advance their interests, maximize their power, and hedge themselves against their opponents. This is what explains the fact that Renamo seeks to gain outside the formal system what it cannot win through formal competition, while Frelimo takes refuge in overly legalistic interpretations of the formal rules that maximize its own ability to control procedures. In other words, the parties are optimally responding to one another as they each seek to advance their respective interests within the context of the new rules of the game.

As long as the new democratic institutions continue to shape and condition the behavior of the political actors, and as long as they continue to return to the electoral contests, democratization is safely on course in Mozambique. The prospects for elite habituation to the new rules as Manning notes, are bright and, *ipso facto*, so are the prospects for democratic consolidation. And therein lies the political lesson from Mozambique for other conflict-ravaged countries in Africa and elsewhere in the world.