

# MOZAMBIQUE



# 1.

## MOZAMBIQUE AND THE CHALLENGES OF PEACEKEEPING IN AFRICA

As things stand in the late 1990s, more than a few African states are certain to require some combination of peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding to help them face the future. This is why it is useful to analyze such operations already undertaken in the continent and to assess their achievements and weaknesses. The experience of Mozambique, where between 1992 and 1994 the United Nations scored one of its rare peacekeeping successes, is an unusually rich source of lessons for an international community that finds itself increasingly challenged to deal with complex emergencies and conflicts in Africa.

Demands for new and different kinds of conflict resolution have already been generated by the recent phenomena of state collapse (as in Liberia and Somalia), genocide (as in Burundi and Rwanda), rebellions fueled by instability in neighboring states (as in Uganda and Sierra Leone), or implacable confrontation between forces that control vast areas of national territory (as in Angola and Sudan). Further complex political and humanitarian crises are certain to arise in the years ahead. Different combinations of civil disorder and famine could again create demands for the kind of peace enforcement already controversially pioneered in Somalia.

The more extreme forms of national collapse have encouraged the notion that the international community ought to intervene to limit widespread loss of life by whatever means are available, disregarding conventional notions of sovereignty.<sup>1</sup> UN agencies involved in huge relief

operations mounted for Ethiopia in 1984–85 and Southern Sudan in 1989–93 sought ways of operating with a degree of independence from host governments that were engaged in conflict with rebels. The pattern of achieving access on the basis of need rather than through detailed consultation with official authorities was set by Operation Lifeline Sudan and was later followed by the operation to protect relief supplies in Somalia—a pattern also adopted in the former Yugoslavia. In these cases, humanitarian crises that were caused or exacerbated by war succeeded in generating sufficient concern and urgency for the international community to take decisive action with military support.

Increasingly, the world's attention has to be focused on preventing such crises getting out of hand. Events in Liberia, Rwanda, Burundi, and Zaire (renamed Congo in spring 1997) have required the international community, UN agencies, and nongovernmental organizations to relieve suffering in conditions of political meltdown; in such circumstances, the delivery of emergency relief can all too easily become part of the political bargaining. To prevent a proliferation of similar conflicts, more attention has to be given to mediation and to achieving more efficient delivery of humanitarian aid, as well as to the prospects of achieving a transition from conflict to peace.<sup>2</sup> Interventionist peacekeeping may still be needed, but the evidence shows that it will rarely be successful outside the context of saving lives or supporting viable peace agreements.

Africa is not guaranteed a peaceful future, but experience has shown that fractured states can be put back together, given adequate levels of local and foreign support for the process. To the extent that most wars eventually come to an end—whether through victory, a negotiated solution, or sheer exhaustion—Africa has already seen the satisfactory winding down of a number of long-running conflicts, especially in the two regions most afflicted by the Cold War syndrome, namely Southern Africa and the Horn, where superpower rivalry ensured active military support for governments and rebel movements alike. Since 1990 and the end of the Cold War, successful mediation has produced promising long-term solutions for Namibia, South Africa, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Mozambique, all of which suffered conflicts deemed “ripe for resolution” as long ago as 1984.<sup>3</sup> The emergence of these states from war or the threat of war provides an important measure of hope for Africa. Although new points of tension are emerging, a significant number of the continent's major conflicts have been put to rest.

The United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) provides an important example of how a peace process can be conducted under

international supervision. It need not be taken as a perfect model. Just as the African context does not present a uniform set of problems, peacekeeping is by its nature an inexact science, bedeviled by hidden depths of uncertainty and volatility. Any peacekeeping operation (PKO), once launched, is subject to high levels of risk, as well as to shifts of perception and of performance by both sponsors and warring parties. The UN operation in Mozambique somehow managed to avoid the pitfalls that have beset many other peacekeeping operations. It deserves to be examined, in the interests of peacekeeping elsewhere, to establish how responsive and relevant the operation was to the situation on the ground, to assess the political authority that the United Nations was able to exert throughout the process, to consider the role of the international community as a whole, and to assess the legacy the undertaking left behind in Mozambique.

There are clear parallels between the kind of conflict that laid waste to much of Mozambique in the 1980s and the cruel hit-and-run insurrections, sometimes backed by outside forces, that are continuing to create instability in other parts of Africa. Africa regularly poses challenges for the international community comparable with those that emerged over many years in Mozambique. The current challenges include stemming the flow of weapons fueled by, or fueling, conflict; responding to complex humanitarian emergencies resulting from prolonged conflict; achieving viable mediation channels; responding to the results of such mediation through formulas and processes for the separation of forces, demobilization, disarmament, resettling refugees, and safeguarding human rights; and converting armed conflicts into peaceful political contests.

There is also a case for examining ONUMOZ in the light of the difficulties experienced by the United Nations in Angola since 1991. Although the parallels with Angola should not be overstated, the sometimes close synergy between developments in the two countries—dating from their shared history as the largest Portuguese colonies in Africa, their adoption of Marxist policies after 1975, and their common experience of South African destabilization policies of the 1970s and 1980s—continued into the 1990s as parallel international efforts were made to bring an end to their respective internal wars. As events turned out, the disastrous failure of the second Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II) in the last months of 1992 became a major factor in persuading the Security Council of the need for a substantial mission in Mozambique. The subsequent success of ONUMOZ contrasted sharply with the failure in Angola and,

naturally enough, some of the new lessons were applied in the formulation of UNAVEM III in 1995. Such lessons necessarily had to be adjusted to the reality that the Angolan conflict was sustained by very different dynamics from those that had earlier prevailed in Mozambique. Between 1992 and 1994, the Angolan parties demonstrated a relentless capacity and will to keep on fighting, each believing that it could defeat the other or, put differently, that it could not face the consequences of losing. In Mozambique, the United Nations's role was made considerably simpler by the genuine desire on both sides to halt the fighting—one of the factors that can make all the difference between success and failure in peacekeeping.

### **UN Peacekeeping in Africa and Beyond**

The UN Security Council has in general been sparing in its approval of peacekeeping operations in Africa, and has preferred to offer its moral support for regional or subregional peacekeeping initiatives. The first direct involvement in the Congo between 1960 and 1964 was a substantial operation, but it was continuously hampered by disagreements in the Security Council, by the changing realities on the ground, and by the evolution of the mandate from one of halting foreign intervention to one of ending a civil war. The Congo experience was as traumatic for the United Nations as was the Vietnam War for the United States. The United Nations did not return to peacekeeping in Africa until the end of the 1980s, and then to verify and monitor agreements reached—without UN participation—by other parties. Following the signing of accords between Angola, Cuba, and South Africa in New York on December 22, 1988, the United Nations was drawn into the scaling down of the same Cold War tensions that had been largely responsible for its own inability to engage in peacemaking or peacekeeping in Africa. The United Nations began monitoring the Cuban troop pullout from Angola under the first Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM I, 1989–91) and then undertook a much more substantial operation in Namibia, where its Transitional Assistance Group (UNTAG, 1989–90) helped to steer the country to independence from South Africa on March 21, 1990.

UNTAG was a “classic” operation in that it was underpinned by the consent of the principal parties (the South African government and the SWAPO independence movement). It was also an important model for UN “peacebuilding,” bringing together the military function of overseeing

the withdrawal of hostile forces with the political function of monitoring elections.<sup>4</sup> Although UNTAG initially faced difficulties in securing funding, troop contributions, and adequate staff, the successful outcome in the form of free and fair elections in November 1989, leading directly to Namibia's complete independence, was of tremendous significance to the United Nations, boosting confidence at a time when the organization was beginning to be called upon to mount comparably complex operations in other parts of the world, notably those in Nicaragua (1989–91), El Salvador (1991–94), and Cambodia (1991–93).

The growth in demand for post-Cold War peacekeeping operations from mid-1991 onward significantly strained the United Nations's political consultative process and the administrative capacities of the new Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in New York. In Africa, the operations approved at this time included the stillborn Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO)—launched in 1991 but subsequently stalled by Moroccan foot-dragging—and a second Angola Verification Mission (1991–92), which included substantial monitoring responsibilities (cease-fire, formation of a new army, and elections) but was constrained by a short time frame, a tight budget, and the lack of reconciliation between the warring parties. As Fen Osler Hampson has commented, "UN action could not have been much more efficient unless UNAVEM II had been given a substantially wider mandate to implement the peace process and put more personnel on the ground."<sup>5</sup> Demobilization was ineffective, and the planned new army was not formed ahead of the September 1992 elections. Then the election results were unacceptable to the Unita leader, Jonas Savimbi, and the country rapidly slid back to an outright war more ferocious than anything that had gone before. As the Angola debacle unfolded, the United Nations was also beset by accusations of ineffectiveness in the face of the simultaneous tragedies in the former Yugoslavia and Somalia. The first UN operation in Somalia (UNOSOM I), authorized in April 1992, was collapsing amid dangerous conditions from a lack of agreement over its mandate, inadequate funding, and an international unwillingness to make troop contributions, prompting the outgoing U.S. president, George Bush, to order the U.S.-led Operation Restore Hope in December.

Despite these setbacks, the United Nations was developing its experience of classic peacekeeping and peacebuilding, notably through its substantial operation in Cambodia, which was assembled over the months following the signing in 1991 of that country's Paris peace accords. The

Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC, 1992–93) had an ambitious and costly mandate to change the political structure of the country with the help of 15,000 military and 7,000 civilian personnel. Although implementation was marred by the refusal of one of the four signatories, the Khmer Rouge, to demobilize its forces, UNTAC remained on course to organize and monitor an acceptable electoral process in 1993.

It was against the background of these African and international developments that Mozambique's General Peace Agreement in Rome was signed on October 4, 1992. Decisions about the level of support for Mozambique were largely determined in the light of the collapse of the Angola operation. The coincidence of timing between the failure of one process in Southern Africa and the start of another helped to concentrate minds on the establishment of ONUMOZ as a "classic" and multifunctional operation, capitalizing on the detailed drafting of the Rome peace agreement and the full consent of the parties. The political outlook was promising although the humanitarian challenge, compounded by a severe Southern African drought, was a cause of concern.

### **The Possibilities and Limits of Peacekeeping**

Different models of peacekeeping have been tried, but endlessly variable political and humanitarian conditions exact demands that are unique to each operation. Peacekeeping is, by its nature, an ad hoc function. Moreover, as many analysts have noted, it is only fully successful when all the parties wish to stop fighting.<sup>6</sup> For the United Nations, peacekeeping operations are best suited to following up, rather than preceding or enforcing, efforts at conflict resolution. The common features of successful operations, as suggested by William Durch, are local consent; international impartiality; support from the major powers, and from the United States in particular; and the willingness of the local parties to alter their priorities from "winning everything to salvaging something" in a peace process.<sup>7</sup>

Beyond these general hypotheses, important lessons can be drawn from each operation. In considering the achievements and weaknesses of ONUMOZ, some useful comparisons can be made with UNTAC in Cambodia, which suffered near-failure but enjoyed eventual success and was clearly an important test case for classic missions of a complex nature. The lessons drawn from UNTAC by Michael Doyle and Nishkala Suntharalingam stress the vital importance of not losing time in the immediate aftermath of a peace agreement and the need for mandates to

be "politically well designed."<sup>8</sup> In their view, the designing of mandates should focus on the institutionalization of whatever degree of reconciliation the parties have agreed to in their peace negotiations, the incorporation of bargaining advantages for the UN authority, and as much independent implementation for the United Nations as the parties will accept.

The Australian foreign minister most closely involved in preparing the ground for UNTAC, Gareth Evans, later outlined the basic requirements of such missions as clear and achievable goals, adequate resources, close coordination between peacemaking and peacekeeping, impartiality, local support, external support, and a signposted exit.<sup>9</sup> He also expressed the conviction that the UN Secretariat needs to establish or strengthen its planning units for the specific components of each mission, that deployment should occur as soon as possible after the parties reach agreement, that the United Nations must provide the best possible personnel, and that communications between the force and the UN Secretariat must be strengthened. A significant comment comes from the secretary-general's special representative in Cambodia during the UNTAC mandate, Yasushi Akashi, who urged proper training for military and police contingents "for inculcating sensitivity and respect for local customs and cultures."<sup>10</sup>

An ever present challenge to peacekeeping and humanitarian operations comes from shortages of qualified personnel and managers, shortfalls in funding, and the weaknesses of management and information at the UN Secretariat.<sup>11</sup> Over the period of planning for and deployment of ONUMOZ, these challenges were made particularly intense by the competing demands of Cambodia and the former Yugoslavia. The cost of UN peacekeeping jumped from \$500 million in 1991 to \$2 billion in 1992, rising again to \$3.2 billion in 1993 and \$3.9 billion in 1994. By 1994, the United Nations was running seventeen PKOs worldwide, involving 70,000 soldiers. After reaching this peak, demands for UN peacekeeping began to tail off. By 1996, the largest PKO in the world was the third Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM III), deploying 6,500 soldiers, 500 military observers, and 300 civilian police monitors.

### **Achievements and Weaknesses of ONUMOZ**

The hypotheses and proposals spelled out above are particularly relevant to an operation on the scale of ONUMOZ. Mozambique's two parties wished to stop fighting and adjusted their objectives from seeking victory to accepting compromise, the international community displayed impartiality, and

both the United States and the European Union lent strong support. The United Nations's mandate, if not well designed, was at least based on a patiently negotiated formula acceptable to both parties. The mandate sought to institutionalize the process agreed between them and it gave the United Nations considerable authority and leverage over the peace process. The inherent weaknesses and institutional shortcomings of the United Nations—sluggishness, delayed deployment, inadequate funding, a shortage of professional staff, and poor preparation, planning, and training—became apparent at different stages but did not prove fatal to the process.

Although the full conclusions of this study are given in the last chapters, it is appropriate to anticipate some of the overriding themes. First, the obvious achievement of ONUMOZ was that it helped to steer a large, war-torn country firmly in the direction of peace. Thus the principal purpose of the UN mandate was achieved. At the end of the two-year mandate in December 1994, the United Nations and the international community as a whole could claim that they had not only succeeded in keeping Mozambique's sworn enemies, Frelimo and Renamo, from returning to war, but also organized elections that had established a democratic political structure for this war-shattered nation over the longer term. Mozambique was not ignored at a time of great need and the international community acted with a rare degree of unanimity. As earlier in Namibia, the United Nations became the agent of transition and was endowed with a degree of authority and leverage to help to guard against any resumption of conflict.

Second, the circumstances were generally propitious. Events in Southern Africa, and in Mozambique in particular, were dominated by the changes taking place within South Africa—changes that were to lead to the democratic elections there in April 1994. In sharp contrast to the catastrophe in Angola, where the belligerent parties were ready to return to war at a moment's notice, Mozambique was in a state of exhaustion. The Mozambican generals and politicians on the whole remained committed to the peace agreement they had negotiated and signed in Rome. Once the soldiers on the two sides of the conflict were successfully and voluntarily demobilized, the risk of a return to war was effectively eliminated. Moreover, millions of displaced Mozambicans showed their faith in the process by returning spontaneously to their homes as soon as they felt it safe to do so. Ultimately, about 5 million of a population of 16 million took advantage of the return to peace to reclaim land and property.

Third and most remarkable, a determined and enthusiastic electorate overwhelmingly endorsed the peace. Ordinary citizens clearly did not want to miss their first chance to choose parties and individuals to represent them. Despite a last-minute threat of disruption by Renamo's leader, Afonso Dhlakama, the well-organized elections of October 27–29, 1994, confirmed that the people of Mozambique were ready to make a new start.

In terms of the final outcome, therefore, the United Nations was seen to have performed satisfactorily in Mozambique, completing a complex mandate from the Security Council with challenging military, humanitarian, and political components. But peacekeeping is thankless work, even when as apparently successful as this mission turned out to be. As had been the case in so many of its other operations, the United Nations was criticized for its performance. From soon after ONUMOZ was launched in late 1992 until it ended two years later, complaints were voiced that the operation was too slow and bureaucratic, that there was poor cooperation with the different agencies active in Mozambique, that the secretariat in New York sent unprofessional personnel, and that ONUMOZ failed to attend to some of the most urgent priorities while trying to take on several unnecessary or even unachievable functions. The examination of ONUMOZ that follows shows that mistakes were indeed made and that peacekeeping operations have built-in encumbrances and contradictions. The image of the United Nations as a slow-moving and heavy-footed beast was all too often highlighted.

A determination to avoid failure was generated by events in Angola and contributed to an overambitious mandate, but it also stimulated effective political management of the most visible aspects of the peace process. A combination of cooperation by the international community and political dexterity helped to bring Mozambique to a point where ONUMOZ could disengage without shame or rancor. Forceful leadership of ONUMOZ was provided by the UN secretary-general's special representative, the Italian politician and diplomat Aldo Ajello, who after a difficult start was able to use effective persuasion and improvisation to keep the peace process on track. Ajello's energy and commitment ensured the support of a powerful supervisory and monitoring commission that included the ambassadors of countries with influence in Mozambique. Ajello was able to keep ONUMOZ running in tandem with the joint efforts of the donors. Together they extracted just enough cooperation from the Mozambican parties to keep the peace process moving forward to its end.

Politically, the efforts of the donor community and ONUMOZ combined to deliver well-monitored elections in 1994 and put a convincing seal on the Rome peace agreement. It was ultimately fortunate for the United Nations that the elections diverted attention from some of the operation's more obvious weaknesses, such as the poor results recorded in the clearance of landmines and the collection of weapons, the small size of Mozambique's new armed forces, and, above all, the lack of full reconciliation between Frelimo and Renamo. In the event, none of these setbacks was to prove disastrous to the peace process although each raised questions about the longer-term stability of Mozambique.

One of the most persistently difficult questions to answer relates to the actual need for an operation of the ambitious size, scope, and expense of ONUMOZ, which cost at least \$700 million, to resolve the political, military, and humanitarian problems of a poor country with a notional gross domestic product of only \$1.5 billion. The operation, as first visualized in 1992 and subsequently sustained, certainly represented an important insurance policy for the international community at time of great disappointment over the disaster in Angola, continuing uncertainty within South Africa, and a severe regional drought threatening neighbors that depended on Mozambique's transportation infrastructure. The nature and composition of ONUMOZ was ultimately determined by the Security Council in New York, in its eleven resolutions relating to Mozambique between October 13, 1992, and November 21, 1994. Once established and funded, the operation took on a life of its own. Much of the political decision making occurred in Maputo rather than in New York or Western capitals, which were more often informed rather than consulted about the changing needs on the ground. This allowed for political flexibility, but ONUMOZ was rarely subjected to close examination by its paymasters.

By the time it was withdrawn, ONUMOZ had come to be seen by many as a sledgehammer employed to crack a relatively small nut, and its disengagement was broadly accepted and welcomed by both its paymasters and its beneficiaries. By the end of 1995, the tangible sense of relief in Mozambique that ONUMOZ had departed was accompanied by some concern about its longer-term impact on the Mozambican polity and society. Mozambicans of all persuasions had often been offended by the overbearing influence and behavior of UN personnel. Moreover, the donor community appeared to be more comfortable with the notion of exerting political influence through normal diplomatic channels than with the role it had played as party to the overt political power wielded

by ONUMOZ. The vacuum left by its withdrawal was filled by a consortium of donors, including the United Nations's own agencies.

It will become clear in the course of this study that the entity known as ONUMOZ was in a number of its activities more of an abstraction than a reality. Although the management of the entire peace process was nominally entrusted by the UN Security Council to ONUMOZ, much of the work was in fact conducted by units operating outside the UN system and funded directly by bilateral donors. The phenomenon of donors working in parallel with ONUMOZ became particularly evident during the demobilization phase and the preparation for elections. Despite great difficulties of coordination in some areas, most donors managed to keep in step with the overall aims and objectives of ONUMOZ, if not with its frustrating bureaucracy. Perhaps ironically, it was usually the UN agencies with long experience of Mozambique that proved the most reluctant to cooperate with the new, inexperienced, and entirely temporary ONUMOZ staff, who came to be viewed almost as invaders.

The varied perceptions of ONUMOZ revealed in this study help to illustrate both its achievements and its weaknesses. Criticism of the operation from the Mozambican parties and the local press was continuous, but this actually helped to keep the operation alert, if not always responsive, to the expectations of Mozambican citizens. Once ONUMOZ was launched, concern about its performance was also repeatedly expressed within the international community in Maputo. It was to Ajello's credit that he encouraged and used debate and criticism as essential tools in his mission.

To the extent that the ONUMOZ period in Mozambique provides insights into the theory and practice of peacekeeping and into the political, humanitarian, and economic challenges facing Africa, the conclusions and lessons are presented in the concluding chapters.

