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Repatriation as peacebuilding and reconstruction: the case of northern Mozambique, 1992–1995

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Introduction

The concept of peace is easy to grasp.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali¹

After 17 years of fighting between the forces of the ruling Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo) and the guerrilla forces of the Mozambican National Resistance (Renamo), the two adversaries signed the General Peace Agreement (GPA) in Rome on 4 October, 1992. One of the most poignant symbols of the success of the GPA was the massive return migration of 1.7 million displaced Mozambicans. With the majority of Mozambican refugees home by late 1994 – and the stinging boondoggle of Angola still fresh – there was an increased sense of the urgency to develop an understanding of how this successful repatriation was influenced by the UN system’s new “peacebuilding and reconstruction” (PBR) approach to complex emergencies.² Interestingly, the process and pattern of the repatriation has not been well understood because the bulk of it took place spontaneously, and independently of the international emergency aid and relief efforts in the country. From the perspective of UNHCR, this issue became secondary to the urgent need of providing the proper environment in which the returnees could quickly begin the difficult task of reconstructing their shattered lives.

It will be demonstrated here that the Mozambican peacebuilding process was influenced by pressure from a host of international actors but did not become internally driven until a combination of economic collapse, ecological disaster and military stand-off left the Mozambican state as a shredded space. Interestingly, the fragmentation of Mozambique allowed for displaced populations to repatriate by brokering deals with Renamo before the official UN-chaperoned GPA took effect. By giving the Mozambican peasant’s motivation for repatriation between 1990 and 1994 – when the country came to represent one of the biggest and most successful UN relief and reconstruction efforts anywhere – this paper attempts to add to our understanding of how peacebuilding at the local level could be understood via the courageous physical act of largely spontaneous repatriation.

Linking the processes of peacebuilding and repatriation holds significance on two fronts. First, it re-emphasizes that repatriation – one of the most important social artifacts of any peacebuilding and reconstruction process – must be viewed as a highly political affair operating on the edge of formal bureaucratic organization. Second, conceptions of the past and future which influence the decision to return and form the foundation on which peacebuilding and reconstruction are set, are interwoven into the complexity of civil conflict and must be understood from the vantage point of the everyday peasant population and not just the military and political leadership of the warring factions or the international relief and development community, who tend to dominate any national political or historical agenda. Thus, if the peacebuilding and reconstruction discourse is to provide a new methodology for dealing with war-torn societies in transition to successful civil societies, then the incorporation of a strong ethnographic and historical approach will be needed, which not only reflects the will and designs of the powerbrokers, but also those of the hitherto

¹Boutros Boutros-Ghali. 1992. “An Agenda for Peace: Report of the Secretary-General.” New York: United Nations. A/47/277: S/24111: 3.

²Portions of this paper were published in 1998 as part of IDRC’s Peacebuilding and Reconstruction Programme Working Paper Series under the title “The United Nations Comes to the Hinterland: Peacebuilding and Reconstruction in Mozambique”, which is available at: www.idrc.ca/peace.

voiceless peasantry in the outlying localities, who ultimately must negotiate and reconcile their historical and political past with little, if any, outside mediation. For if the following discussion of the Mozambique case study adds anything to the emerging discourse and empirical library, it is that given the right set of circumstances the capacities for peacebuilding and reconstruction can be wrested from the so-called national and international stage by those on the margins of national history, geography and politics. Fortunately, in the case of Mozambique this was primarily a positive experience.

The first part of this paper will briefly re-examine the period leading to the October 1992 General Peace Agreement, in order to provide a clearer sense of the original dynamics shaping the political machinations of the signing. It will go on to investigate the national and international attempts of some of the major PBR activities in Mozambique in 1990–1995, in order to determine the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of these efforts.

The second part comprises the case study of repatriation and PBR in the contested northern district of Angonia, Tete Province. The Angonia case will demonstrate that independently of the high-powered events taking place in Maputo, Rome and elsewhere, local peasant efforts were equally as important in providing a framework for PBR in Mozambique.

Conceptual background

Depending on motives and background – be they NGO, UN agency, military, academic, diplomatic, or donor driven – the term “peacebuilding and reconstruction” has come to characterize a multiplicity of meanings and actions.³ In general, however, the broad working conception put forward by the former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to the UN General Assembly that peacebuilding is part of an overall “peace process” has been very influential. Boutros-Ghali saw that “peace” as a process was spread along a continuum of events, which included preventative diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding. In short, the Secretary-General viewed the first three stages as follows: “Preventative diplomacy seeks to resolve disputes before violence breaks out; peacemaking and peacekeeping are required to halt conflicts and preserve peace once it is attained.”⁴ Peacebuilding was seen as the subsequent period, when a unified response, designed to rebuild civil society and “support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict”, would be pursued.⁵ Among other things, peacebuilding activities would include creating an environment where “disarming the previously warring factions and the restoration of order, the custody and possible destruction of weapons, and repatriating refugees” would take place.⁶

However, there are at least two further points of view that must be considered. In a 1996 review Tschirgi argued that current thinking on peacebuilding has been limited by its narrow focus on the “immediate humanitarian and security tasks that confront the international community”, which falls short of contextualizing “complex emergencies and post-conflict transitions within a

³K. Bush. 1995. “Towards a Balanced Approach to Rebuilding War-Torn Societies”. *Canadian Foreign Policy*, 3 (3): 49–69.

⁴Boutros-Ghali 1992, p. 6.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid. p. 16.

broader systemic framework”.⁷ One of the main insights that emerges from the survey is that there has been a propensity in the literature towards the reformation of policies, programmes and institutions of the international emergency aid and assistance machinery charged with responding to the various PBR needs around the globe; at the same time, pressing practical and theoretical questions still abound regarding the internal dynamics of states that have collapsed and are on the road to reconstruction and reconciliation. In other words, there is a dearth of applied scholarship that has attempted to link the policy and programming initiatives of the UN, NGOs and multilaterals with the political and historical literature on the pre-conflict and post-conflict period which influenced the dynamics behind the peace process. Similarly, in her expanded review, Weiss Fagen saw three weaknesses which burdened the applied international response to PBR: (i) inadequate co-ordination among UN agencies and the donor community; (ii) poor linkage between emergency relief and domestically driven sustainable development initiatives; and (iii) difficulty in uniting peacekeeping and PBR mandates.⁸ But she also goes on to note that the divide in the practical, analytical and historical literature is a prime contributing factor to the lack of a coherent theoretical/practical approach to the study of the process of PBR.

Given the weighty role that the UN played in defining and shaping the Mozambican peace process, it is this general conception which will be used as one of the main discursive tools throughout this paper. Although a more substantial sweep of the literature is not possible here, the two main theoretical and methodological caveats raised by Tschirgi and Weiss Fagen are also engaged. Notwithstanding that the first half of this paper utilizes the UN notion of PBR, which here is interpreted as being a broad political-cum-development process leading to a sustainable peace, the second half of the paper attempts to unpack the ethnographic record to arrive at some understanding of the social and spatial meaning of PBR. This aim is an important further step in grappling with how, and why, the Mozambican war-to-peace transition took place with few serious refluxes. By way of briefly exploring the ethnography of the conflict, a richer – “thick” – description and interpretation is arrived at, which helps in understanding how the broader structures of PBR shaped, and were shaped by, the confines of everyday village life.

The repatriation problematic

The propensity to address refugee movements as mass “exoduses” or “events” has obscured the important processes that account for differentiating patterns through space and time which are associated with displacement. Thus, despite the crippling human toll and the social, economic and political upheaval experienced by the growing number of asylum seekers, there still remain many unanswered questions concerning the dynamics of forced migration. The core of research, which has been conducted on displacement, has focused on the period and location of flight,⁹ resettlement¹⁰ and organized return.¹¹ Although this agenda has contributed to a better

⁷N. Tschirgi. 1996. “Review Article: Transitions from War to Peace: Issues, Challenges and Policy Lessons”. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* (forthcoming). Draft version. p. 20

⁸P. Weiss Fagen. 1995. “After the Conflict: A Review of Selected Sources on Rebuilding War-Torn Societies”. Geneva: United Nations Institute for Social Development. p. 1.

⁹J. Rogge, 1985. *Too Many, Too Long: Sudan’s Twenty-Year Refugee Dilemma*. Totowa, NJ.: Rowman & Allanheld; L. Gordenker and L. Monahan, eds. 1987. *Refugees in International Politics*. London: Croom Helm; G. Loescher and L. Monahan, eds. 1989. *Refugees in International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; C. Anthony. 1991. “Africa’s Refugee Crisis: State Building in Historical Perspective”. *International Migration Review*, 25 (3): 574–591.

¹⁰B. Harrell-Bond. 1986. *Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; G.

comprehension of the adversity faced by asylum seekers as displacees, it has failed to probe adequately the fourth dimension of refugeedom, namely voluntary repatriation.

The risks involved with this type of movement are considerable, including (i) no promise of amnesty; (ii) no infrastructural development or repatriation programme; (iii) no recognition from the international community (legal protection); and (iv) no promise of change in internal conditions.¹² Given these uncertain criteria it would seem that the desire to return runs very deep.

UNHCR has always attempted to initiate return before the disruptive conditions in the country of origin have been resolved. It utilizes a tripartite approach to repatriation, when it acts as a broker between the host country and the country of origin; however, given the lofty state of bureaucratic and diplomatic protocol in Africa and the labyrinthine UN system of communication, this relationship often grinds to a halt. This is evidenced by failures in Rwanda, Somalia and Sudan, where the results of the tripartite approach have been largely ineffectual because of the complex and lengthy negotiations process between the various protagonists. UNHCR is at times also criticized for promoting return without adequately evaluating the consequences or consulting with the refugees.

One of the most striking new trends regarding refugees over the past decade has been the considerable number of asylum seekers who have independently returned home prior to conflict resolution, guarantee of safety or international recognition – the dramatic example of Rwanda in late 1996 is one of the most powerful symbols of this phenomenon. In fact UNHCR estimates that in Africa the ratio of spontaneous versus organized return can be greater than 100:1. A point of departure here will be to conduct an analysis of the local factors which play a part in the migration decision-making process and attempt to understand the motives of people willing to risk their lives by returning to an uncertain future in their country of origin. There is an urgent need for research in this area; as Rogge remarks, “much of the literature and data base on repatriations tends to focus specifically on return movements organized and/or assisted by the international community, and much of the information we have is concerned specifically with legal and/or political parameters of such repatriations”.¹³ Harrell-Bond takes one step further and states that “studies are urgently needed based upon field research rather than relying only on ‘expert’ interviews and existing public documents produced by agencies”.¹⁴

Locales of meaning and locality studies

One of the principal themes of this paper is to break down the established meta-narrative approach to the Mozambican peace process and show greater sensitivity to local circumstances of rural life. In this regard the work of academics writing within the school of “new” critical

Kibreab. 1990. *The Sudan From Subsistence to Wage Labour: Refugee Settlement in the Central and Eastern Regions*. Trenton: Red Sea Press.

¹¹M. Bulcha. 1988. *Flight and Integration: Causes of Mass Exoduses from Ethiopia and Problems of Integration in the Sudan*. Uppsala: SIAS; F. Cuny and B. Stein. 1989. “Prospects for and Promotion of Spontaneous Repatriation”. In Loescher and Monahan 1989: 293–312; J. Rogge and J. Akol. 1989. “Repatriation: Its Role in Resolving Africa’s Refugee Dilemma”. *International Migration Review*, 231 (2): 184–20.

¹²Cuny and Stein 1989.

¹³J. Rogge. 1991. “Repatriation of Refugees: A Not-So-Simple Solution”. Geneva: UNRISD. p. 22.

¹⁴B. Harrell-Bond. 1989. “Repatriation: Under What Conditions is it the Most Desirable Solution for Refugees?” *African Studies Review*, 32 (1): p. 42.

regional geography is of assistance.¹⁵ Empirical research which faithfully incorporates the concept of “space” as a socially constructed variable has become the central plank of this movement. As is suggested by its name, new regional geography endeavours to transcend the traditional descriptive school of regional analysis which viewed the “region” in a normative perspective based on the people/society bond. Within this domain, theory, method and interpretation remained “neutral” and grounded in strict empiricism and produced fixed and arbitrary regions.¹⁶ Much of the analysis of refugee data, for example, succumbs to this weakness as aggregate numbers gleaned from UNHCR tend to dominate the interpretations of what is happening on the ground based on patterns but not processes.¹⁷ The new regional geographers contend that people participate, in complex ways, in the creation of their own “messy” histories and geographies which stretch away through time and space. Harvey saw that one of the main purposes of “locality studies” was to bridge the gap between theoretical discourse and empirical reality by linking the broader social processes that influence daily life with “the specifics of what is happening to individuals, groups, classes and communities at particular places at certain times”.¹⁸ Massey,¹⁹ and Massey and Allen²⁰ have long been proponents of this view, and have added that the relationship between society and space must be conceptualized in bilateral terms. In their words, “geography matters”, because not only do structural processes have an impact on locales in different fashions, but locales also influence the very shape and form of structural transformation: they are inseparable.

Even though new regional geography tries to reconcile the questions of how processes, structures and contexts interact in a given locale in order to understand the daily social-spatial circumstances of people’s lives, there still remain questions of agency, consciousness and interpretations that operate within these relationships that must also be recovered.²¹ On this issue there has been a call for the blending of ethnographic and locality studies to bridge this gap.²²

Trying to get at the thoughts and actions of the peasantry in Mozambique will not lead to a neat hermeneutic conclusion. However, the object of this paper is to shed more light and provide a place for an alternative reading of rural life as experienced through extreme social disruption over the past few years. The sheer rawness of the power that affected almost every aspect of peasant life has been tragically measured in deaths, destruction and refugees; meanwhile, the descriptive analysis has more recently trumpeted images of repatriation and PBR. By amplifying the words of the local people who suffered at the hands of both Frelimo and Renamo, a much richer and more complex story will be told that allows the subordinated side of the power equation to assume the historical stage. This paper is faced with attempting to uncover hidden social artifacts, which are

¹⁵A. Gilbert. 1988. “The New Regional Geography in English- and French-Speaking Countries”. *Progress in Human Geography*, 12 (2): 208–228; M. Pudup. 1988. “Arguments within Regional Geography”. *Progress in Human Geography*, 12 (3): 369–387.

¹⁶Pudup 1988, p. 374.

¹⁷R. Black and V. Robinson. 1993. *Geography and Refugees: Patterns and Processes of Change*. London: Belhaven.

¹⁸D. Harvey. 1984. “On the History and Present Condition of Geography: An Historical Materialist Manifesto”. *Professional Geographer*, 46: p. 6.

¹⁹D. Massey. 1983. *Spatial Division of Labour: Social Structures and the Geography of Production*. London: Macmillan.

²⁰D. Massey and J. Allen. 1984. *Geography Matters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

²¹A. Sayer. 1989. “The ‘New’ Regional Geography and Problems of Narrative”. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 7: 253–276.

²²*Ibid.* p. 257.

by definition difficult to locate and even more difficult to interpret. Scott's own metaphor, "the more menacing the power, the thicker the mask", places well-founded empirical and methodological obligation on researchers attempting to work in highly charged political and historical settings.²³

The building blocks to peace in Mozambique

*1.5 million people made refugees in the neighbouring countries by the lethal terror of Renamo wait anxiously for peace to signal the time to return home.*²⁴

*When the Renamo government takes over, then I will know there is peace in Mozambique.*²⁵

Peace, as the above two epigraphs suggest, is a complicated thing. PBR therefore, even when successful, requires a sharp analytical lens that can penetrate beyond the headlines if a practical and conceptual understanding of the process is to be generated. Recently, several academic works have explored the historical background to the Mozambican peace process. Employing the UN's categorization, this genre of writing can be subdivided into three groupings: (i) peace negotiations; (ii) ceasefire; and (iii) elections. What emerges from this corpus is that outside intervention/mediation played an important role in influencing the transition from civil war to post-conflict Mozambique. Not surprisingly, there has been much critique – from Frelimo, Renamo, practitioners and scholars – of the nature of the handling of complex political negotiations and transition, and their future tangents. The thrust of criticism is aimed at the internationalization of the domestic affairs of the country which were beset with meeting deadlines, fulfilling quotas and executing programme agendas, while offering scant concern to the local nuances of these objectives.

The negotiations leading to the signing of the GPA were indeed closely orchestrated by the likes of the UN, the European Union and the United States. The political pressure brought to bear on Renamo and Frelimo eventually resulted in the two sides agreeing to meet in Rome in July 1990 to begin what would turn out to be 12 disorderly rounds of talks ending with the signing of the GPA in October 1992. By this time the ravages of war had left Mozambique decimated. Rough estimates placed the number of casualties caused directly or indirectly by the hostilities at close to one million. Of the country's 15 million people nearly 1.7 million were forced to become refugees and approximately 4.5 million became internally marooned.²⁶ By the early 1990s extensive damage to roads, bridges, hospitals, schools and the economy was judged to amount to well over US\$15 billion.²⁷ On top of this burden, Mozambique's debt had grown from \$2.7 billion in 1985 to \$4.7 billion in 1991, and at the same time it became one of the most aid-dependent countries in the world. Needless to say, by this period Mozambique was in ruins. Africa Watch undertook to evaluate the human suffering and damage of the civil war in the country, but described it as "literally incalculable".²⁸

²³J. Scott. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press. p. 3.

²⁴A. Matonse. 1992. "Mozambique: Painful Reconciliation". *Africa Today*, 1st and 2nd quarters: p. 29.

²⁵Mtengowagwa, Malawi. 8 July, 1993.

²⁶UNHCR. 1996b. "Status Report: Repatriation and Reintegration of Mozambican Refugees". Maputo: April. p. 2.

²⁷UNHCR. 1993c. *The State of the World's Refugees*. New York: Penguin. p. 108.

²⁸Africa Watch. 1992. *Conspicuous Destruction: War, Famine and the Reform Process in Mozambique*. London:

Aware of its vulnerable position, Frelimo had begun negotiating a peace settlement in the early 1980s to avoid the total crippling of the country. One of the most infamous attempts was the US-brokered Nkomati Accord, signed between Frelimo and South Africa in March 1984, which was to see the apartheid state suspend its covert logistical support for Renamo, and Frelimo expel the African National Congress, which was based in the Maputo suburb of Matola. Frelimo was beginning to reel from the destabilization effects of the war and saw this as a way of ending the conflict as well as of gaining economic relief from the West. In fact, after the signing Mozambican President Samora Machel travelled to Washington to meet US President Ronald Reagan, and was rewarded with an increase in Mozambique's aid basket.²⁹ This must have been a bitter pill for Machel to swallow, since he had attempted to transform Mozambique into an African socialist state following independence, and now, due to internal and external events beyond his control, was forced to change his vision for national development. Unfortunately, the South African government had no intention of complying with the terms of the agreement, and by 1986, with the assistance of South African commandos, Renamo actually became more aggressive and ushered in the most deadly period of conflict.³⁰ Still, negotiations would continue throughout the civil war, with Zimbabwe, Kenya, Portugal, Italy and various church and missionary societies slowly becoming more intimately involved.

As the 1980s drew to a close, several crucial international events combined to have important repercussions inside Mozambique. The Cold War, in which Mozambique at one time had a bit-part, having proclaimed itself a Marxist-Leninist state in 1977 and pursued an unsuccessful attempt at becoming the first Third World country to join the Eastern Bloc, was winding down, leaving Frelimo unable to lever aid or military hardware from either the uninterested United States or the disintegrating Soviet Union.³¹ This coincided with the apartheid regime in South Africa beginning to bend under condemnation and pressure from the international community. After years of carrying out the economic and political destabilization of the anti-apartheid Frontline States,³² under the guise of thwarting the spread of communism, the South African administration began officially to divest itself of its interests in Mozambique; in other words, five years after Nkomati, Renamo was finally being cut off.³³

With the cost of war taking its toll and the potential for total anomie on the horizon, Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe and Kenya's President Daniel Arap Moi intensified their involvement in brokering a peace deal. Frelimo, feeling pressure from the donor/aid community to secure peace or face the prospect of severely cut pledges of aid, adopted a series of radical shifts from its former Marxist ideological position which changed the political landscape inside and outside Mozambique in its favour.³⁴ In addition to the failure of the 1984 Nkomati Accord and the

Human Rights Watch. p. 5.

²⁹W. Minter. 1994. *Apartheid's Contras: An Inquiry into the Roots of War in Angola and Mozambique*. London: Zed Books. p. 47.

³⁰J. Hanlon. 1987. *Beggar Your Neighbours: Apartheid Power in Southern Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

³¹For more background see J. Saul. 1993. *Recolonization and Resistance in Southern Africa in the 1990s*. Toronto: Between the Lines. pp. 35–66.

³²Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

³³The issue of the Civil Co-operation Bureau (a wing of the South African Defence Force) providing military and financial aid still remains conjecture. However, it is believed that extreme factions in the military, police, and business community supplied Renamo until 1992 (see Vines 1991 and Finnegan 1992).

³⁴C. Alden and M. Simpson. 1993. "Mozambique: A Delicate Peace". *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 31 (1): 90–130; D. Plank. 1993. "Aid, Debt, and the End of Sovereignty: Mozambique and Its Donors". *Journal of Modern*

adoption of an International Monetary Fund structural adjustment programme in 1987, Frelimo began in 1989 to move publicly towards resolutions that would include the acceptance of multipartyism, general elections, freedom of worship and liberalized markets. Frelimo's political changeover impinged on the ideological territory occupied by Renamo in justifying its actions to the outside world, a move which began to snooker Afonso Dhlakama, the Renamo president and commander-in-chief, into sitting down with Frelimo at the negotiations table.

By 1989 high-level talks had begun in earnest, complete with Frelimo and Renamo each drafting "principles for peace" documents to be used as the framework for deliberations. Interestingly, one of the main sticking-points was Frelimo's unwillingness to recognize Renamo as a legitimate political party. Joaquim Chissano, who became Mozambican president and the chair of Frelimo after Machel's death in 1986 in an unexplained air crash in South Africa, continued to maintain that the basis of Renamo's support rested on its well-known tactics of "violence, fear and external backing" and not on any genuine grass-roots political endorsement.³⁵ In turn, Renamo quickly refused to recognize the legitimacy of Frelimo as the government of Mozambique. Shuttling between African and European capitals continued for another year before direct talks finally took place in Rome in July 1990. Much of the back-room diplomacy detailed by Vines uncovers the increasing influence that the Italian lay church organization, Sant' Egidio, the Holy See, Mozambican bishops and the Protestant Mozambican Christian Council (CCM) began to wield after Renamo and Frelimo wobbled in their commitment in late 1990 and 1991.³⁶ In the end, it was August 1992 before a face-to-face meeting between Chissano and Dhlakama finally occurred in Rome.

One the ground, the military issue also played an important role in the securing the GPA. Frelimo's inability to uproot Renamo militarily left the guerrillas firmly entrenched in the rural central and northern provinces. After years of failed campaigns, the estimated 76,000-strong Mozambican Armed Forces (FAM) had become poorly motivated, organized, trained and equipped.³⁷ By the end of the 1980s the FAM had been restricted throughout most of the central and northern provinces to guarding district or provincial capitals and main transportation arteries. By 1990 the FAM was a huge drain on the government and was accounting for between 40 and 50 per cent of spending.³⁸ Although Mozambique's relationship with the Soviet Union was never as close as right-wing elements in the West and in South Africa would argue, it did receive most of its military training and hardware from Moscow. A combination of a cash-strapped Frelimo and a Soviet Union about to break up resulted in the atrophy of the heavily mechanized FAM military arsenal. After a successful war of liberation fought in the mode of guerrilla warfare against the Portuguese, Frelimo had after independence in 1975 adopted a traditional, heavily mechanized Soviet military approach. At this point Frelimo organized its armed forces to stave off an invasion from South Africa, which it saw as its greatest threat. Unfortunately, the enemy (Renamo) came from within and fought using classic guerrilla techniques, rendering the FAM's

African Studies, 31 (3): 407–430.

³⁵A. Vines. 1994. "No Democracy Without Money": the Road to Peace in Mozambique (1982–1992)": Briefing Paper. London: CIIR. p. 11.

³⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 14–17.

³⁷There is uncertainty as to the actual size of the FAM. Estimates range from 50,000 to 150,000 (R. Griffiths. 1996. "Democratization and Civil-Military Relations in Namibia, South Africa, and Mozambique". *Third World Quarterly*, 17 (3): 475). Based on demobilization statistics and the current strength of the new army the above is an approximation.

³⁸E. Berman. 1996. *Managing Arms in Peace Processes: Mozambique*. Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. p. 44.

technically sophisticated tanks, MiG jet fighters, attack helicopters, anti-aircraft guns, missile systems and multiple rocket launchers largely ineffective. This was compounded by the lack of spare parts, infrastructure and trained personnel to operate, transport and service the imported equipment.³⁹

Compounding the military question were political signals emanating from Zimbabwe and Tanzania that the financial and human costs of years of assisting the FAM in protecting economic targets and rooting out Renamo had become too high. This was aggravated by negative domestic Zimbabwean feeling that the 20,000 Zimbabwean troops, who were better trained and equipped than the FAM, were becoming the surrogate force in many attacks on Renamo strongholds. The poorer Tanzanian army had a much smaller presence but suffered a high ratio of casualties that largely extinguished any continuing support. The Malawian army protected the train running sporadically from Blantyre to Nacala on the Mozambican coast, but had little impact on the outcome of the war. Given Mozambique's dire economic situation, its geopolitical unimportance and its lack of rich oil and diamond fields such as enabled Angola to pay for replacement parts or technical assistance, the FAM's human and physical resources fell into total shambles by 1992.

Renamo had far fewer resources than the government, and most of the logistical support it did receive from South Africa and right-wing elements in the West came in the form of light weapons (AK-47 assault rifles, mines, anti-aircraft guns and mortars) and communications equipment. Given the guerrilla tactics of Renamo, and the sheer lack of technical and logistical assistance, the insurgents normally destroyed any captured heavy military pieces in a symbolic gesture indicating control of a given area. This waste-strewn landscape also had a strong psychological impact on the FAM soldiers and quickly crippled the movement of commercial goods from Malawi, Zambia and particularly Zimbabwe, to ports scattered along the Indian Ocean coastline. Renamo was relatively well organized in battle and deft at hit-and-run tactics, and as the war dragged on it continued slowly to increase the numbers in its ranks as a mix of social banditry and discontentment with the government began to increase. As many commentators have noted, there was also a considerable amount of forced conscription by Renamo, particularly the kidnapping of child-soldiers, that can be attributed to this increase.⁴⁰ Generally accepted estimates of the continued expansion of Renamo's forces indicate a rise from a few dozen immediately after independence in 1975 to a pre-GPA figure of close to 25,000.⁴¹

Renamo managed to subsist by living off local populations, or loot recovered from attacking FAM garrisons or slow-moving commercial convoys that were half-heartedly guarded by the army. Other strategies included selling ivory or granting poaching rights to well-heeled big-game hunters who were clandestinely flown into Renamo-held territory from South Africa. There is also evidence that local businessmen paid protection money to insure that they were spared attack.⁴² South Africa, Malawi and several international agri-businesses were also widely known to have paid off Renamo.⁴³

³⁹Ibid., pp. 49–51.

⁴⁰For further discussion on Renamo see M. Hall. 1990. "The Mozambican National Resistance Movement (Renamo): A Study in the Destruction of an African Country". *Africa*, 60 (1): 39–68; A. Vines. 1991. *RENAMO: Terrorism in Mozambique*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Minter 1994.

⁴¹The exact numbers for Renamo are even harder to substantiate and range between 12,000 and 25,000. The above number is based on the number of soldiers demobilized by the UN (UNOHAC 1994, p. 57).

⁴²This was the case in Tete City where the business community comprised a large number of Portuguese who remained in Mozambique after independence. Tete's existence depended on importing goods from Zimbabwe and

Hardened by life in the bush, the rank-and-file of Renamo could have limped along indefinitely. This was particularly true where Renamo actually obtained substantial grass-roots support and was even known to redistributed booty seized during raids. However, in 1991–92 Mozambique was beginning to experience its second severe drought in fewer than ten years. Combined with years of wanton destruction and indiscriminate attack on the peasantry from both sides in the conflict, these desperate conditions contributed to the onset of famine.⁴⁴ As a coping strategy Renamo tried to intercept or at least strangle the movement of relief and food aid to the towns and cities they surrounded. For people living in Renamo-controlled areas the drought made meeting daily food requirements extremely difficult; let alone the sharing of any surpluses with the rebels. Isolated from the outside world, Frelimo was well aware that Renamo's continued existence depended on the supplies it could squeeze from the beleaguered rural population. By this time the international aid and relief community was well established in Malawi, and the tiny country was seen as a relatively safe haven from the war and famine. Therefore, the FAM began its own campaign of depopulation in pro-Renamo areas, particularly in the provinces of Tete and Zambezia, which bordered Malawi.

Not that everyday life was much better in government-controlled territory. Because of the drought the government lost any income generating potential from export crops and began having problems paying and feeding the FAM, who according to donor conventions were not to receive any of the emergency food aid. This led to abuses of the food aid donated by the international community and distributed through government channels.⁴⁵ Reports of the FAM confiscating modest amounts of food to feed itself are well known, and not too surprising; however, there was also civilian culpability. For example, in one case in northern Tete, when the NGO community raised the issue of large quantities of missing food they were publicly censured by the highest ranking local official. When it finally came to light that the official was behind the disappearance of the food, he was transferred to another district, where the same pattern was soon re-established.

For those people who were too far from an international border their main option was to flee to the peri-urban areas and internal refugee camps protected by the FAM. Often these internally displaced persons (IDPs) were in a worse physical condition than those Mozambicans who were able to co-exist with Renamo or able to spill across an international frontier. Thus, given its location, it is not too surprising that by 1992, when the GPA was ratified, Malawi was home to 1.3 million refugees – equal to 10 per cent of its own impoverished population – fleeing from drought, Renamo and Frelimo.

providing a transit node for overland transportation between Malawi and Zimbabwe.

⁴³Hanlon 1987, p. 140; and personal interview with a British agricultural engineer who was captured by Renamo in Zambezia in 1988.

⁴⁴Africa Watch 1992, pp. 102–136.

⁴⁵Ibid. pp. 56–58.

The UN and the ceasefire

The United Nations operation in Mozambique stands as testimony to the ability of the international community to help build the foundation for sustained peace, even in situations of seemingly intractable conflict.

Boutros Boutros-Ghali⁴⁶

The fine balance that Frelimo had to maintain vis-à-vis its international dependence and domestic independence during the transition from war to peace was certainly upset by the massive invasion of outside capital, institutions, mandates and ideologies. Thus, the “recolonization” thesis recently put forward by academics has some merit in the case of Mozambique.⁴⁷ The basis of the argument proffered is that notions of neo-liberal market economic policy and Western models of civil society introduced as part of the PBR operation were a form of recolonization. This position holds further sway when one considers that the GPA took precedence over all national laws, including the country’s Constitution. However, even before the party politics of Mozambique had been reconciled, the aid industry had become so well established in the country by 1990 that it led Hanlon perceptively to ask in the title of his well-known work: “Mozambique: Who Calls the Shots?”⁴⁸

Only four months after Boutros-Ghali gave his Agenda for Peace address in June 1992, the Rome General Peace Agreement was signed. Thus, by the time UN advance teams arrived in Maputo in late October the new UN PBR agenda had begun to pick up momentum. Based on the strong recommendation by the Secretary-General to the UN Security Council, the UN Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) was created in December 1992. ONUMOZ would become the lead instrument for the UN and was mandated with sweeping overall responsibility in four primary areas, namely political, military, humanitarian and electoral affairs. It was well recognized that all four elements were intimately connected, and the PBR operation would have to reflect this delicate reality. The UN eventually provided 6,000 military and civilian personnel, and by the time the mission officially concluded in February 1995 had contributed \$500 million to the peacekeeping operation.⁴⁹

Not only was ONUMOZ’s task enormous, but it was to be carried out in 12 short months. Militarily it was to monitor and verify the ceasefire, demobilization and demilitarization of both armies; to observe the withdrawal of all foreign troops; and to provide security along the country’s four main transit corridors (Tete, Beira, Maputo, Nacala) and the coastal Maputo–Chimoio highway, and at seaports and airports. Politically it was to ensure that the fundamental principles and timetables in the GPA were recognized and attained. Legislative and presidential elections were to be held one year after the signing and were also to be organized, verified and monitored by ONUMOZ.

⁴⁶United Nations. 1995. *The United Nations in Mozambique: 1992–1995*. The United Nations Blue Book Series, Volume V. New York: Department of Public Information, p. 67.

⁴⁷For a valuable expansion of this argument see Plank 1993; J. Saul. 1999. “Inside from the Outside? The Roots of Resolution of Mozambique’s UN/Civil War”. In *Civil Wars in Africa*, T. Ali and R. Mathews, eds. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press; G. Harrison. 1996. “Democracy in Mozambique: The Significance of Multiparty Elections”. *Review of African Political Economy*, 67: 19–35.

⁴⁸J. Hanlon. 1991. *Mozambique: Who Calls the Shots?* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

⁴⁹For a detailed description of the entire operation see United Nations 1995.

ONUMOZ was the first peacekeeping mission to incorporate a sizeable humanitarian technical unit. With guidance from the UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs the UN Office for Humanitarian Assistance Coordination (UNOHAC) was established in Maputo. Working under the authority of ONUMOZ, UNOHAC was given the assignment by the UN Security Council to act as a catalyst for reconciliation and to “coordinate and monitor all humanitarian assistance operations, in particular those relating to refugees, internally displaced, demobilized military personnel and the affected local population”.⁵⁰

The contribution of other UN agencies (WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP, WHO, IOM, ILO, FAO), domestic and international NGOs, combined with those of the international community, meant that the total amount spent on humanitarian needs in the country was \$775 million. There was a real cognizant attempt by ONUMOZ to manage humanitarian assistance as a proactive tool – as opposed to the crisis management of international relief during the war – that would help usher in a lasting process of reconciliation and reconstruction. This PBR effort would have programmatic targets that in the end would see the rural (re)construction of 750 primary schools and of 2,000 water points, the creation of 250 health posts, the distribution of over one million tons of food and non-food relief, the transportation of hundreds of thousands of returning refugees and internally displaced persons, the establishment of the Emergency Seed and Tool Programme to help facilitate agricultural production and household food security, the launching of a nationwide mine awareness and clearance programme, and the demobilization of more than 78,000 soldiers, each given a small cash settlement (to last 18–24 months), food, seeds, tools, clothing and transportation back to their original homes.⁵¹

ONUMOZ was originally plagued by administrative, logistical and political setbacks, which resulted in the spread of mistrust and the reluctance of either Frelimo or Renamo forces to gather at assembly points to begin the crucial demobilization process. Having learned a harsh lesson in Angola, where a four-year peace negotiation process came crashing down in 1992 because the UN pushed for the holding of elections despite both armies remaining nearly intact, the Secretary-General in April 1993 decided to revamp the GPA timetable. Based on a new calendar of activities, the process of demobilization, repatriation and reintegration would be completed in 16 months (October, 1994) at which time the seminal event in the new UN paradigm – the national elections – would be held.

At a post-ONUMOZ workshop which included the leading interlocutors of the different organs of the PBR effort, it was recognized that the overall key was the “strong will for peace of the Mozambican people”.⁵² One of the two main criticisms levelled was that there was tension between the short-term demands of peacekeeping (demilitarization and reintegration of ex-combatants) and those of longer-term development planning. The spectre of future flare-ups was raised by some who saw the narrowly focused and too hurried ONUMOZ approach as being not much more than a quick fix for what was a much deeper social and economic set of issues. Julio Nemuire, the president of the Mozambican Association of Demobilized Combatants (AMODEG), which represents both former Renamo and FAM soldiers, stated that the overall demobilization process was a negative affair, particularly because the promised training, financial

⁵⁰UNOHAC 1994, p.5.

⁵¹Including family members the actual number of people transported as part of the demobilization effort is approximately 200,000 (UNOHAC 1994, p. 5).

⁵²W. Kuhne, B. Wiemer, and S. Fandrych. 1995. “International Workshop on the Successful Conclusion of the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ)”. Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik. New York: p. 58.

assistance and employment opportunities never materialized once the ex-soldiers returned home. He was also disappointed in the lack of serious consideration given to the social and cultural aspects of reintegration, which he saw as being central to healing the deep social wounds in the country. Nemuire adds that the process was non-participatory and that “it is a serious error to narrowly conceive the demobilized soldiers as objects, not the subjects, of reintegration”.⁵³

Borges Coelho and Vines tackled the difficult security/development conundrum in their study of demobilization in Zambezia Province.⁵⁴ They also conclude that the short-term demobilization programme was a success, but that once it got beyond the initial steps of disarming and reintegration, the longer-term dilemmas of development threatened to undermine the entire operation. In Mozambique a return to civil war is unlikely, but social conflict arising from a combination of a poor economic opportunities for ex-combatants, the easy access to weapons, and the distinct feeling that ex-soldiers have been cantoned, demobilized, repatriated and then forgotten has already sparked a substantial increase in crime and banditry.⁵⁵ Given that of the estimated 1.5 million AK-47 assault rifles in Mozambique only 200,000 were recovered, there is reason for concern.⁵⁶ The majority of light weapons turned in at UN assembly areas were in ill-repair and no longer of much value (on the black market or operationally). It is believed that many of the functional weapons have been scattered throughout southern Africa, adding to the marked increase in violence in the region.⁵⁷ Apart from the well documented consequences of the high number of weapons that have flowed into South Africa in recent years, Malawi has become a frequent target of brazen daylight armed robberies – something unheard of in the country’s history until 1992. The armouries where the confiscated weapons were held were also prone to lax security, and confiscated weapons frequently disappeared. Even as late as April 1996 in Niassa Province the author saw piles of rusting mortars, rounds of ammunition, land mines and small rockets still being stored in easily accessible ramshackle buildings.

The second criticism was that there was a lack of inter-agency cooperation between the different UN organizations represented in Mozambique. Alden’s writing on the byzantine UN administrative and bureaucratic organization in Mozambique offers further insight into why programming was at times carried out in a less than coordinated fashion.⁵⁸ Apart from the price tag of over one million dollars a day at the height of operations, Alden observes that struggles between sister UN agencies, the international donor community, NGOs, Renamo and Frelimo, over jurisdiction and implementation, contributed to delays, confusion and blunders, which eventually harmed the effectiveness and reputation of ONUMOZ. The former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) to Mozambique, Aldo Ajello, who played a very prominent role throughout the entire PBR effort, observed that tension between the “culture of development versus peacekeeping” had debilitating effects, particularly in the area of

⁵³J. Nemuire. 1995. “Demobilized Soldiers in Mozambique”. In *Demobilized Soldiers Speak: Reintegration and Reconciliation in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Mozambique*. Managua: Centro de Estudios Internacionales. p. 63.

⁵⁴J. P. Borges Coelho and A. Vines. 1995. “Demobilization and Re-integration of Ex-combatants in Mozambique”. Oxford: Refugee Studies Programme.

⁵⁵*Africa Confidential*. 1995. “Mozambique: Underpaid, Underfed, and Unruly”. 36 (8): 6–7; *Africa Confidential*. 1995. “Mozambique: The Freelance Warriors”. 35 (19): 3–4.

⁵⁶Kuhne, Wiemer and Fandrych 1995, p. 21.

⁵⁷C. Smith, P. Batchelor, and J. Potgieter. 1996. *Small Arms Management and Peacekeeping in Southern Africa*. Geneva: United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research. p. 85.

⁵⁸C. Alden. 1995. “The UN and the Resolution of Conflict in Mozambique”. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 33 (1): 103–128.

demobilization.⁵⁹ Again, it seems that this mis-step damaged the reputation of ONUMOZ, but did not cripple it. ONUMOZ was able to weather these setbacks, and by October 1994 the country was set for the first democratic elections in its history.

The elections

Despite its dire recent history, almost 90 per cent of the eligible Mozambican electorate did cast their votes in what the international observer community declared to be a basically “free and fair” electoral process.⁶⁰ As was expected, the Frelimo presidential candidate, Chissano, won, and Frelimo won the control of the legislature. However, the margins of victory were much closer than expected. Chissano collected 53 per cent of the vote, while his main rival, Renamo leader Dhlakama, managed to gain 34 per cent.⁶¹ More surprisingly, in its bid to control the 250-seat legislature, Frelimo won only a small majority over Renamo, gaining 129 seats to Renamo’s 112, while the remaining nine went to the newly formed right-leaning Democratic Union.⁶²

In the aftermath of the elections SRSJ Ajello reflected the feelings of the UN and most of the international community that “Mozambique has become some kind of a political laboratory showing that democracy can work in Africa”.⁶³ Four months later ONUMOZ packed up and left Mozambique, its mission accomplished. On reflection, Boutros-Ghali stated:

ONUMOZ succeeded admirably in all its objectives. It provided the vehicle with which to Mozambicans could sustain their peace efforts, created an environment of security which allowed the ceasefire to hold, accomplished the demobilization of former combatants and, finally, provided the basis for democratic practices.

and

ONUMOZ was one of the most effective peacekeeping operations in the history of the UN. It brought peace to Mozambique and, equally important, it contributed directly to the profound political transformation that has enabled Mozambique to set a firm course towards a greater peace, democracy and development.⁶⁴

But Saul⁶⁵ and Harrison⁶⁶ see the jubilant egress of ONUMOZ to be predicated on powerful international machinations that have little reality or impact for the average Mozambican.

⁵⁹Kuhne, Wiemer, and Fandrych 1995, p. 13.

⁶⁰*Sowetan*. 1994. “Vote Counting Begins in Mozambique: Model Election Despite Renamo Crying Foul Over Fraud”. Soweto, South Africa; *The Star*. 1994. “Mozambique Poll Declared Free and Fair”. Johannesburg, South Africa. 2 November; National Elections Commission. 1995. *National Elections Commission: Final Report*. Maputo: Colophon.

⁶¹National Elections Commission 1995, p. 38.

⁶²It has been speculated that the DU was the benefactor of its placement on the ballot. Chissano had urged the mostly illiterate population to vote for him by choosing the last box on the ballot; however, in the parliamentary vote this position was occupied by the DU. Some have argued that this hurt Frelimo and that if the DU vote was added to the Frelimo totals they would have won almost, 50 per cent of the legislative vote.

⁶³National Elections Commission 1995, p. 48.

⁶⁴United Nations 1995, p. 69.

⁶⁵Saul 1996.

⁶⁶Harrison 1996.

Notwithstanding that peace has held in Mozambique since 1994, Saul fails the UN on all three of its primary tasks of bringing a lasting peace, democracy and development to the country. In his estimation the PBR effort is fraught with serious structural flaws. For example, on the question of development, the government has little, if any, political latitude on spending decisions and is beholden to external sources.⁶⁷ Regarding democracy, since winning the first national elections Frelimo has been acting as a one-party democracy, paying scant attention to the opposition parties.⁶⁸ Unlike the ANC's stance in South Africa Frelimo rejected any power-sharing agreement with Renamo and so the elections were a winner-take-all proposition. This was in spite of Renamo's legislative victories in the provinces of Manica, Nampula, Sofala, Tete and Zambezia (Table 1). A breakdown of voting patterns shows that Renamo actually managed to defeat Frelimo in rural areas, garnering 41 per cent of the votes compared with the government's 40 per cent.⁶⁹ The second big issue became that of when the government would hold local level elections that were to follow the 1994 national run-offs. As it turned out it was not until mid-1998 that the elections were held in a select number of 'test' districts, where Frelimo would win every poll, since Renamo and the other opposition parties failed to register candidates as they prepared to for the second national elections for president and the National Assembly, to be held in 1999.

Meanwhile a rift was developing within Renamo, as only two of its assembly members received salaries and the other perks of office, while the former military wing of the party became marginalized.⁷⁰

Table 1. Distribution of seats in Mozambican legislature following 1994 elections

Province	Party		
	Frelimo	Renamo	DU
Cabo Delgado	15	6	1
Niassa	7	4	0
Nampula	20	32	2
Zambezia	18	29	2
Tete	5	9	1
Sofala	3	18	0
Manica	4	9	0
Inhambane	13	3	2
Gaza	15	0	1
Maputo	12	1	0
Maputo City	17	1	0
Total	129	112	9

Source: National Elections Commission 1995.

⁶⁷M. Bowen. 1992. "Beyond Reform: Adjustment and Political Power in Contemporary Mozambique". *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 30 (2): 255–279. *Mozambican Peace Process Bulletin*. 1995. "Donor Politics: Opposition to IMF". 16 (December): 3–4; *Mozambique Information Agency Bulletin*. 1995. "Mozambique's Relationship with the IMF". 26 November: 2–4; *Mozambique Information Agency Bulletin*. 1995. "IMF Under Attack in Assembly". 27 November: 4–5. Harrison 1996, p. 27.

⁶⁸*Southern Africa Report*. 1995. "After the Count is Over: Mozambique Now". 10 (4): 16–18.

⁶⁹*Africa Confidential*. 1995. "Mozambique: Money and Votes". 36 (20): p. 1.

⁷⁰*Africa Confidential*. 1996. "A Cloudy Dawn: Bandits and Corrupt Politicians Are More of a Threat Than Guerrillas". 37 (3): 4–5.

However, one must still wonder how much the Renamo leadership managed to transform itself since moving from the bush to sit in Maputo. The movement's biggest public concern rested with demanding more money so that it could continue as a viable "democratic option" for Mozambique. In the higher echelons of Renamo, Dhlakama and his inner circle had become accustomed to the largesse of the international community during its earlier attempts to secure the GPA. In the lead-up to the agreement Renamo had demanded between \$10 million and \$12million and chilled the pre-GPA signing with the comment: "There is no democracy without money."⁷¹ Renamo's claim that it needed money to re-tool itself from a military movement to a political party in the lead-up to the multiparty elections was seen to be valid, and a special internationally funded trust was established to further this cause. However, it was revealed in a report that the amount ballooned to \$17 million,⁷² none of which remains, or can be accounted for; in fact Renamo is said to owe creditors \$5 million.⁷³ Renamo now receives only \$50,000 per month from the state, and Dhlakama has resorted to veiled threats that if the international community does not take his requests for more money seriously he would consider returning to Gorongosa, the traditional headquarters of Renamo during the civil war: the symbolism of this move was not lost on Frelimo or the international community.

This unequal political and economic power balance (both internally and externally) places democracy on shaky footing. The question of development is therefore inherently weakened by the politics of the peace–democracy continuum. Yes, the Secretary-General was correct in arguing for a peace-cum-development approach to complex emergencies, but in the case of Mozambique it would seem that the emergency is not yet resolved. After the country's second national elections, held in December 1999, Renamo demanded a recount because of its narrow defeat in the presidential campaign, and also demanded that it be awarded the governorships of the five provinces where it had won the largest proportion of the popular vote. Renamo has warned that if the government does not heed this request it will establish a parallel government based in the central city of Beira.

The historical geography of refugee movements in Angonia district, Tete province

The preceding section has focused on the policies and agendas of the key international and domestic agents involved in the Mozambican peace process and the creation of sustainable PBR conditions. As previously mentioned, tied to the engendering of a general climate of confidence in Mozambique was the massive and speedy return migration of the large displaced population. Despite the real and potential problems of transition identified above, two of the most indelible expressions of the peace process have been the reality that the peace has lasted and that the process of repatriation remains poorly understood. This final section will illustrate that the massive movement of people represents a powerful social–spatial artifact that provides some clues as to how and why peace has changed the Mozambican landscape from one of twisted metal to that of bustling markets and villages. This exploration will reveal a local peasantry that was able to negotiate its own terms of return, independent of – and in many cases prior to – the onset of the larger political efforts. This is an important point, since much of the conflict resolution literature speaks to the "ripeness" for resolution between the main protagonists which is often predicated

⁷¹Vines 1994, p. 32.

⁷²*MozambiqueFile*. 1996. "Dhlakama Demands More Money". July (240): 19.

⁷³*Mozambican Peace Process Bulletin*. 1995. "Renamo Needs Money". 16 (December): 5.

on a “hurting stalemate” that allows for the transition from war to peace to take root. However, these two concepts have come under criticism for not explaining why peace agreements manage to endure or why they fail.⁷⁴ International relations specialists argue that “third parties” are an essential ingredient in nurturing a durable peace, but that success is ultimately dependent on the inherent tenor of the conflict. The first half of this paper has tried to demonstrate that Mozambique was “ripe” for a peace settlement and that third-party intervention played a role of some substance in the peace process. But it also highlights the weaknesses of this process in terms of practical and academic analysis. This assertion of weakness is given further currency when contemplating the large humanitarian effort in Mozambique and the dearth of understanding associated with the repatriation phenomenon.

The next section delves into the political and geographical hinterland to explore the meaning of the peace process and how it influenced repatriation from the perspective of the Mozambican peasantry. The empirical evidence presented was gathered during the repatriation of Mozambican refugees from Malawi into the district of Angonia in northern Tete province in 1993–94. Angonia offers a unique opportunity to investigate this nexus for several reasons. First, at time of the signing of the GPA Angonia was almost entirely in the hands of Renamo. In fact, apart from the two major towns of Vila Ulongue and Vila Domwe, Renamo had controlled the countryside throughout most of the civil war. As we shall see later, this would skew the distribution of humanitarian relief and of reconstruction projects that were channelled through Maputo into Frelimo-held areas. Secondly, Renamo’s ability to hold Angonia rested with the local support it received from IDPs and the refugee camps located across the border in Malawi. There was little recognition by the international community of this broad base of endorsement on either side of the border, so that the majority of refugees returned to sectors of Angonia that were under-served by the PBR effort. Fortunately, the returnees were more concerned with re-establishing their gardens, homes and communities than with the “politics of aid and relief” or the formal conceptual building blocks of PBR.

The international community and repatriation in Angonia

In Mozambique UNHCR had for the first time developed a formal repatriation and reintegration programme to handle the rapid and large-scale return of refugees in the post-conflict phase. The objectives of this 1993 plan were both comprehensive and progressive as they sought to address not only the obvious transport, food security and shelter needs of the returning population, but also the reconstruction of basic physical infrastructure (schools, health centres, water and sanitation, transportation) and the dovetailing of UNHCR reconstruction efforts with long-term development activities in other sectors of the peacebuilding effort. Collaborating with its Mozambican counterpart, the Centre for Refugee Assistance (NAR), UNHCR funded 55 implementing partners (10 Mozambican NGOs, 35 international NGOs, five government agencies and five UN multilateral and bilateral organizations) to carry out projects costed at approximately \$100 million.⁷⁵ The centrepiece of the programme’s rural development initiatives, known as quick-impact-projects (QIPs), employed local communities to carry out the

⁷⁴F. Hampson. 1996. *Nurturing Peace: Why Peace Settlements Succeed or Fail*. Washington, DC: Washington Institute of Peace Press. pp. 210–211.

⁷⁵UNHCR. 1996a. “Rebuilding a War-Torn Society: A Review of UNHCR Reintegration Programme for Mozambican Refugees”. Geneva: July. p. 1.

rehabilitation and reconstruction work. Furthermore, given the high ratio of refugees to non-refugees in many of the hardest hit areas UNHCR undertook to provide relief aid to entire district populations, whether or not they were refugees under the UN Convention. Still, a frank and valuable analysis of the entire repatriation and reintegration programme justly noted that “the progress which has been made in the Mozambican repatriation and reintegration process cannot necessarily be attributed to the effectiveness of UNHCR’s repatriation and reintegration programme”.⁷⁶ The report goes on to state:

UNHCR’s efforts to facilitate the reintegration process must also be assessed in the context of the refugees’ own repatriation strategies. Again relatively little is known about this subject. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that during their time in exile, the Mozambicans made careful plans to minimize the difficulties which they would encounter and the risks they would have to take when they finally returned to their homeland. Significantly, many thousands had made their way home by the time that UNHCR had established any repatriation, reception or reintegration facilities.⁷⁷

Certainly one of the driving qualities of the Mozambican repatriation was that 78 per cent returned spontaneously and independently of the massive UNHCR system.⁷⁸ In fact in the Malawi scenario, 90 per cent of the refugees self-repatriated between early 1993 and the end of 1994. Table 2 illustrates the historical refugee flows from Angonia into the neighbouring district of Dedza, Malawi. It mirrors the general pattern for all migration into Malawi, the largest host of Mozambican refugees. From a macro perspective the pattern of refugee movements to Dedza seems to be quit clear; as Renamo gained more territory the diaspora intensified, leaving the district virtually depopulated by 1990.⁷⁹ However, if we delve deeper into the historical geography of the war we are confronted with a “messier” reality.

Table 2. Mozambican refugee migration to Malawi, 1986–95

<i>Year</i>	<i>Dedza district</i>	<i>Rest of Malawi</i>
1986	150,000	80,000
1987	59,000	400,000
1988	113,000	600,000
1989	160,000	822,000
1990	174,000	926,000
1991	153,000	981,000
1992	149,000	1,000,000
1993	133,000	932,000
1994	5,000	100,000
1995	2,000	65,000

Source: UNHCR, 1993a, 1994a, 1995.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 4.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 5.

⁷⁸UNHCR 1996b, p. 2.

⁷⁹A. Callamard. 1994. “Malawian Refugee Policy, International Politics and the One-Party Regime”. *Journal of International Affairs*, 47 (2): 525–556; R. Zetter. 1995. “Incorporation and Exclusion: The Life Cycle of Malawi’s Refugee Assistance Program”. *World Development*, 23 (11): 1653–1667.

Local history

The most turbulent decade in Angonian history began around 1984, when Renamo established a permanent military presence in the district. By 1986 all but the capital of Angonia, Ulongue, and the sub-district capital of Domwe had fallen under the control of the guerrillas. For an approximate four-year period between 1986 and 1990, even these two strongholds were overrun by Renamo forces and occupied for short periods. In 1990 Frelimo returned in force to Angonia and recaptured Ulongue, Domwe and a small area of territory immediately adjacent to the towns. If, however, the analysis shifts to the local process of this forced movement in Angonia, a more complex scenario emerges, in which it is discovered that: (i) a significant number of refugees were fleeing Frelimo; (ii) a relatively large number of people remained inside Renamo-held territory in Angonia, surviving without the assistance or protection of the international community; and (iii) Renamo established a significant grass-roots following that provided the social and physical space for early repatriation to commence.⁸⁰

As Table 2 illustrates, from 1990 on Dedza exhibited a noticeable decline in refugee numbers while the rest of Malawi still was receiving asylum seekers. Since permanent internal refugee migration within Malawi following escape from Mozambique was insignificant, the only real cause for this decline was voluntary spontaneous repatriation. At the signing of the GPA it is estimated that 66,000 out of a population of around 250,000 had already repatriated to Angonia,⁸¹ while, according to a 1994 report by the Mozambican National Planning Commission, the number of people living in Domwe sub-district who were considered to be in Renamo-held territory was 18,641.⁸²

In general the data shows that the majority of Angonians did not brave the war and instead moved to Malawi as refugees. With the military support of Zimbabwe and Tanzania, Frelimo had re-established a stronger military presence in the district by 1990 and started to flush out those people who had still remained in Angonia. Even so, these military excursions were infrequent affairs, as one man who hid attests: “attacks would not take place more than two a month and people could be merry drinking and dancing to music from the cassettes”.⁸³ By 1990 the war of attrition and the region’s worst drought in 70 years, which had already devastated the rest of the country, had also overtaken north-eastern Tete. Nevertheless, the partial peace provided the opportunity for thousands of refugees informally and spontaneously to repatriate from Dedza back to Angonia two years prior to the GPA. In the Angonia case, most of these refugees went back to their original homes – mainly because of the nature of customary land tenure systems and the sociological importance of the village – the majority of which were in territory held by Renamo.⁸⁴ This was despite the international relief effort in Malawi, which according to

⁸⁰This local history and the grounds for Renamo support are elaborated on in O. Tataryn Juergensen. 1996. “Peasants on the Periphery: A Geohistory of Rural Change in Mozambique, c. 1960–1992”. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Geography, Queen’s University, Kingston, Canada.

⁸¹Interview with Dr Carlos Samaniego, National Planning Commission/Directorate of National Statistics, Maputo, 6 April 1994.

⁸²Mozambican National Planning Commission/Directorate of National Statistics. 1994. “Province of Tete: Population Indicators”. p. 114.

⁸³Miyanga, Mozambique. 14 February, 1994.

⁸⁴UNHCR, “Repatriation and Reintegration Process: Angonia, Tsangano and Macanga”; Comissão Nacional do Plano Mozambique. 1991. “Enumeração da População E Agregados Familiares Das Cidades E Algurs Distritos E Postos Administrativos de Mozambique”. p. 13.

UNHCR⁸⁵ and other relief organizations, was acting as a magnet for more Mozambicans to cross into Malawi at the time.

However, astonishingly, despite the severity of the war, the local coping strategy was not always to flee to the refugee camps in Malawi. In the following oral testimony some of the difficulties and contradictions faced by one person who remained in Angonia becomes evident:

Daily life changed once Renamo came, but we only feared Frelimo. Renamo came in 1982 and were very harsh, they were cutting down heads of people with axes but in 1984 we all stayed with them nicely. They were harsh to people away from us. It was impossible to resist because they would search in the house. There was no one who tried to hide things here but some people were taking their things to Malawi such as cattle and goats. They [Renamo] would take anything, even the last chicken. Then Frelimo used to come and kill people because they were saying the people were supporting Renamo. We were scared and very afraid but lucky enough we were a group. Things became tense but the Renamo were making meetings telling us that we should not run away.

The Renamo were telling the people that everyone will be free to do whatever he wanted. Renamo told the people they could do their farming wherever they want. One could own the land as his personal property. Most people supported them. People got themselves involved because they were convinced by what Renamo was saying. It was not out of fear, but we wanted to help. I did not want to go to Malawi to starve in the camps. I stayed because I wanted to see and die in my homeland.⁸⁶

A resolute middle-aged woman describes life in 1982–1994 and the difficulties that her and her family had to endure while living in Renamo territory only a few kilometres from the Malawi border in one direction and an FAM base in another:

The problem with living here was that everything we needed came from Malawi and we needed money. It was not easy to obtain such things as cooking oil, soap and other things. My husband used to take maize and beans from here and exchange them in Malawi. Sometimes we would go by foot to Mtengowagwa or take the bike. We met a lot of problems because sometimes we would meet the Commrados (FAM) who would take the bicycle from us and then try to tie us up. But we did not stop going to Malawi.⁸⁷

This is not to absolve Renamo, which similarly attacked villages suspected of being pro-Frelimo, creating its own wake of refugees, as a woman who lived close to Ulongue describes in one 1984 incident:

The Renamo were demanding things from us. They also killed a lot of people. They came three times and many people were hiding in the bush. About six people were buried in one grave. After they were gone we used to go back. We

⁸⁵ UNHCR. 1992. "Mozambique: The Next Somalia?" *Refugees*, December (91): 30–33.

⁸⁶ Miyanga, Mozambique. 15 January 1994.

⁸⁷ Miyanga, Mozambique. 9 February 1994.

had been doing that several times. After some days in the bush we came to Malawi. I only brought a few things in a basket; all our things were destroyed.⁸⁸

An ethnography of repatriation, reconstruction and reconciliation

*When I see people I have not seen in a long-time I usually greet them and tell them they should be happy and free because this is their country.*⁸⁹

The village elder quoted above echoes an overriding sentiment in Angonia: there would be no festering legacy of social conflict that might send Mozambique back to war. Unlike the ethnic tensions fuelling strife elsewhere in Africa, the Mozambican civil war was primarily fought along military lines, without much direct civilian involvement.

Once Frelimo and Renamo became tactically less aggressive in Angonia the opportunity was created for a partial return to normal everyday rural life. The 1990–91 military stand-off stimulated refugees, some of whom had lived in crowded camps in Malawi for up to 10 years, to embark on short forays back into Mozambique. At first these journeys were to collect much needed firewood, which had become very expensive in the denuded Dedza hills: “Firewood was one of our main problems as we needed it for cooking. In Malawi wood was very expensive so I would travel 40 km in Mozambique on my bike and collect firewood.”⁹⁰ Over time these forays took on greater significance in terms of generating income, as carpenters for example began to search for timber to turn into much-sought-after furniture to be sold in the Dedza markets at a good profit; while fisherman and hunters roamed the very rich Angonian plateau in search of food to eat and sell. One resolute ex-migrant labourer who showed off his prized carpenter’s tools boasted of having gone back to Angonia many times to cut timber planks to make tables and chairs: “I get paid in maize for my work and then I buy firewood with flour.”⁹¹

After enduring a decade of the same mundane and nutritionally poor diet, small garden plots and pastures began to be reclaimed within sight of the Malawi border, to improve food security: “The food is not enough here (Malawi); we do not even have a garden, we do not have many things. I go to my garden in Mozambique [only a few hundred metres from her tiny hut] once a week.”⁹² Apart from small quantities of oil and pulses the rations contained almost no fat or micro-nutrients; while relishes such as tomatoes, onions, or greens were totally absent from the refugee pantry. With each encroachment the refugees grew bolder and eventually, by mid-1992, a substantial number had returned to their villages to begin to rebuild their homes and prepare their fields for planting: “The husband will be the first to return home and will stay a few days and then return. Many people have already gone home but we don’t talk about it. I just want to go home.”⁹³ The primary reason that this coping strategy was not publicly discussed was the possibility that the family would lose its precious UNHCR-Malawi ration card.

There were inevitable setbacks, for example when someone stepped on a landmine or was captured by an occasional Frelimo or Renamo patrol and detained. But these became less

⁸⁸Njonja, Malawi. 9 August 1993.

⁸⁹Miyanga, Mozambique. 9 February 1994.

⁹⁰Mtengowagwa, Malawi. 8 July 1993.

⁹¹Mtengowagwa, Malawi. 8 July 1993.

⁹²Mtengowagwa, Malawi. 9 July 1993.

⁹³Mtengowagwa, Malawi. 9 July 1993.

frequent as the prospects that the GPA would be signed grew stronger. Renamo was happy to see the peasants returning because it gave them legitimacy in the territory they controlled and they could extort a small tax from the returnees. Furthermore, most of the Renamo soldiers were from Angonia or Tete province, and it was likely that they were known to the refugees, shared the same culture, and could speak the lingua franca, Chewa. In the case of the FAM, their ranks comprised conscripts from across Mozambique who were unfamiliar with the geography or people of the area. The vast majority those people in the refugee camps in Dedza supported Renamo, whose forces often visited the camps, but for primarily non-military reasons;⁹⁴ usually locally brewed beer, a conjugal visit or the collection of basic foodstuffs were the motives. In the twilight of the conflict the FAM became less adventurous, and when the GPA was initialled the troops in Angonia were permanently quartered at the military barracks in Ulongue. Eventually, both sides agreed to suspend any “offensive patrols or manoeuvres” or the occupation of “new positions”, bringing to an end a decade of intense fighting in the district.⁹⁵

Renamo moved around without much hindrance from the local Malawian authorities or the refugee community in Dedza. The basis of this freedom was not so much the threat of force, as it was apt to be inside Mozambique, but that people saw the rebels fighting for their locally defined “democratic” rights.⁹⁶ During the war, as Renamo became stronger, and Frelimo more reactionary towards the local population, more and more people began to embrace the rebels’ “democratic” platform which hinged on the re-establishment of the cultural norms of local traditional rules and customs. Nordstrom’s work on the ethnography of warfare and terror in Sri Lanka and Mozambique is conceptually helpful in understanding how the “dirty war” of violence aimed at bringing about the political acquiescence of the civilian population can backfire and spur resistance.⁹⁷ In her experience, it was Renamo’s attempt at literally and symbolically dismembering Mozambican society that created the conditions in which “violence paralleled power” in countryside.⁹⁸ In Angonia however, there were multiple instruments and forms of military–political power (Frelimo, Renamo, officers, soldiers, chiefs), but the deepest resistance was shown towards those responsible for the disruption of cultural life and for forced migration. In this regard, the extreme exercise of power backfired on Frelimo; the life-worlds that were clamoured for harked back to traditional social organization and the ability to live in Mozambique. Eventually, when it came time for the 1994 elections, Renamo’s basic message, that it was coming to remove communism and restore the freedom to do “business”, practise

⁹⁴The story of the local dynamics in Mulange District, along the south-eastern Malawian border region, and the much more pitched battle for control of the district of Milange in Zambezia has been skilfully addressed by Wilson and Nunes. Although the focus of their work is slightly different from the present, the authors do explore the changing nature of Renamo and Frelimo and their relationship with the peasantry, and make the important observation that “leading Frelimo- and Renamo-supporting refugees clearly remain in the camps at least partly to press their political cause against one another” (1994: 202). In other words, although the war did not openly spill over the Malawian border, the feelings and politics did. Unlike in Mulange, the refugee communities were not as divided in Dedza, where there was extensive support for the insurgents. Of the 13 major settlement centres in Dedza district only Mphati, which was less than a kilometre from the government army base at Ntaka, was considered to be pro-Frelimo.

⁹⁵*General Peace Accord of Mozambique, 1992, Protocol VI, p. 2*

⁹⁶For a local perspective see O. Tataryn Juergensen. 1994. “Angonia: Why Renamo?” *Southern Africa Report*, 10 (2): 13–16.

⁹⁷C. Nordstrom. 1992. “The Backyard Front”. In *Paths to Domination, Resistance, and Terror*, C. Nordstrom and J. Martin, eds. Berkeley: University of California. 260–274.

⁹⁸*Ibid.* p. 269.

traditional customs and fight for “democracy”, won substantial favour in Angonia,⁹⁹ and in the elections Renamo won nine of the 15 seats in Tete province, including that of Angonia.

Indications of public backing for Renamo in Malawi ranged from their being allowed to sell smoked wild boar and hippopotamus meat at the weekly markets that circulated along the border to the appearance of buttons, posters and innumerable women’s cloth wraps (chitenjes) adorned with Dhlakama’s portrait.¹⁰⁰ Frelimo propaganda, the Portuguese language, or any other sign that Mozambique even existed next door were completely absent from the refugee landscape. Yet the refugees still saw themselves as “Mozambicans” and longed to go home where “there was plenty of land and we could grow our own things”.¹⁰¹ Because many of the refugee settlements in Dedza were within sight of the Mozambican border the refugees were reminded on a daily basis of their life in fertile and sparsely populated Angonia – long referred to as the “breadbasket” of Mozambique.

The refugees were indeed leery of returning to Angonia, yet they still risked the trek: “I went to swap things, but I was too afraid to spend the night. I will go after the elections; we can take Angola as an example, peace will not last.”¹⁰² This risk had in large part to do with the dreary and impoverished life in the refugee camps. The numbers, combined with the already existing large Malawian population, meant that Dedza became overcrowded very quickly. Given that peasant family cultivation based on slash-and-burn methods was the primary mode of production, the degradation of the local environment was swift and extensive. Furthermore, traditional landholding did not allow for the refugees to acquire land to remain self-sufficient and supplement their meagre UNHCR rations: “Our biggest problem is food, we do not get enough and the quality is poor. It does not even last a week.”¹⁰³

Not only was the quality poor, but often logistical problems associated with food and relief distribution compounded the refugees’ plight. The “tippers” who would distribute the food every fortnight were well known for abusing their positions of power over what not only amounted to food, but in reality the “currency” of the camps. When a refugee came to collect his or her basic food rations, the daily allocation was supposed to be 450 grammes of maize flour, 40 grammes of pulses, 20 grammes of groundnuts, 20 grammes of sugar and 5 grammes of salt.¹⁰⁴ However, the tippers commonly short-changed the refugees. Even though the distribution of these goods was conducted in the presence of the Red Cross, UNHCR and the WFP, the strictures of refugee life rarely provide the freedom and strength to complain openly about the shortages.¹⁰⁵ The counterfeiting and black marketeering in ration cards provided another means of gaining food and cash. This was a boon to the underground war economy at all levels of government, as well as to non-governmental and traditional authority, as one refugee remembers: “Some chiefs used to come in the houses and ask for food as a tax.”¹⁰⁶ In conversation with relief workers, and over

⁹⁹These conceptions are developed in greater detail in Tataryn Juergensen 1996.

¹⁰⁰There were none with Chissano’s likeness available; conversely, in Tete City, Dhlakama’s image was absent from the shops and streets.

¹⁰¹Ndamera, Malawi. 13 August 1993.

¹⁰²Mphati, Malawi. 4 August 1993.

¹⁰³Ndamera, Malawi. 6 December 1993.

¹⁰⁴UNHCR 1993b. “UNHCR Briefing Note for Mozambican Refugees”. Lilongwe; UNHCR. 1994b. “Modified Food Distribution in Dedza Refugee Settlements”. Lilongwe.

¹⁰⁵Njati, Malawi. 3 December 1993, and personal communication with representatives of the above-mentioned agencies.

¹⁰⁶Njonja, Malawi. 13 December 1993.

time, from many personal observations, these amounts were of some consequence and not unusual.¹⁰⁷

Overwhelmingly people were tired and wanted to go home and live a normal life again where they could farm the bountiful soil of Angonia. Even a hardened Renamo commandant who had spent more than 10 years in the bush was of mixed emotions, on one hand responding to the chance that Renamo might lose the elections by tersely remarking that “Renamo did not sign the GPA to turn in its guns”, but on the other saying: “I am tired, I want there to be peace so I can start working and go cultivate my land.”¹⁰⁸ In a sense, he was a captive in a large fertile district (Angonia) but could not farm because signs of permanent agricultural activity would have eventually attracted the FAM’s attention. As can be imagined, this theme was very common among the refugee population: “In Mozambique there is no problem with land and if a person has land they are lucky because then they have food.”¹⁰⁹

As skirmishes became less frequent, border crossings to collect fuelwood, trade in ivory, hunt, or re-establish abandoned farms became the primary activities of the Mozambicans. As long as people remained in the territory held by the government or guerrillas there was little aggression. Although the GPA was signed in October, it did not take full effect on the ground (in terms of free and safe internal movement of people) until early 1993, when the bulk of Mozambicans began cautiously and permanently to move back across the border to begin the process of reconstruction and reconciliation. It must be emphasized, however, that given the large support for Renamo in Angonia and in the refugee camps of Malawi (all but one of the camps in Dedza was pro-Renamo), the issue of reconciliation was more between the government and the returnees than among villagers. Reconciliation was concerned with such questions as traditional authority, landholding, small enterprise development and accepting Renamo as a local alternative, and not reparations, personal vendettas, ethnicity or military–political power struggles.

International presence and impact

Subsequently, what the Mozambican repatriation did was to re-stimulate UNHCR into adopting a longer-term “development” approach to its work in countries experiencing, or emerging from, conflict.¹¹⁰ By this time, the new international discourse on PBR was also taking hold among academics and practitioners, who were pushing in addition for closer integration of emergency relief and development planning so that the mechanisms for a lasting transition to peace could be nurtured. Thus while this was not new for those involved in refugee studies,¹¹¹ suddenly it also

¹⁰⁷Njati, Malawi. 12 July 1993.

¹⁰⁸Lubwe, Mozambique. 19 July 1993.

¹⁰⁹Kolambo, Mozambique. 11 April 1994.

¹¹⁰T. Betts. 1984. “Evolution and Promotion of the Integrated Rural Development Approach to Refugee Policy in Africa”. *Africa Today*, 1: 7–24; B. Harrell-Bond 1986; R. Gorman. 1986. “Beyond ICARA II: Implementing Refugee-Related Development Assistance”. *International Migration Review*, 20 (2): 283–298; J. Cuenod. 1989. “Refugees: Development or Relief”. In *Refugees in International Relations*, G. Loescher and L. Monahan. eds, Oxford: Oxford University Press. 219–253; B. Stein. 1994. “Ad Hoc Assistance to Return Movements and Long-term Development Programmes”. In *When Refugees Go Home*, edited by T. Allen and H. Morsink. London: James Currey. 50–70.

¹¹¹The notion of linking refugee relief aid and development aid in Africa was first promoted in the early 1960s within the framework of zonal development. The objective of this approach was to address *all* of the development questions of a region (including refugees) by integrating the efforts and resources of the UN system, the NGO

gained a higher priority among the major donor countries and their leaders, who were facing greater domestic accountability after financing years of non-durable solutions in Africa.

In terms of logistical outside support many refugees noted the need for seeds, hoes, cooking utensils and food as being a priority. Through World Vision International these items were distributed in Angonia in November 1993, as each family received three months of food rations to ease the transition through to the first 1994 harvest. Again, the rations were inadequate (13.5 kg of maize, 1.2 kg of beans, 0.6 litres of oil per person/month) to meet minimum nutritional requirements. Fortunately, many families were able to supplement their diets by hunting and collecting wild fruits and vegetables. Given the highly political and symbolic nature of the control and distribution of emergency relief commodities, there were problems. For example, responsibility for the allocation of these items fell to Frelimo, which at the end of the war held the major towns and cities, while vast tracts of the countryside were in the hands of the rebels. Renamo was marginalized in this process, even under great protest from the international NGOs (some of which actually considered suspending operations unless they were allowed to go into Renamo-controlled areas in Angonia and neighbouring Macanga). With an election on the horizon and PBR money pouring into the country, Frelimo could demonstrate that it was in charge of the national reconstruction and development process. Frelimo's position was further enhanced when in December 1993 UNHCR in Malawi announced that it would be ending its humanitarian relief operation in Dedza (it would continue for another year in other parts of Malawi). This move was not very surprising, since by the end of 1993 most of the refugees had returned to Angonia to get ready for the December planting season; however, as a coping strategy many households had kept family members in Malawi to collect the bi-monthly food rations until the end of the year.

There were several international NGOs working in Angonia, namely the Lutheran World Federation, the Jesuit Refugee Service, Médecins sans Frontières, DANIDA and the International Rescue Committee, which worked in conjunction with the local Mozambican authorities to re-establish basic infrastructural needs, ranging from building roads to minor income-generating activities. Again, the distribution of aid relief and freedom to fulfil mandates and even projects was left to the discretion of the local government officials. This clearly had a negative effect on the services available in the non-government-controlled areas. For example, by March 1994, when the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, visited Angonia to witness personally the repatriation, personnel at five of the 10 traditional health posts located in Renamo-controlled territory had received some minor training and medications, while the health infrastructure had been rehabilitated at all the health centres in government-controlled areas.¹¹² In the areas of education and water the situation was worse: of the 21 schools and 35 water projects rehabilitated or constructed in Angonia by this time, none were in the Renamo strongholds in the central and western part of the district.

community, and governments. In 1963 the High Commissioner reported to the 17th General Assembly of the United Nations:

The Commissioner considers it most important that permanent solutions should be so conceived as to solve humanitarian problems and at the same time contribute to the economic and social progress of the country of asylum, and that, [w]ith this object in view the High Commissioner is seeking to avail himself of the possibilities which might be offered to refugees under technical assistance projects supported by the United Nations and its specialized agencies in the countries concerned (UNHCR, 1963: 9)

¹¹²UNHCR 1994a.

This maldistribution had potentially negative consequences, but fortunately a combination of demobilization and mass repatriation helped defuse this potentially dangerous situation. The containment of 600 FAM soldiers in Ulongue and approximately 400 Renamo rebels at its military base at the tip of southern Angonia quickly demilitarized Angonia and eased tensions in the district.¹¹³ Although there were landmine casualties, these were not numerous and thus did not pose a significant threat to the resumption of agriculture or transportation. Remarkably, there were no reported military skirmishes after October 1992, despite the fact that the armoured infantry from Botswana based at the provincial capital, Tete City, were more than four hours' journey time from Angonia and rarely travelled the difficult unpaved road to the district to inspect the troop demobilization.

The most important international presence was not from the "peacekeeping" component of the UN, but rather that of humanitarian relief, led by UNHCR. The activities of UNHCR were both pro-active and symbolic in encouraging the repatriation from Malawi. UNHCR was able to collect and publish important demographic and socio-economic data which formed the basis of the humanitarian effort. Once such information was part of the public record it was harder to deny access to former enemy areas. Although it was not always able to alter the government's decisions regarding aid distribution and reconstruction sites, the field presence did provide a certain amount of accountability, security, conflict mediation, trust and community building, which contributed to the overall reintegration process. Angonia, unlike some other parts of Mozambique, did not have a dual administration (Frelimo and Renamo) managing the relief operation. Thus, if it were not for some external presence the distribution of goods and services would probably have been even more inequitable for the people living or returning to Renamo territory. The distributions that the author witnessed in Renamo areas were a far cry from even those in Malawi, since food and household utensils were issued with no controls or recourse if shortages occurred. Many peasants complained of not receiving their full entitlements of food, pots, pans and blankets, while more or less simultaneously supplies of these easily recognizable items were readily for sale in nearby markets.

Exhausted by war fatigue, but happy to be home again, the people of Angonia conveyed an overwhelming sense of optimism by mid-1994. The lack of a clear military victor in the conflict and the lack of any deep-rooted popular ideological basis/cause to the war made reintegration a relatively smooth affair. Even while the people were displaced in Malawi, there were few reported instances; in fact, overwhelmingly people interviewed agreed with the sentiment that "in the villages Renamo and Frelimo people do not quarrel".¹¹⁴ From the vantage point of the peasantry they had been pawns in a bigger struggle, one that had left them devastated. Perhaps the view of an articulate former Frelimo party secretary captures why the reconciliation and repatriation process went so smoothly: "The people acted out of survival, not ideas; they simply wanted to move home and survive."¹¹⁵

¹¹³ International Organization for Migration. 1995. "Mozambique: Demobilization Programme". Maputo: January.

¹¹⁴ Mtengowagwa, Malawi. 8 July 1993.

¹¹⁵ Chimbaya, Malawi. 15 April 1994.

Conclusion and future directions

Where two elephants fight it is the grass that suffers.
Malawian proverb

The two main objectives of this paper were to review the concept of PBR as a tool for facilitating the delicate transition from war to peace, and to gain an understanding of how this process evolved in Mozambique and manifested itself at the local level. By attempting to understand the migration patterns of refugees in northern Tete province on the basis of this political context, we can see that “voting with your feet” can have different meanings and motivations rooted as much in the local context as in international political relations. In relative terms the UN was able to implement its agenda for peace in Mozambique. Given that, in comparison, the accomplishments of the missions engaged in similar operations in Somalia, the Great Lakes area, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Angola have spiralled towards disappointment, Mozambique stands out as a successful and practical example for the international community in Africa. No doubt this success can be partially measured on the basis of the speedy and large-scale repatriation and reintegration of the displaced population. The level of confidence and the impetus created by the movement of people in districts such as far-off Angonia began to consolidate PBR almost independently of the fragile power politics of the various tripartite agreements for repatriation, Frelimo–Renamo relations and the different international PBR mandates.

This study has correspondingly tried to demonstrate that different historical and methodological viewpoints are needed to gain an overall understanding of the dramatic social changes associated with war and the ephemeral period (from the perspective of the international community) of transition to a postwar situation. True, Mozambique might be on its way to moving from a post-conflict to a post-post-conflict phase; however it is still to be determined whether the loftier PBR goals of democracy, development and the rebuilding of civil society have taken, or ever will take, root fully in the country on the basis of the agenda for peace. Expectations created by PBR were heavily subsidized by external agents; today, however, as the immediate high tide of the emergency has passed, this involvement and the public’s confidence has waned, and it looks as if beyond the locus of the capital, Maputo, Mozambique once again finds itself facing a difficult road.

It must be noted that the achievements of the Mozambican PBR process were founded to a considerable degree on the joint political will of Frelimo and Renamo to end their fighting and on the national will of the people of Mozambique to begin reviving their destroyed lives and communities. When one considers the large number of refugees who returned to the neglected Renamo-held territory in spite of the marginalization of these areas, it only further stresses the point that ultimately the PBR process is internally driven and negotiated, first within the moral economy of the village, and then beyond to other points on the district, provincial and national compass. The dimension provided by the international community is not without substance, but should be located within the broader understanding of the roots of the conflict and its local pre- and post-conflict manifestations.

The Mozambican example further reinforces the need to press for a closer integration and co-ordination of the shared objectives of alleviating short-term human suffering (relief) and long-term suffering (development). The process of PBR is inherently a process of changing the pre-existing social and physical landscape. In many African countries the rehabilitation or reconstruction of democratic principles, the rule of law and even basic infrastructure, education

and health services, never existed in the first place. Therefore, PBR in many instances is a simultaneous process of construction and development. Greater sustained international commitments that support the interface between political, humanitarian and development assistance, which builds on local capacities, are central if the potential dividends of peace are to be nurtured in places such as Mozambique. If long-term development investments are not conceptualized and integrated into the PBR effort, then a collapse into a new cycle of instability should not come as a surprise. Therefore, despite Mozambique's earlier success at reconciliation and reintegration, the expectation of an equitable and just society still seems fragile.

The argument for greater analysis at local level, which can provide some contextualization for strategic thinking on PBR and its connection to repatriation, also emerges from the discussion. This is particularly important in war-torn societies that have been geographically split by conflict, but often remain socially united through history, culture and imagination. The need to make use of this social fabric is crucial if a sensitive reading of peasant politics and history is to inform future decisions regarding aid, relief and reconstruction. In Angonia the common culture and history eased tensions, but a still greater decentralization of the PBR programme would have been beneficial. This action would have been locally empowering, increased accountability; provided the international community a closer perspective of what is happening on the ground, and built trust, fairness and cooperation; all of these are necessary social and political elements needed successfully to (re)build civil society. Fortunately, in Mozambique there was no re-trenchment of or return to hostilities as has been all too common in the continent.

Lastly, although this paper has concentrated on Mozambique, it represents a modest first attempt at trying to link academic inquiry with an understanding of practical responses under the most difficult of situations in order to gain some useful understanding of the complex, and often contradictory, circumstances of the war-to-peace transition and patterns of migration at local level. Although there were both successes and failures in the case of Mozambique, the challenge remains to continue to engage with these highly charged events in a positive and progressive fashion, with the goal of creating a body of working knowledge that can be successfully translated into concrete policy and programming directions.

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