



Malyn Newitt with Patrick Chabal, Norrie Macqueen, eds. *Community and the State in Lusophone Africa*. London: King's College, 2003. xvi + 184 pp. No price listed (paper), ISBN 978-1-897747-15-5.

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The Problematic State in Angola and Mozambique

Lusophone African countries have experienced a particularly problematic transition from colonies to statehood. Consequently, for much of the post-independence period, these countries have struggled to create stable polities and economies. Within this small community of African countries who share the same colonial oppressor, Angola and Mozambique—given their size, geographical situation, resource endowment, complex internal dynamics, and foreign policies—have, undoubtedly, suffered the worst consequences, including long and devastating civil wars. The book under review focuses on post-independence politics and society in Angola and Mozambique. The title, therefore, does not properly reflect the book's contents inasmuch as the majority of lusophone African countries—Cape-Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and Sao Tome e Principe—have not been included. What is included is a reasonably deep discussion of some of the issues that have constrained the development of stable states in key lusophone African countries and, at least in the case of Mozambique, a discussion of how some of those critical issues were addressed.

The chapters, four on Angola and four on Mozambique, in addition to the introduction by Malyn Newitt, were originally presented at a conference on New Research on Lusophone Africa held in May 2002 at King's College London. The first chapter on Angola, by Nuno Vidal, focuses on post-modern patrimonialism. Vidal begins with a brief discussion of modern patrimonialism to make the point that Angola has moved past this degenerative stage that characterizes African politics and

societies and currently exists in an even more problematic condition best defined as post-modern patrimonialism. Admittedly, patrimonialism provides an incomplete framework for understanding Angola's politics and society after independence, but for reasons distinct from those Vidal provides. From the patrimonialist perspective, "ties of preferential solidarity" (p. 1), based on such micro-identities as region, religion, ethnicity, clan, and race have supplanted more universal solidarity ties such as citizenship or horizontal types such as class that were expected to emerge with the advent of independence for the former European colonies in Africa. But this expectation was too optimistic and highly exaggerated, reflecting the idealistic hopes of both—some Africanist academics and most African nationalist leaders. In reality, at the time of decolonization, the inhabitants of most newly independent states did not automatically adhere to notions of macro-identity like citizenship because they derived much of their identities from their membership in specific sub-national groups. In fact, for many of these sub-national groups, independence was seen as an opportunity to reclaim their identities after the long colonial overlay. In other words, in post-colonial Africa, there were no "solidarities of a universal nature" to supplant because their development was, at best, embryonic and generally inexistent (p. 1).

Post-modern patrimonialism—centered on the notion that distributive interdependence based on patrimonial networks "did not consolidate but were instead diluted" (p. 3)—does not go much beyond its un-hyphenated coun-

terpart in providing a clear description of what has taken place in Angola since independence. The fact of the matter is that several types of such patrimonial networks not only consolidated, they have become critical for managing the political, economic, and coercive spheres in society. For example, there is a strong political network centered at Futungo de Belas presidential compound, which expands outward into society in concentric clientelistic circles. Second, there is an economic network that ensures, financed by oil revenues, that some members of society grow grotesquely rich while others barely survive. Third, there is a military/security network linking the commander-in-chief to the soldiers and security officers that have ensured the survival of the regime. This particular network hinges on the "class" of generals who, after being properly looked after through various forms of compensation—including mining concessions to engage in diamond mining—are, in turn, expected to look after "their" soldiers. In other words, there is a strong patrimonial network supporting most critical pillars of the post-colonial state in Angola.

Evidently, most Angolans do not participate in and do not benefit from membership in such networks leading to the situation of neglect that Vidal so well describes. But this neglect cannot be viewed only in terms of existence or absence of these internal networks. In many respects, the ruling elites could afford to neglect their "constituents" due to the existence of strong external ties of solidarity. Specifically, the large number of foreign NGOs operating in Angola provided essential services to the population, particularly in peripheral rural areas, thus allowing the government to neglect some of its functions to focus more on operations closer to the center. But even if one accepts Vidal's neglect argument, it does not necessarily follow that some sort of awakening of class consciousness should have been expected. The members of the biggest class—the peasants—were too preoccupied with physical survival while the others were so embryonic that they lacked cohesion, let alone much consciousness to awake.

In the second chapter on Angola, Imogen Parsons looks at conflict and the (de)formation of the state. She does so, however, without adequately contextualizing the very specific and highly turbulent period in this country's history she seeks to analyze. Thus, the analysis loses much of its strength since the end of the war in Angola. Looking at the historical period Parsons focuses on, the actions of the regime were not at all incompatible with its main goal, i.e., survival. State-building during the long civil war was not MPLA's primary preoccupation.

This explains why, "having consolidated their own position," MPLA "showed considerable reluctance to extend official protection and inclusion over the territory of the Angolan state, even to those parts to which they had laid claim" (p.44).

Parsons's key argument is that the state in Angola, as elsewhere in Central Africa, "is being (de)formed" and the new order into which it is being transformed "takes the form of an increasingly *informalised* state" with its own particular "structure and logic" (p. 37). The reality on the ground supports Parsons's contention that the Angolan state lacks "apparent form" (p. 37). The argument arises with Parsons's analysis of how the Angolan state acquired this form over time. MPLA had an idea of the state it wanted to build in Angola after independence. It would be constructed along Western, even if socialist, lines. In other words, MPLA inherited a "(de)formed" colony and attempted to transform it into a socialist state. There was not yet a state to be (de)formed. The process of state formation MPLA envisaged—or, more precisely, the transition from colony to state—was effectively frustrated by the dynamics of a protracted civil war. This process of transition from colony to socialist state—involving, among other ambitious goals, the creation of "a new man" (*homen novo*), i.e., a new ideational framework for post-colonial society—was expected to be highly challenging even in conditions of peace due to the nature of the colonial experience and the haphazard decolonization process. The reality of the informalized state represents MPLA's attempts, distorted by war, to create, by trial and error, the foundations of the new state and, critically, the rules of the game for managing conflicts in the post-colonial society. In other words, the "structure and logic" of the state MPLA had envisaged for post-independence Angola was far from chaotic; it was orderly, even if only in a Soviet sense. It was post-independence violence that fundamentally altered how MPLA approached its state-building objectives. The war effectively distorted MPLA's sense of priorities. As regime survival became the overriding concern, the state-building ideals that drove the liberation struggle, alas, were downgraded to lower levels of priority. So, it was not so much that, after achieving and consolidating power, MPLA showed reluctance to extend official protection and inclusion. MPLA never fully consolidated its domain much beyond key urban areas. Indeed, MPLA itself needed protection from Cuban and Soviet troops to survive.

Now that survival is no longer a concern, there is both greater willingness to use national resources to ex-

tend state functions throughout the entire territory and a growing recognition of the need to undertake concrete measures to remove the country from the “underside of globalization” and to place it in the mainstream (p. 47). This suggests that, in conditions of peace, the notion of the “shadow state” loses some of its relevance in the Angolan context. However, paradoxically, Angola will continue to be a problematic state partly because of the incompatibility between the new political and economic models—now neo-liberal, but still Western—guiding post-war state-building and the realities of Angolan society, still African.

The third chapter on Angola, by Paulo de Carvalho, focus on social exclusion. It presents a detailed review of statistics showing the low level of human development and the high levels of social exclusion in Angola. This is important in and of itself. However, it could have gone much beyond that. Specifically, for example, and given the book’s focus on the state, a deeper discussion on how excluded citizens relate to the state would be very helpful. Also, what are the implications for state-building, both in terms of short-term stability and longer-term sustainability, when the majority of the citizens are socially excluded? This is a critical question for post-civil war Angola upon which Angola specialists can make an important contribution.

As Carvalho convincingly explains, even some war veterans who lost limbs defending the state have been effectively abandoned by the same state and have been forced to fend for themselves, often resorting to begging and other humiliating activities to survive. The lament by one of these individuals, with which Carvalho closes his chapter, is pregnant with political meaning: “I don’t know whether the government only needs us when one is well, after being neutralized one is nothing. I don’t know why he is doing this. We want this to end. We want this to end, oh boss. This really ought to end” (p. 74). This may also be construed as a warning of violent things to come unless these war veterans and all other segments of the population currently excluded can be given a stake in the country’s future. The author though, by ending with the excluded person’s lament, misses an opportunity to engage the critical political question pertaining to the dynamics of the problematic relationships between citizens and the state in Angola.

In the final chapter on Angola, Paul Robson and Sandra Roque look at/for community and collective action and find, unsurprisingly, that it is “rare for peri-urban residents spontaneously to organize themselves to tackle

their common problems” (p. 91). Post-colonial policies encouraged this peculiar behavior. In several important respects the citizens were disempowered by a post-colonial state that insisted on accumulating power while encroaching—in some cases even managing—private domains of the citizens. The MPLA-dominated state is only reluctantly accepting the liberal notion that places the individual, not the party, at the center of society. The party-centered notion that endured for much of the post-independence period produced, expectedly, significant social peculiarities, including citizens’ unwillingness to tackle their common problems. The general expectation is that the state or the international NGOs that proliferated in the post-independence period have the primary responsibility to resolve those problems. Alas, this is not unique to Angola. Mozambique, the other lusophone African country, to which half of the book is dedicated, presents similar issues.

The four chapters on Mozambique focus on political transition (Eduardo Siteo), democratic decentralization (Einar Braathen), the peace process (Roberto Morozzo della Rocca and Luca Riccardi), and boundaries (Corrado Tornimbeni).

Although Tornimbeni’s chapter appears last, it provides an indispensable background to understand where Mozambique is coming from: the oppressive colonial system, complete with “labour reserves,” similar in many respects to other oppressive systems that existed in the region and throughout the continent during European occupation. More recent struggles for peace, democratic stability, and development must be analyzed against this historical background.

On more contemporary issues, Siteo offers a very lucid articulation of the factors that drove Mozambique’s democratization process. He provides important insights into FRELIMO’s ideological metamorphoses as the ruling party sought to find pragmatic ways to evolve and fulfill what it regarded as its historical responsibilities in the midst of important changes at the domestic, regional, and international levels. Importantly, he argues that “inter-elite struggles,” not FRELIMO’s pragmatic changes over time, were the “triggers of a meaningful democracy” that is now being constructed in Mozambique (p. 19).

Braathen’s chapter focuses more specifically on democratic decentralization in Mozambique. Unnecessarily, however, it starts out by comparing Mozambique with other “war torn societies” to point out that this country is a “political and economic sunshine story” (p. 99). It is not clear why Mozambique should retain the

“war torn” label even after a decade of peace. Unless there is a specific cut-off point, after which time a society is no longer considered war torn, most African societies can be considered “war torn.” And, from this perspective, by comparison Mozambique is not such a sunshine story. Even more to the point, as the author notes, “repatriation and destabilization” (p. 100), including the “militarization of politics” (p. 101), is a feature of Mozambican politics. This is not the stuff sunshine stories are made of. Admittedly, Mozambique has taken important steps toward consolidating peace. It is also seeking to rebuild itself after the generalized destruction caused by the devastating civil war. Still, it faces colossal challenges at both the political and economic levels. It is too early to suggest whether the neo-liberal models it is currently pursuing will sustain peace and development. In other words, it may be somewhat premature to label Mozambique a “sunshine story,” even if it gave itself a chance in 1992 to achieve this optimistic goal by successfully negotiating the end of the civil war.

Roberto Morozzo della Rocca and Luca Riccardi provide excellent insights into the long negotiation process that culminated in the Rome Peace Accords that ended Mozambique’s civil war. The authors focus on the factors that induced the belligerents to make peace. Unlike the peace processes elsewhere in Africa, especially in Angola, where the mediators could exert tremendous pressure upon the opposing sides by threatening to cut off political, military, or financial support, the peace process in Mozambique was unique. The mediators—the Community of Sant’Egidio, the Italian government representative, and the archbishop of Beira—patiently provided the FRELIMO government and RENAMO ample time to “overcome their stubborn political and mental reluctance” and come to the realization that the acceptance of each other’s right to exist was a pre-condition for peace (p. 130). This, for the authors, was the turning point in the peace process and ensured that the peace

of Rome for Mozambique, unlike the peace of Bicesse for Angola, was “convincing” for both parties. But the authors overemphasize the role played by both the mediators and warring factions in achieving peace while arguing that international factors played little or no role in ending the war in Mozambique. Della Rocca and Riccardi correctly point out that the Rome Peace Accords were not achieved as a result of superpower intervention or the promise of significant rewards but by the negotiators’ ability to decipher “the complex terms in the question of legitimacy” (p. 130). However, the international context was obviously important, even if only indirectly. After all, the peace accord for Mozambique was signed in 1992, a year after the end of the Cold War, an event that was expected to usher in a new period of peace and stability in world affairs. In the optimistic euphoria of that time, the end of conflicts—from the global/ideological level down to the intrastate level—was expected to generate important “peace dividends.” Mozambique, a peripheral but highly dependent country, could ill afford to ignore the global winds of change. Unlike Angola, where the belligerents could afford to ignore the wishes of the international community, if only temporarily and at great cost, due to their control of important sources of revenue, the key players in Mozambique lacked such resources and were, therefore, much more inclined to reach agreement even without direct international intervention in the peace process.

Two well-established academics, whose names appear on the cover, did not contribute chapters to this volume. Such contributions could have strengthened this book by, ideally, adding more “new research” on lusophone Africa. As the lead editor admits in the introduction, there is “a curious symmetry” in the arguments presented in the book with “the analysis of Africa in the immediate pre-colonial phase of the late nineteenth century” (p. x). The problematic nature of the state in lusophone Africa requires both new and fresh analyses.

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