



Margaret Hall, Tom Young. *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique Since Independence.* Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997. 263 pp. \$22.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8214-1191-9; \$44.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8214-1190-2.



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What happened to the vision of a socialist future in Africa? This book, a post-mortem of sorts, sheds light on why the socialist transformation in independent Mozambique eventually failed.

Confronting Leviathan, due out in July, examines the main developments in Mozambique since the country achieved independence from Portugal in 1975. The focus is on Frelimo's efforts to rule Mozambique during fifteen years of war with Renamo, the armed resistance movement that carried out a destructive campaign of guerrilla warfare. This book provides a thorough overview of the events—political, military, and economic—that eventually brought both sides to the negotiating table and led to multi-party elections in 1994.

The authors, Margaret Hall, Africa Researcher for the British Foreign Office, and Tom Young, a political scientist at the School of Oriental and African Studies, devote most of their attention to the two main actors in Mozambique over the past twenty years: Frelimo (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique), which performs in the political arena; and Renamo (Mozambican National Resistance), which takes over the military stage. They discuss Frelimo's Marxist-Leninist struggle to transform Mozambique into a "new society" and Renamo's attempts to destroy all of Frelimo's gains. Those not familiar with recent Mozambican history may be surprised by this book,

for it includes details of South Africa's covert attempts to destabilize Mozambique, gruesome accounts of Renamo's campaign of terror and such peculiarities as the negative attitude of Samora Machel (Mozambique's first president) toward tight trousers and long hair. More informed scholars, on the other hand, will probably nod their heads and occasionally raise an eyebrow as major events are described and explained.

This work includes a particularly strong discussion of the dynamics of Renamo. Building on their earlier research, Hall and Young attempt to explain how Renamo grew from a small group of "armed bandits" first supported by Rhodesia into a viable military organization (with South African support) that the Mozambican army was unable to defeat. In their analysis of the nature of Renamo and the movement's relationship with people in the countryside, the authors draw on the work of well-known scholars such as Alex Vines, Christian Geffray, William Minter, and Ken Wilson.

Confronting Leviathan also shows how Frelimo orchestrated political and constitutional changes in Mozambique as it retreated from Marxist-Leninist thinking in preparation for democratic elections and substantial economic assistance from the West. The detailed analysis of both swift (some would say rash) and gradual changes in Frelimo's policies over 20 years brings to-

gether the research of many scholars and scattered documentary information. The standard works by Joseph Hanlon, Thomas Henriksen, Barry Munslow, and John Saul are incorporated here, along with Frelimo documents, speeches by Machel, and newspaper accounts.

Besides a brief preface, this book lacks any introductory comments to guide the reader through a text divided into nine chapters. The opening chapter abruptly begins with an examination of Mozambique at the close of Portuguese rule. A brief discussion of the colonial period helps to explain the dire situation that Mozambique faced at independence. Information on the establishment of Frelimo in 1962 and the front's internal workings provides the needed background for understanding Frelimo's powerful yet precarious position at independence. In their detailed discussion of the liberation struggle, the authors note that many members of the black paramilitary units trained by the Portuguese fled to Rhodesia before or soon after Mozambique's independence and became "a skilled recruitment pool for later action against Frelimo-ruled Mozambique" (p. 27).

The next three chapters focus on Frelimo's vigorous attempts to construct a new society after independence. The authors examine the transition to independence, Frelimo's Marxist thinking, and the party's development policies. Hall and Young are quite critical of the *grupos dinamizadores*, or dynamizing groups, which were established by Frelimo soon after independence to fill the gap left by the Portuguese flight. Strangely, there is only a faint admission in *Confronting Leviathan* that Frelimo's sincere but flawed socialist endeavor had beneficial aspects for the population. As they examine the nature and significance of Frelimo's turn to Marxism, the authors argue that "Frelimo's Marxism was imported from outside" rather than from the experience of the armed struggle (p. 64).

Hall and Young show how Frelimo cleverly reshaped Marxist terminology "to articulate national and racial concerns" (p. 66). "Concepts of class were not used in any sense of economic agents generated by a mode of production, nor were they deployed in any kind of 'class analysis' in the conventional sense. Rather, they designated a whole series of colonial experiences, including status hierarchies and notions of racial inferiority and division" (p. 66). The party's recurring references to exploitation centered on discrimination and unfair trading practices rather than economic relationships (p. 66). Thus Frelimo's own brand of Marxism offered an alternative to the "corrupt" colonial experience.

The authors discuss how this new ideology, which denied the African past and looked only to the future to develop a "new man," ended up alienating many Mozambicans. Frelimo's elite faced an interesting dilemma. Since they were "convinced of the superiority of modern civilization and the need to 'catch up' with it," they viewed the rural population as empty, or similar to a "blank page," as Geffray has suggested, with people simply waiting to be transformed by Frelimo (pp. 65, 219). This ideology turned Mozambicans into objects to be acted upon, with no regard for the traditions and histories of the country's various peoples. Rural Mozambicans, for their part, supported a revolutionary transformation, but, according to Hall and Young, only in a narrow anticolonial sense (p. 82).

Despite Frelimo's ambitious plans to achieve a socialist "victory over underdevelopment," there were several factors which hindered the revolution. The authors dismiss "fashionable" contemporary critiques of "ruinous" strategies carried out by Frelimo and conclude that the Front's planned transformations were halted only in part by myopic policies (p. 88). They note that Renamo's presence, regional differences within Mozambique, and international forces, especially those stemming from South Africa, were other major stumbling blocks in the path to development.

Hall and Young devote a chapter to the political and military problems faced by Frelimo as the socialist revolution faltered. They document the origins of Renamo in Rhodesia and the movement's growth in the late 1970s. Although many hoped that the fall of the Rhodesian regime would lead to Renamo's extinction, Renamo was instead transferred to South Africa in 1980. For the authors, three factors that prevented its demise were: (a) Frelimo's ineffectiveness and loss of legitimacy, (b) the emergence of ruthless leaders in South Africa, and (c) a change in the global balance of power that favored the United States.

Although strictly a military organization throughout the 1970s, Renamo faced pressure from South Africa in the early 1980s, to increase the movement's legitimacy by developing a political leadership. Renamo's structure, however, remained almost exclusively a military one until the late 1980s (p. 171). Hall and Young contend that despite Renamo's crude political stance, the organization did have popular appeal since "it managed to voice the dissatisfactions of those who had been variously antagonised by Frelimo, with its policy of compulsory villagisation and attempts to collectivise agriculture, its assault

on traditional practices, the removal of traditional chiefs, and its curbs on the Catholic Church” (p. 137). However, they never go quite so far as to state that these practices brought about the war in Mozambique.

In mid-1982 Frelimo’s approach toward Renamo shifted from a purely military response to overt political moves aimed at isolating the movement from international supporters. These strategic political tactics occurred when Frelimo realized that “military action was unlikely to be enough on its own to defeat Renamo” (p. 139). Many believed that the organization would not prevail if South Africa withdrew its external support. Thus Frelimo, according to the authors, turned to Western powers to pressure South Africa to stop assisting Renamo. This rapprochement with the West led to the infamous Nkomati Accord with South Africa in 1984.

A detailed analysis of the war with Renamo is provided in the chapter titled “Mozambique at War with Itself.” Unfortunately, this assertion is never satisfactorily explained. Was this a civil war in the eyes of the authors? Hall and Young see more than armed banditry run amok, and they agree with Geffray’s contention that the “war was grounded in the social fabric of rural Mozambique” (p. 188). They suggest that various factors led to a “confusing patchwork of shifting local engagements,” but they need to provide a deeper discussion of support for Renamo within Mozambican society (p. 187). Renamo’s extreme brutality and use of forced recruitment also deserves more attention. It is clear that internal conditions were only one aspect of this complicated war, and the complex reality of Renamo’s tenacity and expansion is not fully examined here.

As the Mozambican army struggled to combat Renamo’s forces in the countryside, Frelimo took aggressive steps to confine the conflict and halt the massive deterioration of the country’s economy. In 1986 the Program of Economic Rehabilitation (PRE), largely sponsored by the IMF and the World Bank, was the beginning of “the wholesale handover of the economy to international agencies” (p. 199). Political change soon followed this economic reform. Hall and Young document how the Frelimo leadership worked to end “the war on (virtually) any conditions” (p. 205). This included “substantial ideological changes” and an end to Marxist-Leninist references in the late 1980s (p. 202). Even though Frelimo abandoned Marxism, the party did not want to give up its role in directing the people (p. 203). After initiating constitutional and other legal reforms, Frelimo made public overtures toward possible talks with Renamo and sug-

gested the adoption of a multi-party system. Thus an era of socialist endeavor came to a close as a long-awaited peace was in sight.

The final chapter examines shifts in international politics that led Mozambique to become, in the eyes of the authors, “an experimental laboratory for new forms of Western domination” (p. 218). Comparing the Constitutions of 1975 and 1990, Hall and Young show how the basic goals of the state have changed. They note the heavy dependence on international aid and argue that Mozambique has “ceased to be a state at all as traditionally understood” (p. 217). Theoretical perspectives on socialism and liberal capitalism are explored and an interesting discussion on how these were the only “conceivable” political languages for the political elite is also included (pp. 218-19).

Although they invoke Leviathan in their title, the authors never really discuss this mythical monster who, for Thomas Hobbes, could provide peace and security after being granted authority to act as the state. Instead, they briefly explain why a Hobbesian Leviathan would never be recommended to perform “the grim business of ‘deconstructing’ old ways of life and creating the social preconditions for a liberal state” (pp. 223-24). They call for “functional equivalents of Leviathan” to attain “political modernity” in Africa (pp. 223-24). It is the authors themselves who seem to be “confronting Leviathan,” for they are dealing with notions of the state throughout this book—in both details on the workings of Frelimo and in a broader study of the purpose of the state.

With this book Hall and Young are also confronting what is for many a fundamental question: given Frelimo’s deep commitment to restructuring society to benefit all Mozambicans, why did this plan fail? Answers tend to fall on two opposing sides. Either credit is given to Frelimo’s attempts, and blame is placed on Renamo, or Frelimo’s agrarian policies are criticized for alienating the rural population, the very people that leaders claimed to be “transforming.” Hall and Young seem to hold a middle position. While they do not hesitate to find fault with Frelimo’s policies and do indeed draw parallels between rural dissatisfaction and support for Renamo, they also note that the movement destroyed almost everything that Frelimo attempted to build in the countryside. Hall and Young’s suggestion that most of the reasons are woven into the policies and actions on the ground over the last twenty years still leaves the reader guessing—what do they really think? A more nuanced analysis would strengthen their argument.

Scholars studying contemporary Mozambique will certainly benefit from Hall and Young's work. *Confronting Leviathan* offers a sound overview of the major patterns and events in Mozambique's recent political and economic history. Hall and Young trace the history of both Frelimo and Renamo and attempt to explain, with some success, how each movement was perceived by the Mozambican people. The authors have amassed a large amount of information to present a middle-of-the-road picture of Mozambique over a twenty-year-period.

Historians of Mozambique, on the other hand, will be disappointed with the historical background that is presented in this book. Hall and Young have glossed over nineteenth-century history and failed to incorporate more recent scholarship on this period and the era of colonialism. While some have blamed the colonial period for many of the problems faced by independent African nations, Hall and Young argue that the picture is

far more complicated for Mozambique. Their interpretation of events since independence pressures scholars to look beyond colonial legacies and reconsider the effects of Frelimo's early policies (however earnest they were) along with the relative "success" of Renamo in the 1994 elections.

In Mozambique today there are many unfortunate and grim side-effects stemming from the transition to liberal capitalism. The reader of *Confronting Leviathan* is left wondering how the state and Mozambique's people will fare in this new post-election era. While the portrait offered by Hall and Young ends on a note of skepticism, one hopes that Mozambicans will draw once again on their resilience to face this difficult, yet peaceful, time.

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