Pacted Transition to Democracy: The Case of Mozambique

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Abstract

The findings of “third wave” studies on democratic transitions in Southern Europe and Latin America from the 1970s suggested that a democratic outcome is most likely when contending parties are relatively equal and elites make a pact to navigate the transition process. However, later studies of post-communist transitions do not support this inference. This paper analyses the transition process in Mozambique, a former “Afro-communist” regime, during the early 1990s. The findings show that – contrary to the conclusions drawn from the “third wave” studies – in Mozambique the pact concluded in the context of the peace accord of 1992, which ended a sixteen-year civil war, had contradictory results in terms of democratisation. While the political situation has been relatively stable until recent years, the country has moved toward competitive authoritarian rule instead of full democracy. The main explanatory factor for this trend appears to be the cohesion of the ruling party, which in the case of Mozambique derives from its origins in armed liberation struggle. Renewed incidents of political violence over the last few years also cast doubt on the durability of political stability.

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In the case of pacted transitions, the process again is contingent upon internal elite divisions – this time not only among rulers, but also among their opponents. Whatever the reason (and they are not uniform), the soft-liners within the government and the moderates in the opposition form an alliance by agreeing upon a common set of rules designed to reduce the intrinsic uncertainty of the transition in regime – and to prevent its being captured by either of their more extreme factions. In the early transitional modes of reform and revolution, the bourgeoisie played a crucial role by preferring the former to the latter and, therefore, by promoting democracy. Political Party Political Arena Party Leader Democratic Transition Democratic Politics. These keywords were added by machine and not by the authors. This process is experimental and the keywords may be updated as the learning algorithm improves. For accounts of the role of the UN and donors in Mozambique’s peace process in general and their interaction with RENAMO in particular, see Alex Vines, No Democracy Without Money (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1994); Google Scholar. Jett, Why Peacekeeping Fails; Chris Alden, Mozambique and the Construction of the New African State: From Negotiations to Nation-Building (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001); CrossRefGoogle Scholar.