

incentives and processes with which governments give away or retain powers and resources.

In conclusion, this volume provides an excellent insight to the state of art in decentralisation in the selected sub-Saharan countries for scholars in socio-economic and political sciences. The introduction organises the conceptual framework and analytical sequence in a very informative and pertinent manner which can be used for other country case studies (not only in Africa) and will certainly remain useful in analysing the dynamics of decentralisation in the selected countries. The conclusion also summarises the main results in comparative tables which pinpoint the main issues and failures: useful for drawing tomorrow's road map in the process of learning from each other. In sum, a must on the bookshelves of any researcher with an interest in decentralisation – in Africa and outside – from the point of view both of the analytical method it proposes and its transposition in real world analysis.

BERNARD DAFFLON  
*University of Fribourg*

**Africa Consensus: New Interests, Initiatives, and Partners** by LUDGER KÜHNHARDT  
Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. Pp. 380 + xvii. \$44.95 (pbk)  
doi:10.1017/S0022278X15000245

The premise of the book under review is that changes in the nature of politics in Africa, the strengthening of regional institutions and the development of new trading partners (primarily the emerging economies) will result in new and qualitatively better links to the external world for Africa. The author argues that an 'Africa Consensus' is thus needed to channel all the positives flowing into the continent. This Consensus is to be based on, *inter alia*, 'a better and respectful engagement with the African people'; 'true recognition and respect for African ownership'; and a 'functional redefinition of sovereignty in the service of people and cooperation' [sic] (pp. 293–4).

The book might be located in the growing trope of literature surrounding a notional 'Africa Rising'. This discourse argues that 'correct' policies have driven growth in the context of significant improvements in governance. The basic premise behind this position is, however, false. There is in fact little evidence that overall the quality of governance is improving across the continent. The composite Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance had a continental average of 47/100 in 2000 – by 2013 it had increased to 51.6/100 – hardly seismic and in fact, barely 40 per cent of Africans live in countries which have shown overall governance improvement since 2010. The World Bank's own indicators indicate that of the 49 Sub-Saharan states, fully 30 have seen a worsening of governance between 2000 and 2012.

In contrast to the book's claims about a new dynamism in Africa, the continent's countries remain characterised by a dependence on the export of raw commodities and the import of manufactured goods. In fact, the share of primary commodities in total exports has risen precipitously over the last 10 years or so. Exports from Africa to both traditional and non-traditional trading partners exhibit a very clear and continuous pattern in terms of

trading structure, consistent with Africa's Ricardian advantage in commodities. Any 'Consensus' based on this advantage is short-sighted in the extreme, when one considers the projections for future commodity prices. With the exception of timber, all commodities are predicted by the World Bank to fall in value in the next 10 years.

There are in fact few current signs of social transformation in Africa. Rather, there have been signs of de-industrialisation. The growth and governance models being pursued in Africa are based on facilitating market-based actors' profit-making and capital accumulation, but generally ignore conditions that enhance production. The existing growth model is instead based on a simplistic raising of national GDPs. Little or no consideration is paid to the long-term implications of how these growth rates have been accomplished. Africa's wealth is being taken out of the continent at an exponential rate by an ever-diversifying array of actors. All the while, this is being celebrated as Africa's gain. The World Bank itself recommended in 2006 that subtracting the value of non-renewable resources through extraction gave a superior indicator of actual gains made through trade. Do that and any idea that Africa is rising collapses, as does the possibility of any 'consensus' to build on such notional gains.

It is fruitful to note the difference between structural and superficial features of Africa's economies. The superficial features can be identified in the GDP figures, industry, prices, debt levels and exchange etc. The structural features are, however, less apparent and more profound as regards Africa's place in the international division of labour. There is no evidence thus far to suggest that Africa's structural profile is improving or that the continent is going through even the birth-pangs of any transformation. Of course, talk of dependency and the international division of labour are unfashionable these days. More is the pity, because if such realities were considered, talk of 'A New African Beginning' (pp. 71–117) would be centred on addressing the real structural obstacles facing the continent and on how best to tackle the internal and external barriers to Africa's development. The author argues that we need to 'think outside of the box' (p. 270), but if that means neglecting some real fundamentals and overplaying African agency, I doubt whether any 'Africa Consensus' will be realised.

IAN TAYLOR

*University of St Andrews*

**The New Kings of Crude: China, India and the Global Struggle for Oil in Sudan and South Sudan**, by LUKE PATEY

London: Hurst and Company, 2014. Pp. 357. £25 (pbk)

doi:10.1017/S0022278X15000257

This book tells the story of how, following the departure of Chevron and some Western oil companies from Sudan, the entry of Asian National Oil Companies – Chinese National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Videsh (OVL) of India and Petronas (Malaysia) – ushered an unprecedented oil boom in Sudan. It provides a detailed analysis of the ways in which politics, personalities and non-state