

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

ALFRED NHEMA and PAUL TIYAMBE ZELEZA (eds), *The Roots of African Conflicts: the causes and costs*. Addis Ababa and Oxford: OSSREA and James Currey (pb £17.95 – 978 1 84701 300 2). 2008, xii+244 pp.

ALFRED NHEMA and PAUL TIYAMBE ZELEZA (eds), *The Resolution of African Conflicts: the management of conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction*. Addis Ababa and Oxford: OSSREA and James Currey (pb £17.95 – 978 1 84701 302 6). 2008, xvi+207 pp.

The Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA) is to be commended for facilitating the production of these two volumes, which together provide further evidence of an increasingly rigorous approach to the study of African conflict. As befits OSSREA's mission, the vast majority of the chapters are authored by Africans or individuals based at African institutions, and the two collections cover a diverse array of topics. However, perhaps inevitably, this is a mixed bag. There are some first-rate analytical studies, some thematic digressions, and a handful of contributions which are both descriptive and glib. Some of the contributions in the first volume – dealing with 'causes and costs' – are excellent, and offer much that is new in terms of perspective and paradigm: John Akokpari on citizenship and conflict in Côte d'Ivoire; Thandika Mkandawire on violence against peasantries by rebel movements; Aaronette White's examination of gender through a revisiting of Fanon; Fondo Sikod on the relationship between conflict, poverty and food supply. Indeed Sikod's chapter highlights one of the weaknesses of this volume, as there needed to be much more on the issues raised all too briefly in this chapter. Chapters by Sandra Maclean on external factors and global connections, and by Timothy Shaw and Pamela Mbabazi on the 'two states' that Uganda has become, offer new and interesting perspectives. In the second volume – on 'resolution and reconstruction' – there is much of interest to policy makers and analysts. The general ethos of the second book is 'African solutions to African problems' – hackneyed, but no less valid for its over-use – and a recurrent theme is the need to reduce reliance on outside intervention, whether political or financial. Thus there are some worthwhile contributions on regional cooperation schemes (Victor Adetula) and the role of the African Union (AU) (P. Godfrey Okoth) – the latter chapter, predictably, critiques the Organization for African Unity (OAU) but is rather more upbeat about the prospects of its successor – and on the possibilities of conflict prevention through early warning systems (Jakkie Cilliers) and the problematic role of the International Criminal Court (ICC), with particular reference to northern Uganda (Kasaija Philip Apuuli). Khabele Matlosa's chapter on elections and conflict – the former are far from being a panacea – is one of the best in the collection, and surely flags up a key area for future research. Brazao Mazula's treatment of post-conflict Mozambique is also thoughtful and informative.

Yet there are oddities. In the first volume, Errol Henderson's statistical analysis left this reviewer cold, and not much the wiser; neither of the two chapters (one in each volume) on Sudan tells us much we do not already know, and in fact both leave out a fair amount that we do know. Cephas Lumina's piece on terrorism and human rights (the first volume), and Charles Manga Fombad's chapter on constitutional reformism since the early 1990s (the second volume), do not seem especially germane to the collection. There are other pieces dealing with 'resolution' which – while worthy – also seemed out

of place, notably that by Ursula Scheidegger (social capital in South Africa), whose conclusion, that an inequitable distribution of income is a problem, lacks a certain shock value; and by Christof Hartmann (local government in South Africa, Namibia and Mauritius), who poses quite a few questions but does not seem to answer many. A couple of chapters in the second volume are already out of date, moreover. Idris Salim el Hassan might believe that 'the Sudanese people' will come together in the interests of peace because they are innately tolerant; but there is no discussion of such problems as the holding of elections, the organization of the census, Abyei as a flashpoint, or, remarkably, Darfur. And in the case of the Somali peace process—discussed by Kizito Sabala, Aisha Ahmad and Edwin Rutto—it seems almost ludicrous now to talk of the 'opportunities for development' under the beleaguered TFG. Since the chapter was written, presumably, the Ethiopian invasion has left Somalia more violent than at any time since the end of the 1980s.

In terms of introductory overviews, Ali Mazrui's piece is bizarre, and contains a number of frankly painful generalizations. Paul Tiyambe Zeleza's survey is more useful, and indeed throws up some interesting ideas; but it is surely missing the point to suggest that 'Africa's share of the more than 180 million people who died from conflicts and atrocities during the twentieth century is relatively modest', and that there is no equivalent in Africa to the two world wars, or massive civil wars in China and Russia (p. 1). He makes this point in order to call for 'more balanced debate... [and] to put African conflicts in both global and historical perspectives' (p. 1). It is also fairly typical to suggest that '[t]here is hardly any zone of conflict in contemporary Africa that cannot trace its sordid violence to colonial history and even the late nineteenth century', and that colonial violence is usually at the root of modern conflict (pp. 1–2). Perhaps; but this is argument resting on truism. Africans are presented as the recipients of colonial violence, and thus largely exonerated from 'blame', and certainly marginalized from the engines of change; but surely we must start looking for deeper local and regional roots of conflict, into the nineteenth century and earlier. It is also a major misrepresentation to suggest that 'African conflicts [are] inseparable from the conflicts of the twentieth century—the most violent century in world history' (p. 1). It is a gross exaggeration to suggest this, and, again, serves only to imply the status of several generations of Africans as mere victims of some kind of global epidemic of violence. Of course many conflicts were instigated or exacerbated by colonial rule; but they still had local and/or regional roots and dynamics, and were very much the product of their physical, political and economic environments. There were of course times when the world wars intruded on Africa, and, more relevantly, when the Cold War exacerbated or greatly prolonged extant conflicts; but as most of the contributions themselves demonstrate, such violence must be understood in its local context.

Initial hand-wringing gives way to the so-called Afro-optimism at the heart of the project. Readers may well have some sympathy with the sentiments expressed in the publicity blurb on the OSSREA website, which proclaims that '[t]he contributors offer sober and serious analyses, avoiding the sensationalism of the Western media and the endemic Afropessimism of scholars in the Global North'. But this reviewer is nervous about expressions of 'Afro'-anything, whether sanguinity or gloom, and while the fundamental idea is sound—encouraging a redistribution of research output from 'North' to 'South'—an African scholar or a scholar based at an African institution is not *necessarily* in a position to provide more 'sober' or more 'serious' analysis than one from a different gene pool or employed elsewhere. Unfortunately, too,

the grand sweep of the two volumes lends itself to repetition, and a lack of definition of what, precisely, is being examined. A sharper conceptual focus and more robust editorial guidance and/or intervention would have improved the collection greatly, because in the end we are presented with lots of conflicts and not much sense of what it all means. 'Conflict' is defined in the broadest possible sense: this has the advantage of allowing the inclusion of a wider range of socio-political violence than might otherwise be the case, but has the drawback of effectively removing the possibility of making any larger point. Certainly, the two volumes might have been arranged differently, perhaps into 'types' of conflict: as it is, the first volume provides some examples of how certain wars start, and the second volume offers instances of how other types of conflict have been – or might be – resolved. In the study of African conflict, moreover, there is a trend toward tedious jargon: not only is African conflict and its resolution 'complex' – and we are told this so often that this reviewer wished someone would argue, just for once, that the causes of such-and-such a conflict are actually quite simple – but so too are the means by which some analysts lay out their theses.

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BENNO J. NDULU, STEPHEN A. O'CONNELL, ROBERT H. BATES, PAUL COLLIER and CHUKWUMA C. SOLUDO, *The Political Economy of Economic Growth in Africa 1960–2000*, Volume 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (hb £60 – 978 0 52187 848 7). 2008, xix+452 pp.

BENNO J. NDULO, STEPHEN A. O'CONNELL, JEAN-PAUL AZAM, ROBERT H. BATES, AUGUSTIN K. FOSU, JAN W. GUNNING and DOMINIQUE NIJINKEU, *The Political Economy of Economic Growth in Africa 1960–2000*, Volume 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (hb £95 – 978 0 52187 849 4). 2008, xl+1028 pp.

This monumental two-volume book on Africa's economic growth is an incredible resource both for social science and development economics. Very rarely does a publication achieve the balance of presenting hard econometric data and empirically rich case study. This publication undertakes this task, and its central conceptual structure is based on bridging a long-standing dichotomy in research on Africa between the social science and economics literature. Part one of Volume 1 rationalizes, justifies and focuses on the theoretical approach used in the analysis in the rest of the volume, and is written retrospectively based on extensive case studies of 26 African countries. The extensive research, based on work done by the African Economic Research Consortium, focuses on African economic growth, the syndromes resulting in economic decline, and the impacts of political-economy shifts in various contexts over a 40-year post-independence period. The rationale of the book is to draw out the patterns of growth or decline in African economies in this period, based on the countries' geopolitics and a classification of the syndromes that have caused decline. The diagnostic evaluation need not deter Africanist social scientists