while faced with on-going economic and social inequalities.

This book is an informative examination of an important and potentially watershed election. It leaves several significant topics unexamined, however. First, the colorful title would suggest a focus on Jacob Zuma. In reality, Zuma does not enter into most of the chapters or the discussion of the election, and readers would have benefited from a chapter on the rise of Zuma as a political leader and his role leading up to the election. Second, while the book presents interesting data on the campaigns and electoral outcomes of the election, there is no theoretical discussion based on the literature of democratic consolidation. A crucial issue concerns how well the 2009 election strengthens democratic values, institutions, and practices. How do the authors perceive the evolution of democratic consolidation in the context of the previous elections? Third, while the authors mention in passing the importance of the youth vote, and more generally the changes in the national demographics since 1994, a separate chapter on demographics and the election would have been interesting. Fourth, most of the chapters examine the electoral outcome from the perspective of individual political parties, although the electoral data could also be interpreted from the point of view of race, ethnicity, economic class, traditional authorities, and other social groups.

Overall, this book provides an important examination of the 2009 national election from the perspective of South Africa's political parties and is essential to scholars and observers who focus on parties, campaigns, and electoral data. While it does not address many significant issues related to an evolving democracy, it does provide important and worthwhile data and electoral analysis.

Howard P. Lehman
University of Utah
Salt Lake City, Utah
lehman@poli-sci.utah.edu

Filip Reyntjens. *The Great African War: Congo and Regional Geopolitics, 1996–2006.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. xi + 327 pp. Maps. Bibliography. Index. $90.00. Cloth.

It is not easy to write a comprehensive book on the Congo wars that began in late 1996. Over the following decade, nine countries as well as several dozen domestic armed groups have been involved in the conflict, fighting over natural resources and taxes, land and citizenship rights, protection for ethnic communities, and access to local and national power. The complexity is confounding. Fortunately, in 2009 several prominent scholars of the region took on this challenge in book form. Filip Reyntjens's book comes on the heels of a longer tome with similar scope by Gerard Prunier (*Africa's World War* [Oxford University Press, 2009]), as well as a more thematic

https://doi.org/10.1353/arw.2010.0005 Published online by Cambridge University Press

treatise on the dynamics of violence in the region by René Lemarchand (*The Dynamics of Violence in Central Africa* [University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009]), and a work focusing on North and South Kivu by Thomas Turner (*The Congo Wars: Conflict, Myth, and Reality* [Zed Press, 2007]).

Confronted with the enormity and complexity of the task, Reyntjens has adopted a parsimonious approach. The book is organized mostly chronologically, from the Rwandan refugee crisis (1994–96) to the aftermath of the Congolese elections in 2006. He confines his account largely to the level of national and regional politics, treating sparingly the intricacies of local politics. Despite his succinct clarity in describing events, however, he spends relatively little time in trying to tease out the overarching causes of the conflict, with several tantalizing paragraphs in the introduction and conclusion pointing at interesting possibilities but without further development. Much of the book is concerned with trying to explain what happened, a task he performs very well. In this process, some major themes are prominent.

First, Reyntjens highlights the regional aspects of the conflict. This is not surprising. Like Prunier and Lemarchand, he came to study the Congo by way of its smaller eastern neighbors, Rwanda and Burundi. Reyntjens spends almost a quarter of the book talking about political developments in these countries and their impact on the Congolese conflict. Rwanda's importance in the conflict is unquestionable, and some of the most interesting parts of the book are those in which Reyntjens applies his knowledge of the Rwandan Patriotic Front's government to developments in the Congo. The subchapter on the radicalization of the RPF in 1994–96 and the chapter on the massacre of Rwandan refugees in the Congo are well-sourced and as good as anything in the public domain, although his summary of estimates of how many refugees died does not sufficiently take into consideration the lack of a good baseline figure for the number of refugees in the camps before the war began.

Much like Prunier, Lemarchand, and Turner, Reyntjens highlights the RPF's destabilizing influence on the region. The last lines of the book warn: "By turning a blind eye to Rwanda's hegemonic claims in eastern Congo, the future stability of the region remains in doubt. Rwanda may once again, in the not too distant future, become the focal point of regional violence" (286). Nonetheless, the RPF remains one of the most impenetrable regimes on the continent. Its involvement in the Congo was motivated by a complex mesh of security, political, and economic concerns that Reyntjens does not sufficiently disentangle. He seems to think that the security-based rationale faded quickly after the beginning of the war, but he does not spend much time elaborating how and why these competing motivations waxed and waned during the war. Is Rwanda's involvement in the Congo a matter of simple greed by RPF leaders, an ideological obsession with getting rid of the remnants of the army and militias they defeated in 1994, or part of a political strategy to maintain a police state at home while extracting much-

needed resources next door? I am sure Reyntjens would argue that the motives are a mixture of all these, but a detailed explanation by a scholar of his caliber could bring much-needed sobriety to the discourse surrounding Rwanda's role in the region.

At times, however, these detailed descriptions of Rwandan and Burundian politics seem to lose any relation to the Congolese conflict, and the reader wishes that Reyntjens had applied the same fine-grained approach to understanding the internal structure and dynamics of Laurent and Joseph Kabila's successive governments in Kinshasa. Reyntjens argues that Zairian state collapse was a second major factor contributing to the war in the Congo. His chapter "The Fall of the Mobutist State" is masterful, there is no doubt. However, it reads more as a blow-by-blow account of the regime's final days than as an analysis of the causes of state disintegration. It does not delve deeply into the dynamics of state collapse and the transformation of the Congo from a strong centralized state under colonial rule to an archipelago of competing sovereignties and a welter of underlying political and economic forces.

Finally, the book highlights the importance of the international community. "There was no master plan, in Washington or elsewhere" (283), Reyntjens warns, in opposition to reporters and the many Congolese who see the warring factions as part of the broader strategies of larger powers, especially the United States. This is not to say that Western governments did not contribute to the problem. In particular, he takes France to task, especially for the early period of the war when its policy in the region was dominated by a misplaced fear of Anglo-Saxon expansion through the RPF's influence. He also describes the shadowy involvement of the United States in the early stages of the war when he alleges that the U.S. provided military, diplomatic, and logistic support to Laurent Kabila's AFDL rebels. But an almost graver sin, he argues, has been the lack of strategy of donors' interventions. Too often they threw cash at the humanitarian disaster without addressing the underlying political problems. In the case of Rwanda, for example, this blinkered aid-giving allowed Kigali to "cross the Rubicon again and again" (286).

One cannot help feeling that the book, which is based mostly on desk research and Reyntjens's extensive network of personal contacts, would have benefited from more field research. This is not to denigrate these sources; the author has accumulated an extremely valuable collection of information from NGOs, local and international press sources, and private meetings. Nonetheless, my own experience has been that now, almost fourteen years since the beginning of the war, many of its protagonists are willing to talk about what happened. Had Reyntjens done so, he might have found, as I have, that the U.S. role was probably less prominent in 1996 than he thinks; that the Eritrean and Ethiopian governments did send troops to back the AFDL in 1996; and that UNITA fought alongside the RCD and not the MLC, as he writes.

In sum, the book is an excellent and well-balanced overview of the Congo conflict, probably the most readable and comprehensive account on the market at the moment. Readers should expect a historical account of the war, highlighting some of its main causes, and not an in-depth analysis of the social or regional structures that produced these developments. Given the limited space—confines that Reyntjens repeatedly laments—it is an impressive achievement.

Jason Stearns
Yale University
New Haven, Conn.
jasonkstearns@yahoo.com

Michael Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss, eds. *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics.* Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008. xii + 303 pp. Abbreviations. Figures. Tables. Contributors. Notes. Index. $55.00. Cloth. $19.95.

With contributions from many well-known scholars, this volume provides an interdisciplinary perspective on the ethical dilemmas faced by humanitarian organizations and explores the evolving relationship between humanitarianism and politics. The editors acknowledge that the tension between principles and politics is not new, but the book as a whole suggests that such dilemmas have become increasingly common in the post–Cold War era. This is not an introductory volume; the authors assume a level of knowledge about recent humanitarian operations and focus instead on their ethical implications. Indeed, while African countries (especially Rwanda and Somalia) are mentioned throughout the book, readers of this journal may be disappointed that few of the book's chapters are grounded in the complex histories, politics, and cultures of specific cases.

Each of the book's eleven chapters stands alone. The editors' introductory chapter provides an overview of the recent history of humanitarianism, especially how the sector has been grappling with issues of identity, ethics, and politics. They then lay out several different organizing themes for the book, but there are too many to be useful. The second chapter by James Fearon (the only one based on quantitative data) seeks to explain why humanitarian aid continued to rise after the late 1990s despite a dramatic decrease in the number of wars and refugees. Although somewhat dismissive of alternative explanations, he convincingly argues that this pattern is due to the use of humanitarian aid as a foreign policy tool by great powers and successful task expansion by humanitarian organizations. Most interesting in Craig Calhoun's chapter is his discussion of the "emergency imaginary," which portrays humanitarian situations as "emergencies," as if "normality" would be peaceful and calm. In the current international context, however, "emergencies have become normal" (87), a fact that can be difficult to accept.