

anthropological value, while also being allowed to become something else. The future that was dreamt for South Africa has not happened. The multivalent quality of the Bleek and Lloyd archive places it at the forefront of a process of reimagination. I am left wondering what is more useful to the future of South Africa: more dogged high theory deconstruction of colonialism, the details of which I am sure no one contests in principle, or an exploratory energy which weaves academia into the very real concerns, feelings and hopes of Bushmen and other Southern Africans alike.

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Oil and Insurgency in the Niger Delta: managing the complex politics of petro violence edited by C. OBI and S. A. RUSTAD

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Building on over two decades of research on the political economy of oil and conflict in Nigeria's Niger Delta, Cyril Obi, with Sari Aas Rustad, is well placed to bring together fourteen authors all with their own track record in what has become the field of 'Niger Delta studies'. The aim of this edited volume is to explore 'the complex causes and dimensions of petro-violence and insecurity in the Niger Delta'. The book does not claim to provide an overarching theoretical or empirically grounded perspective of the Niger Delta problematic. Dividing it into three parts – the first looking at structural causes of conflict, the second at the internal dynamics of conflict, and the third at the role that multinational corporations have played within it – the editors deliberately seek to create a space for the airing of a 'variety of perspectives' amidst 'the ongoing debates' between those who subscribe to the 'greed and grievance' thesis, and those who 'call for more nuanced, balanced and radical perspectives'.

The collection as a whole is welcome reading, especially in light of the recent proliferation of 'reportage' style narratives written mainly by journalists turned academics on the Niger Delta (Shaxson 2007, Peel 2009, Ghazvinian 2008), or partial comparative analyses (Soares de Oliveira 2007), that while rich, fail to do justice to the complexity and specificity of the Niger Delta situation. This volume has the merit of at least attempting to focus specifically on the Niger Delta, and builds on earlier collaborations by some of the same authors (Keneth Omeje 2008). Of particular note is the detailed and crisp analysis of militants and militancy by Augustine Ikelegbe ('Popular and criminal violence as instruments of struggle in the Niger Delta'), in which he provides a dynamic yet structured typology of the different kinds of militia groups that have emerged. Charles Ukeje's historical comparison between colonial pacification methods and latter-day approaches to security in the Niger Delta ('Changing the paradigm of pacification: oil and militarization in Nigeria's Delta region'), and Anna Zalik's plea that we deconstruct narratives of transgression (militancy, violence, oil theft) that are promoted by multinational corporations and portray oil companies as victims and communities as perpetrators of violence, are particularly inspiring reading and suggest new ways of making sense of the Niger Delta which go beyond received wisdoms and the frequent lament that

the obstacles to progress in the Niger Delta are simply the product of the 'absence of political will' or 'entrenched corruption'. Babatunde Ahonsi's chapter, which highlights the structural human-resource capacity constraints that face government officials charged with the responsibility of sorting out the Niger Delta, also provides insights into the new sorts of questions we ought to be asking.

Yet while these chapters stand out, the quality of the volume overall is mixed. This may in part stem from the editors' concern to simply 'present a variety of perspectives'. Given the heated debates about the causes of conflict in the Niger Delta and their impact on how conflicts are understood and managed, simply presenting a variety of perspectives—some of which do little advance the debate—sidesteps an important issue. Paul Collier's depiction of militants as essentially criminals, and of the conflict as a struggle over illicit resource capture, while excellently critiqued by both Morten Boas and Augustine Ikelegbe in this volume, has nonetheless intellectually paved the way for the justification of military-style solutions to the Niger Delta problem. Yet the introduction and conclusion to *Oil and Insurgency in the Niger Delta* do little to set the theoretical tone or to challenge the ubiquity of the Collier narrative. In this sense, while the volume purports to be comprehensive and complex, it misses an important opportunity to respond clearly to the gauntlet thrown down so resoundingly by Collier and those who have followed in his footsteps.

What Niger Delta studies urgently need is not another collection of a variety of perspectives, each going off in a different direction (and possibly published in slightly different versions elsewhere), but a volume which presents a cumulative stock of knowledge: that builds on what has come before, challenges it, and moves on. While the inclusion of contradictory perspectives within the same volume may make for interesting 'flick-through' reading, it ultimately provides a very unsatisfactory answer to the question of what we do and do not know about the way in which oil generates conflict in the Niger Delta.

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Nostalgia for the Future: West Africa after the Cold War by C. PIOT

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Informed by over two decades of ethnographic engagement with one small country, Togo, *Nostalgia for the Future* is an attempt to grapple with the complexities and contradictions of life in contemporary West Africa. Like Piot's *Remotely Global* (1999), it is also an impassioned plea for the value of anthropological approaches to global change. Yet this book marks a decisive turn away from the post-colonial theoretical frameworks that animated Piot's earlier work. Where he previously stressed processes of cultural adaptation, negotiation and hybridity, he now emphasises rupture, discontinuity and the dramatic novelty of the contemporary moment.

Critical here is the claim that the end of the Cold War marks a radical break with the colonial and post-independence periods. Chapter 1 ('States of emergency') argues that the late 1980s and early 1990s saw a massive