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

withdrawal of international support for Eyadéma's dictatorial regime, the wholesale retreat of the state from the provision of public services, and the liberalisation of the economy and the public sphere. These processes, Piot suggests, fundamentally altered the political terrain and concentrated power in non-state agencies, particularly the fast-growing network of Pentecostal churches and NGOs. Drawing inspiration from recent work in political theory, he argues that as the Togolese state becomes ever more phantom-like, real power increasingly lies elsewhere.

More provocative is the suggestion that these changes have reconfigured Togolese horizons and produced new kinds of subjects. By breaking both with modernisation narratives and with traditional cosmologies, new temporalities (like those espoused by Pentecostal Christians) have reshaped understandings of the past and opened up radically new possibilities for the future. On this reading, migration to Europe and the United States, 'born again' conversion, cybercafés and satellite television all offer an escape from a burdensome past and have become productive sites for new forms of citizenship and belonging. These dynamics, Piot argues, call for new tools of analysis, and *Nostalgia for the Future* signals his clear desire to resist 'incarceration by the local'.

There is fascinating ethnographic detail here, and Piot mixes narrative and storytelling with lucid analysis, moving deftly between urban and rural settings. One suspects that an entire book could have been devoted to the discussion of the Green Card Lottery in Chapter 3 ('Exit strategy'), which thousands of Togolese enter every year in the hope of being granted a US visa. Piot narrates the startlingly innovative ways in which visa entrepreneurs and applicants both navigate and subvert the complexities of the State Department's bureaucracy. The suggestion that the 'Lotto visa', as it is known in Togo, may actually be producing new, fictive – not to say fraudulent – forms of kinship is indicative of the way in which such practices are remaking aspects of social life.

At times, however, *Nostalgia for the Future* risks overestimating the novelty of the contemporary moment and underplaying the significance of continuities. Piot rightly emphasises, for example, the ubiquity of migration fantasies among the Togolese. However, exactly how such fantasies are configured within existing social and political imaginaries could have been explored in greater detail. Conversations I have had with young Togolese men in Lomé suggest that the purpose of migration may be to acquire economic and symbolic capital with which to return to Togo. In this sense, migration is not only an attempt to stake a claim to membership of a global community, it is also a practice designed for a specific audience 'at home'.

This criticism aside, however, *Nostalgia for the Future* is an invaluable addition to the relatively small body of literature on Togo, and a provocative contribution to the on-going debate about how best to do ethnography in a complex, globalising world. As a sophisticated attempt to move beyond post-colonial frameworks of analysis that no longer quite capture the peculiarities of the present moment, it deserves to be taken seriously by students and scholars both within and without African Studies.

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