

Reviews

Africa and Europe: the changing economic relationship edited by
OLADEJI O. OJO
London, Zed, 1996. Pp. x + 175. £36.95/\$55.00. £12.95/\$19.95 paperback.

La France dans l'Afrique de l'après-guerre froide: interventions et justifications by INGER ÖSTERDAHL
Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1997. Pp. 88. £8.95.

The relationship between Africa and Europe, in the aftermath of changes in the global system, in the European Union, and in Africa itself, remains very much open to question. These two books, each necessarily taking a particular slant on one aspect of that relationship, seek to assess the recent past and in some degree to map out the road ahead.

Africa and Europe, published in association with the African Development Bank, derives from an initiative by the Bank to help member states adapt to changes in Europe, and especially to the Single European Market, the opening up of the former CMEA economies, and the likely creation of a common European currency. The greater part of the book, amounting to 101 of the 175 pages of text, comprises two chapters, by Christopher Stevens and Sheila Page, on the implications of the SEM for trade and capital flows respectively. Stevens' characteristically balanced and lucid exposition suggests that African states may have benefited from the Lomé régime, but only to a very limited extent because the areas in which Lomé confers any worthwhile advantages on them are so few. The major failings of African exports, in his view, lie in the fact that they remain concentrated both in products (unprocessed commodities) and in markets (the EU) in which demand has been weak. The lesson – diversify at all costs – echoes throughout the book. He provides a fascinating analysis of protectionism through non-tariff barriers by individual EU states (with France, Ireland and Italy as the worst offenders), and a more detailed assessment of the markets for bananas and sugar. His overall conclusion is that current developments are likely to weaken Africa's relative position in its most important market.

Page's chapter on capital flows is by no means so clearly written, and though it is packed with statistics, these are often hard to follow and of doubtful value. I am completely unable to puzzle out, for example, how official development assistance (ODA) to Gabon (table 3.1, p. 68) can amount to 209.09 per cent of ODA and foreign direct investment combined. Likewise, the surprising statement (p. 88) that 'Within the EU, the UK is probably now the most important investor in Africa' is supported by a table (3.10) which shows EU investment only from the UK and Germany, and entirely ignores France, which maintains a far greater share of its external investment in Africa than any other industrial state. Figures which correspondingly show a direct EU investment of \$122m in Malawi, as against \$19m in Côte d'Ivoire, can

thus only be regarded with derision. The overall impact of the SEM on capital flows is in any event likely to be slight.

Ojo's chapter on the devaluation of the CFA franc and the prospects of monetary cooperation in Africa rightly identifies the beneficial impact of devaluation on the CFA economies, an impact that has become still more marked since the very early figures that he cites were published. Since this success was due to the overvaluation of the CFA franc, resulting from a deterioration in CFA terms of trade, however, it is paradoxical that he should go on to recommend a continental monetary union, with a currency pegged to a basket of OECD currencies. Further chapters then assess the impact on Africa of changes in the former USSR and eastern Europe, and of the Uruguay Round, with its undermining of African preferences in key markets. The leitmotiv, diversify, remains the same.

La France dans l'Afrique de l'après-guerre froide is a small triumph for *francophonie* – a book written by a Swede and published in Sweden, in French. This analyses the reasons advanced in terms of international law for French military intervention or non-intervention in Gabon (1990), Togo (1986, 1991, 1993), Zaïre (1991, 1993) and Rwanda (1990, 1993, 1994); but the resulting legalism is relieved by a recognition that such interventions largely served French interests, and by a critical attitude to individual cases. While the Gabonese intervention was adequately covered by the need to rescue expatriates held hostage by rioters, it also helped to stabilise the Bongo régime. In Togo, the French intervened in 1986 to protect the Eyadema dictatorship against a domestic opposition movement, but pointedly refused in 1991 and 1993 to support the elected government against Eyadema himself. Their role in Zaïre shifted between the protection of expatriates and tacit support for Mobutu; and in Rwanda, a mission ostensibly to protect expatriates (at a level which provided more French troops than there were expatriates to protect) turned into direct military support for the Habyarimana regime. Though Österdahl repeats as 'fact' the belief, deeply embedded in the French imagination, that President Museveni is of Tutsi origin (p. 61), the book as a whole – within its inherently limited conceptual framework – provides a balanced assessment of a post-colonial reaction to the upheavals of early 1990s Africa which now appears to have been consigned to the scrapheap.

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Structural Adjustment, Reconstruction and Development in Africa

edited by KEMPE RONALD HOPE SR

Aldershot, Ashgate, 1997. Pp. 206. £37.50 hardback.

Kempe Ronald Hope and Gladson Kayira in the first essay in this edited collection make the most telling of points. Whilst the critics of structural adjustment programmes (SAP) may have made a strong case for many of their criticisms, they have singularly failed to put forward convincing and implementable alternatives for African economic recovery. This is the ultimate condemnation of dependency theory, although the criticisms have contributed as a fine tuning mechanism for SAPs. These two authors argue that blame for

the economic crisis in Africa lies in the failure of post-independence policy formulation and implementation. A statist development policy ideology was maintained by ruling élites through the emergence of a patrimonial state which used the state's resources to reward themselves and the loyalty of their supporters. They see a significant deterioration in African leadership after the 1960s and early 1970s with more recent leaderships externalising blame rather than accepting their own shortcomings. They argue that the massive expansion of the subterranean (informal) sector is a positive phenomenon to emerge from the general economic crisis and represents the people's response to the incapacity of the African state to provide a development policy framework to guarantee the material welfare of the population.

In many ways the various contributions to this volume, presented at the Southern African Universities Social Science Conference held in December 1995, represent a sea change in evaluating SAPs from a complete negativity to acknowledging some success stories. The individual chapters contain a mixture of outright critics and those who see positive signs emerging from the SAPs. The focus is on Southern Africa and Anglophone Southern Africa specifically. Hope and Kayira in a later essay build upon their earlier conclusions, suggesting that while blaming SAPs may be politically appealing it is not helpful or credible in building economic recovery. They suggest what is required is an indigenous policy making response to complement SAPs by encouraging the following forms of self-reliance by: prioritising basic human needs; maximising the use of local resources and values through appropriate educational provision; involving the poor in the development process; and finally increasing regional cooperation. This seems to me to be a sensible compromise of the populist and neo-liberal agenda, whilst remaining not unproblematic when it comes to putting it into practice.

The volume is organised into four parts: the economic crisis, structural adjustment and development policy; the economic effects of SAPs; the social effects of SAPs; and finally, alternative approaches to reconstruction and development. As you would expect of a collected volume of conference papers, there is a variation in quality. Yet there is much to interest the reader. Moshi's chapter suggests that the physical, cultural, social and institutional environment in Africa inevitably will limit the speed with which privatisation can be implemented. Macdonald argues that corruption is not an aberration but rather is the way that the system works in the typical African state. Hence privatisation of large public sectors is likely to spur on corruption rather than reduce it!

All in all, the volume contains some stimulating ideas; chapters are short, however, arguments are not developed in detail and case study evidence is limited. However, this new volume is to be welcomed and the editor Kempe Ronald Hope Sr to be commended for his work.

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The Practice of Smallholder Irrigation: case studies from Zimbabwe

edited by EMMANUEL MANZUNGU and PIETER VAN DER ZAAG

Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1996. Pp. xii + 235.

This book offers delightful reading to people who like social science with real people in it. The strength of the book is the precise, qualitative description of what actually happens – the practice – instead of what is expected to happen on technical and legal grounds in smallholder irrigation schemes. It offers lively case material which is also illuminating for people who are not in the first place interested in irrigation, but have a much broader interest in rural Africa. That does not mean that all chapters are easily accessible, because the authors often assume familiarity with the basic terminology in irrigation and one misses a glossary of terms. If one takes, however, that hurdle and concentrates first on some chapters in which social phenomena dominate, for example the ones by Bolding or by Magadlela, then one is rewarded with fascinating insights in the lives of the various actors, which raises broader trenchant questions particularly on the rôle of government in economic life.

The clash between the common good and individual short-term interests looms large in these papers. Irrigation is not cheap and it has to be paid for. Who has to pay what is therefore problematic. Water has to be distributed equitably which is another problem. Thirdly there is a free rider problem because of illegal tapping of water from and within irrigation schemes. Fourthly there are general agronomic considerations with respect to crop choice etc. which can clash with individual preferences of farmers. The interface between government and farmer is therefore a persistent theme.

The struggle for social order, as is apparent in this book, is a pertinent theme in the study of contemporary Africa. Order can emerge spontaneously from below, but that is not automatically the case as many of the chapters show. Nevertheless, the authors take generally a 'farmer first' perspective and stress the resourcefulness and rationality of farmers' choices as opposed to government. Policy initiatives to put the management of irrigation into the hands of farmers have their sympathy. A chapter on farmer initiated irrigation furrows by Bolding, Manzungu and van der Zaag exposes these views most clearly. This chapter is situated in the more isolated Chimanimani district where government could not impose itself strongly on a mixture of interactions between African and White farmers. However, this success story of initiative from below is contingent on an ample supply of water. 'Enormous challenges arose in recent years because of decreasing water availability' (p. 213). As long as there is relatively little scarcity, there is of course less of a problem of preserving common interests. Water is, however, increasingly scarce throughout Zimbabwe, while demand seems to be explosive.

These papers show that regulation by a formal central authority is problematic. This is aggravated in Zimbabwe by a history of high-handed government involvement. There, more than in most African countries, technocratic reasoning in terms of land use planning framed within a racist context was prevalent. The belief in technical and legal engineering, especially before independence, is often extreme, if not pathetic. On the other hand, administrators appear often to be quite powerless as is aptly shown in

Bolding's paper on the Nyanyadzi scheme. While reading, I wished therefore that the empathy which is so well shown in the depiction of the farmers and also in describing the rôles of the white farmers could have been extended to the administrators as well. The fact that regulation by a formal central authority is often problematic and mostly far from effective does not automatically mean that it is undesirable in principle.

The chapter on gender issues in irrigation schemes by Vijhuizen is similarly adhering to a stereotyped view of social relationships. She presents lively cases of women who are involved in marital disputes and want to get title of the household's irrigation plot. These cases illustrate according to her the disadvantaged position of women. However, 30 per cent of the plots in the scheme she studied are registered in the name of women. If we assume that another fair number of plots is registered in the names of households where men and women live relatively at peace, then women seem not to be as powerless as she makes them out to be. In the paper by Mate, who describes various economic strategies of irrigation smallholders, two of the four cases describe women irrigators. The most powerful among them is Mrs Turo, who has a 'land portfolio'. The question is then whether Vijhuizen's cases bring out the social structure in the area, or whether she merely documents acrimonious conjugal disputes, which do not in principle differ from those found anywhere in the world.

The particular cultural and social universe is generally left too vague in this volume. The setting is clearly in a particular area and in a particular country, but the authors treat their observations in the first place as irrigation problems which may occur anywhere. A good introduction to the nature of society and economy in Eastern Zimbabwe is for example missing. Maybe the reason is that this volume by a team of Dutch and Zimbabwean researchers of various disciplines bears many of the marks of work in progress. Further analysis may reveal a less stereotyped view of social relationships and more profile in the cultural and social patterns.

These reservations do not, however, diminish in any way the great stimulating value of the rich observations presented.

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Promises, Power, Politics and Poverty: democratic transition in Malawi (1961-1999) by JOHN LLOYD CHIPEMBERE LWANDA
Glasgow, Dudu Nsomba Publications, 1997. Pp. 315. Pb £23.

This is not a conventional academic book. The author is something of a polymath: a Malawian medical doctor, only intermittently resident in Malawi, who writes and publishes novels as well as books on both politics and music. He was also heavily involved in the early development of the United Democratic Front (UDF) which was initially founded to campaign for multiparty democracy in Malawi and then successfully transformed itself into a political party in time for the 1994 elections. Subsequently Lwanda became disenchanted with the UDF and withdrew from active involvement in Malawian political life.

This book, which represents the first full-length study of the Malawian transition and its aftermath, has very distinct weaknesses and strengths. On the debit side it is very poorly structured and organised. The back cover includes a quotation from Landeg White saying that Lwanda 'is the kind of writer who wants to put everything in'. This is completely accurate. The book is like a rough first draft in which all the author's material and ideas are included but which could then do with strict editing and shaping. In the absence of the latter the end result is a reader-unfriendly sprawl. For readers not already reasonably familiar with Malawian politics it is likely to be fairly impenetrable. No map is provided in spite of the marked regional dynamics of political cleavages, and the author has a penchant for including long lists of names of Malawian political actors without explaining who they are. However, for readers with some familiarity with Malawi and a willingness to persevere there is much of value in this book. Although they are presented in a jumbled manner the book contains many important insights, telling anecdotes and acute personal observations. Above all, it captures the 'feel' of Malawian political life in a way in which more organised academic analyses often fail to do.

For all its faults this book makes an interesting contribution to the interpretation of what was one of the most remarkable political transformations of the recent period in Africa.

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