Reviews

Durable Peace: challenges for peacebuilding in Africa edited by Taisier M. Ali and Robert O. Matthews
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The literature on resolving African civil conflicts, as the editors of this excellent volume rightly comment, has been heavily dominated by the analysis of negotiated peace settlements, to the detriment of longer-term analyses of whether, and how, peaceful political systems can be built on the ruins of states and societies shattered by civil war. This is the challenge that they take up, through the examination of the aftermath of civil war in ten African states, and two chapters looking at the broader issues involved.

The case studies are heavily oriented towards the Horn and Great Lakes region (Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda, Uganda), and southern Africa (Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe), with only a single case, Liberia, drawn from elsewhere. They do however provide broad coverage of the ways in which an initial peace has been achieved, through military victory on the one hand and negotiated settlements on the other, together with some cases where a negotiated settlement collapsed before achieving any effective ‘peacebuilding’ – a term coined in juxtaposition to ‘peacemaking’, for efforts to promote long-term and ‘positive’ peace that rests on the resolution of the conflicts that led to war in the first place.

These case studies, all too often dispiriting, show how difficult this process is. The most striking finding is that peacebuilding after military victory is every bit as difficult as after negotiated settlements, perhaps even more so. The ‘give war a chance’ approach finds little support here. Timothy Longman’s analysis of post-genocide Rwanda emphasises the continued dependence on top-down coercion to maintain a ‘negative’ peace, while the discussions of both Ethiopia and Uganda show how much remains to be done. John Kiyaga-Nsubuga convincingly argues that the mechanisms needed for the restoration of peace in a shattered state such as Uganda can themselves form an obstacle to longer-term reconstruction, while in all of the states where initial peace is achieved through victory, the new governments’ capacity to form meaningful political alliances is deeply constrained by their conviction of their own continued right to rule. This lesson could only have been reinforced by consideration of the most complete case of military victory of them all, Eritrea, where the state constructed virtually from scratch by the triumphant EPLF has degenerated into external war, domestic impoverishment and repression.

When it comes to negotiated settlements, Will Reno rightly points out, with Liberia in mind, that these count for little when they merely empower warlords to pursue the same strategies of personal accumulation in peace that they had previously achieved through war. The three southern African cases are more
hopeful, though both Alexander Costy for Mozambique and Hevina Dashwood for Zimbabwe show that the underpinning of the settlement by the global liberal hegemony carries with it problems for the resolution of major structural problems. John Saul’s morose analysis of the South African transition, however, quite fails to demonstrate how any more ‘radical’ alternative to the ‘elite pact’ that he criticises could have improved the lot of the South African poor, even had it been politically feasible; extensive experience of such alternatives, in Africa and elsewhere, has shown all too clearly that these are every bit as corrupt and elitist as the capitalist model, but much less economically effective.

Hussein Adam, though spending too long on issues of state collapse and intervention that lie beyond the scope of the volume, very usefully contrasts the broadly successful process of internal peacemaking in Somaliland, with the failure of externally mediated settlements in Somalia. There are broader lessons here that contrast with the concern of some at least of the contributors to tie their conclusions to the role of external agencies. The overwhelming impression that this reviewer gained from the case studies is that long-term peacebuilding can only result from policies followed by African governments and civil societies, and that international efforts, even if consistent and supportive, can only be limited and may well be counter-productive. Regrettably in my view, the book is implicitly oriented to a readership among Western decision-makers, whether aid donors, NGOs or international institutions, and is over eager to identify ways in which they can help. This may well be a product in part of its Canadian origins (nine of the thirteen contributors are either Canadian or have Canadian connections), and the priorities of the agencies that helped to fund it. The final section, which seeks to pull together the lessons of the previous analysis, is essentially geared to donors and diplomats, even while recognising that ‘solutions will have to come from within African countries themselves’ (p. 387). The critical requirement, which Reno flags in his discussion of Liberia, but which is generally ignored elsewhere, is the need for government to deliver public goods, and for changes in attitudes to government that see it in essentially extractive terms. The idea that peacebuilding is ultimately educational and cultural, rather than institutional, receives far too little attention. Admirable as this volume is – and the case studies especially are almost uniformly excellent – it will have little impact until similar exchanges occur within the African states and societies whose future is on the line.

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Eroding The Commons: the politics of ecology in Baringo, Kenya, 1890s–1963 by D. M. ANDERSON
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David Anderson has provided us with a rich insight into the actors, events, processes and ideas that have shaped historical trajectories of environmental change in rural Africa. The story he tells unfolds around the prolonged conflict between African pastoralists and European settlers in colonial Baringo District in Kenya’s Rift Valley, and the impact this had on their shared rangeland
environment. Between 1904 and 1920 Europeans moved into fertile areas of the District, and started farming on the assumption that rights to their land were exclusive and secure, in line with European notions of land ownership, and modern scientific farming. Concurrently, Tugen pastoralists were also migrating into the region to take advantage of the opportunities for grazing created by the recent collapse in Maasai dominance of the northern Rift Valley. By denying access to their land, Europeans broke the fluid, seasonal cycle of African grazing, creating a conflict that continues to the present day. Meanwhile, the District was being subjected to an appalling sequence of droughts, famines, locust invasions and outbreaks of disease, the effects of which were compounded by the economic depression of the 1930s. Anderson carefully reconstructs these events and reveals the increasingly sophisticated strategies of African trespassers and European settlers during what he terms the Baringo Range War.

At the heart of this conflict lay the reality of Baringo’s degrading rangelands, and dramatically divergent understandings of its historical causes. For the Tugen, the blame was to be placed entirely on European appropriation of land. For European settlers and officials (with some notable exceptions), degradation was the inevitable consequence of the mismanagement of the African herder. Anderson demonstrates how colonial ecological science, ideologies of progress, structures of domination, and perceptions of pastoral society interacted to produce distorted interpretations of the causes of degradation that consistently supported European interests. European misreading of environmental history, in turn, provided the justification and impetus for a catalogue of disastrous development interventions, many of which in different ways helped to undermine communal forms of land tenure. The second half of the book explores these interventions, focusing on the numerous rangeland reconditioning schemes, compulsory culling programmes, and attempts to market livestock. The final chapter is devoted to the Perkerra Irrigation Scheme and offers a powerful critique of colonial planning by revealing the disregard of many officials for the capabilities of Africans, and for the prospects of learning from the past.

Anderson’s book is very strong on historical detail, and broad in scope. His decision to elaborate several disparate stories of colonial intervention may have diluted the central narrative – the erosion of Baringo’s rangeland commons. Yet all of these stories are important, and help to elucidate the character of African agency, indigenous knowledge, and local politics with which he has chosen to frame the book. My only criticism would be that the wealth of African oral historical and interview material used in the book was largely collected over 20 years ago. More recent research might have been framed differently, allowing Anderson to advance current theoretical debates within environmental history regarding interactions between environmental narratives and African communities. Nevertheless, the book is a thorough, convincing and balanced account, which should be read by anyone wishing to understand the historical causes of environmental degradation in Africa.

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Increasingly confronted by studies suggesting that not only had aid failed to reverse bad policies, but that there may even be a positive correlation between corruption levels and aid, the international donor community have in recent years sought to develop other mechanisms for enhancing democratic accountability and the effectiveness of aid. Public opinion – coupled with negative reports on what conditionality based aid had accomplished in terms of sustainable development – led to a renewed focus on poverty reduction towards the end of the millennium. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) initiated by the World Bank and IMF for forging poverty reduction in the context of debt relief programmes are maybe the most direct attempts by the international donor community to seek to enhance commitment to the poor and accountability to poverty reduction from the outside. Tied to a set of governance conditionalities, PRSPs have placed issues of poverty reduction at the centre stage of the official agenda in a number of debtor countries.

This book, produced by the Overseas Development Institute, confronts the essential question – are PRSPs actually making a difference? Furthermore, can the PRSP-based process-conditionality succeed where other forms of conditionality have failed? In exploring these questions, the book draws on early evidence from seven countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Focusing on the PRSP processes, i.e. the endeavour of formulating and building consensus around the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, the country chapters investigate the extent to which poverty reduction policies, programmes, practices and monitoring systems are being institutionalised in selected African countries. The studies focus on three main topics:

- attitudes, commitments for governmental and non-governmental stakeholders;
- institutional changes introduced with respect to public financial management participation in policymaking;
- development of PRSP monitoring and information systems.

The book contains an introductory chapter summarising the seven country analyses of Benin, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Rwanda and Tanzania. This is followed by seven country studies commissioned by in-country and international scholars. As pointed out by the authors, the PRSP initiative may prove a passing fashion in the ever-changing world of international development. However, there is also a chance that PRSPs may have a greater impact on development aid and practices than the debt relief with which they were first associated. The book provides tentative and guarded conclusions in support of the latter through five general arguments:

- PRSPs have mainstreamed and broadened national poverty reduction efforts;
- but to succeed, complementary reforms are essential, particularly public sector reforms;
- new spaces for domestic policy dialogue have been created;
– monitoring may improve the quality of PRSPs;
– PRSPs invite a more substantial transformation of the aid relationship.

The study is comprehensive and insightful. The level of quality is also displayed in the country chapters that are well structured and linked to the overall themes of the study raised in the first chapter. Nevertheless, one would have wished for a more focused and critical analysis of the underlying issues of politics and accountability in this study. The authors state that politics matters, and that poverty reduction is embedded in underlying political systems. Thus, they argue, the PRSPs can only work through the political system and policy processes of the country concerned. It is therefore disappointing that the authors do not critically confront the striking finding noted throughout the book: that two central institutions of accountability, parliaments and political parties, have been sidelined in these processes. This would imply that key actors and institutions in terms of implementing and co-ordinating PRSPs, namely politicians, political parties and parliament, have not been party to these processes and do not really feel ‘ownership’ of their tangible output. The study emphasises budget reforms, and notes that unless the budget is adhered to and the Ministry of Finance has the capacity to impose budget discipline on government, the PRSP will not make a difference. However, if the PRSP has not even been discussed by parliament and the political parties, how likely is it really to be implemented?

This book provides a very good introduction to debates and an overview of the intriguing issues of poverty reduction strategies. Nevertheless, the reader is left wondering whether a stronger emphasis on the political dilemmas associated with the new forms of accountability created between external actors and civil society at the expense of domestic political institutions would have led to a different conclusion with regard to the impact of PRSPs.

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Worlds of Power: religious thought and political practice in Africa
by Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar
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This book seeks to examine an issue area often believed to be of growing importance not only in relation to Africa, but also more generally, especially since September 11, 2001: what happens when religion and politics interact?. The authors adopt what I regard as a controversial definition of religion, first articulated by a nineteenth-century anthropologist, E. B. Tylor. That is, religion (in Africa) amounts to a ‘belief in the existence of an invisible world, often thought to be inhabited by spirits that are believed to affect people’s lives in the material world’ (p. 3). As Ellis and ter Haar acknowledge, however, this is tantamount to perceiving ‘religion’ as more or less synonymous with ‘magic’ or ‘superstition’; it certainly does not imply a ‘search for meaning in life’, a common designation applied to the theory and practice of religion; moreover, the authors are not interested in institutional expressions or mobilisational aspects of religious
activity. Given that the book specifically claims to be about ‘religious thought and political practice in Africa’, then this might be seen as problematic.

Geographically, the book purports to focus on Africa, although in practice – no doubt understandably reflecting the specialisms of the authors – most empirical material comes from west and southern Africa; as a result, there is little overt attention to east Africa, and even less to north Africa. Because the focus is on rather non-specific, generic religious expressions – characterised by their aficionados’ shared belief in spirits – there is little attention paid to the world religions: Islam and mainline expressions of Christianity. Structurally, the book is divided into nine chapters, plus a brief Introduction. The title of each chapter is invariably one word – ‘Ideas’, ‘Words’, ‘Spirits’, ‘Secrets’, ‘Power’, ‘Wealth’, ‘Morality’, ‘Transformations’ and ‘Histories’.

The authors’ understanding appears to be that ‘politics’ is the ‘activity generated by conflicts of interests and values that affect all of society, and the efforts to reconcile them’ (p. 15). However, in spite of the book’s title overtly referring to ‘political practice’, this is a book that I would place much more squarely in the domains of sociology and anthropology. There is little interest, for example, in political parties and movements inspired by religious idea(l)s, and readers will look vainly for references to contemporary manifestations of political/religious movements in Africa, such as, the Lord’s Resistance Army or the Front Islamique de Salut.

Overall, the book is a useful addition to the growing literature on religion in Africa. But because the authors do not seek to offer a thesis beyond a very general one, belief in spirits is significant for an understanding of politics in contemporary Africa, it means that for this reviewer the sum total of the book’s thrust is less than it might have been; there is little sense of an argument building over the pages of the book to lead to a clear and compelling conclusion. In addition, I felt at times that I was reading a book comprising individual contributions that, while often interesting in their own right, did not always fit together well. For example, there is much discussion of ‘radio trottoir’, one of the authors’ pet themes, but no clear indication, at least to this reviewer, why this was especially relevant to the book’s main concerns.

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Peoples Spaces and State Spaces: land and governance in Mozambique by R. E. Galli
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This book is a study of the centralised nature of political and administrative decision-making in Mozambique, and its generally negative effects on rural communities throughout the country. It is a call for the greater participation of rural peoples in decisions that affect their lives. The book’s author is an academic but was also an advisor to the Mozambican government for about a decade in, first, the National Planning Commission and then the Institute for Rural Development (INDER). She has combined her scholarly training with a
practitioner’s first-hand knowledge of planning in a developing country, to present an informed account of rural practices and difficulties and to promote development solutions that empower rural people. The account draws on archival work as well as on numerous, donor-funded rapid rural appraisals and participatory planning exercises conducted by INDER in the 1990s.

The main argument is that throughout much of the colonial and postcolonial history of Mozambique, rural development planning has been too hierarchical and too controlled by urban elites at the top of the state administrative structure. Instead, the author advocates ‘reversing the normal planning procedure by letting rural peoples make their own plans, and inviting government or donor collaboration as needed’ (p. 203). She claims that communities know best what their needs are, can respond to economic opportunities if they are present, and have the wherewithal to govern their ‘spaces’ without constant intervention from outsiders.

Organisationally, Galli tries to follow her own advice about empowering rural communities by first writing about four ‘culturally dissimilar’ rural communities located in Niassa, Sofala, Manica and Maputo provinces respectively. After giving a rather potted history of each community’s precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial experiences, the book then moves down the administrative ladder in chapters 6–12 to show how planning takes place at the national level; in the institute where she worked, INDER; among donors; within specific communities; and with regard to a specific issue, notably land. The difficulty with this organisational approach is that much that the author tells readers about specific rural communities in the first four chapters makes little sense without an understanding of the legal and institutional apparatus of administrative planning in Mozambique (which is given in a later chapter). Further, the four communities are seldom mentioned in the rest of the book, so one wonders why they are given so much prominence at the beginning.

Theoretically, Galli’s argument for the greater involvement of rural communities stems from a moral belief that rural people ought to be more involved in decisions that affect their lives. Moreover, it is implicitly guided by a theoretical framework that seems to rely heavily on Robert Putnam’s observations regarding the social capital of local communities; Judith Tendler’s findings in Brazil on the capabilities of local government officials to practice good governance if provided the right training; and Antonio Gramsci’s notion of the value of organic intellectuals in empowering local peoples. The argument is compelling, but could have been more persuasive if, in the introduction or first chapter, Galli had more explicitly developed the theory in relation to current debates about the rural areas in the scholarly literature on Mozambique. The author then might have used the theory to frame each chapter, perhaps examining first the notion of social capital in the context of Mozambique’s rural areas; then showing how the planning process has underestimated and ignored (historically and presently) the extent of social capital in the rural areas; and then invoking Tendler and Gramsci to propose a solution. As it is, these authors and the debates in Mozambique are sprinkled throughout the text but neither systematically developed nor critiqued.

Methodologically, the book is problematic in places. It seems to eschew all sorts of standard social science techniques such as fieldwork, random samples,
and standard questionnaires for the gathering and presentation of data. For example, it refers to the views of ‘elders’ in particular communities, but does not say how many ‘elders’ there were, or whether there was any disagreement among them over certain issues. In chapter 5, the book says that the claims are based on work that INDER carried out in twenty-eight communities, but does not say how the work was conducted, whether INDER officials interviewed a representative sample of people, or how many people they interviewed. The notes to chapter 5 say that ‘there were no written questionnaires guiding the interviews, only topics’ (p. 151), which raises questions about the degree to which one can draw conclusions from material that may be inconsistent across cases and regions. In short, the methods for gathering, use, and presentation of data on which many of the claims about what rural communities are and what they want rest, raise all sorts of worrying questions in my mind about the generalisability of the findings across Mozambique. As a technique for data gathering, rapid rural appraisal seems largely to consist of going to a rural area for a few days, talking to whomever is around, and then leaving as quickly as possible.

Yet, the book may prove useful for policymakers in Mozambique. Its observations about the current approach to the rural areas in Mozambique are alternately alarming and encouraging. On the one hand, Galli describes a multitude of government and donor programmes, units, agencies, and institutes that conducted surveys, rapid rural appraisals, participatory planning sessions, and interviews with rural peoples during the 1990s. The sheer number of projects mentioned makes one wonder if the real problem currently in Mozambique is a lack of coordination on the part of government administrators and donors at all levels, and financial waste and inefficiency owing to the repeated efforts to ‘know’ rural people and their communities. A good example of this is given on p. 173, where the author lists at least 13 donor agencies, commissions or projects directed at rural rehabilitation following the end of the civil war in the early 1990s. Scattered references to the layers of bureaucracy that exist in these organisations, issues of territoriality and turf in the areas where they work in Mozambique, and misplaced loyalties, reveal how disruptive and even harmful their actions might be.

On the other hand, the sheer number of efforts directed at the rural areas suggest that there is a great deal of concern about what is happening with agriculture, with rural livelihoods, and with communities. Despite the author’s frustration with the approach taken by many government bodies and agents, it is encouraging that both government and donors at least recognise the importance of rural areas, even if their efforts are misplaced. In answer to Galli’s question at the end of the book, is anybody listening?, it seems that lots of people are listening: it is just that their responses to what they are hearing is driven by their own needs, responsibilities, identities and loyalties, not by those of the rural people they are listening to. Perhaps Galli’s book will change the way they listen and the way they respond.

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Female Genital Cutting: cultural conflict in the global community
takes on an important subject by exploring the broader ‘global’ context of international activism and national policymaking in relation to the controversial practice of female genital cutting (FGC). In many ways this book is less about FGC than about how these practices can be used to explore the structural relationships between nation-states, the interactions between states and international organisations, and the implications of contradictions between international discourses such as individual human rights and national sovereignty. The book is most insightful at this level, helping the reader to understand how and why national governments adopt particular kinds of policies in relation to these practices. Although the volume also offers a useful overview of the now widespread literature on female genital cutting, as well as updated information on the policies and controversies in various countries, the attempt to link these international and national dynamics together with the women who actually engage in these practices is sketchy and less satisfying. Indeed, historians, anthropologists and others interested in historical and cultural detail (what anthropologists refer to as thick description) will find little of it in this volume. Instead, the author seeks to develop generalisable theories that have empirical predictability, drawing heavily upon survey data in addition to institutional analysis. Consequently, the book, although clearly written, is sometimes vague and is perhaps best suited to be a source of background information rather than a text for students. In short, this volume offers a helpful and balanced synthesis of the laws, policies and literature regarding a highly controversial topic, as well as insight into international institutional dynamics; however, it offers little about Africa per se, or about the people who engage in practices of FGC.

Throughout this analysis, Boyle engages with a body of literature referred to as neo-institutionalism, which seeks to view lawmaking in international rather than national terms. She notes that the laws of particular countries in relation to FGC have little to do with the prevalence of the practice within these countries or the sentiments of their citizenry, but rather reflect the position of various nations within an international pecking order. For example, although the United States, with very few cases of FGC, can attempt to direct policies in other countries by withholding aid, less powerful nations, including those in which the practice predominates, are forced to make their positions accord with the stance of more powerful countries. Those countries that are least influential have the most limited ability to contest international pressure. Boyle also explores how hegemonic international discourses sometimes contradict each other. In relation to FGC, for example, the increasingly pervasive emphasis on human rights comes into conflict with long-standing international ideals of national sovereignty, and even democracy, in countries where there is strong support for the practice. For example, when representative institutions like Egypt’s Parliament refused to pass legislation curbing the practice of FGC, the Egyptian president resorted to bypassing parliament and issuing a presidential decree in order to bring his
country into international compliance. Boyle also notes how the structural position of international organisations shapes their efforts at reform: while intergovernmental organisations involved in curbing the practice of FGC work within a framework of national sovereignty and espouse more reformist efforts, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are freer to adopt a more activist and confrontational stance based on individual human rights.

In this account, however, the concept of ‘institution’ itself remains fuzzy. A range of disparate phenomena are discussed as institutions without articulating what might be different about them (among others, Boyle analyses nation-states, ideas of national sovereignty and human rights, Islam, families, and ideas surrounding, and practices of, female genital cutting all as ‘institutions’). Institutions are defined by the author as ‘social patterns or belief systems that accrete over human history, persist without active intervention, and are not eliminated when individuals fail to comply or agree with them. The origins of institutions are often unclear or unknown because institutions are age-old practices and beliefs’ (2002: 9). Institutional actions are also defined in this account as habitual and requiring no conscious reflection. Such a definition, however, downplays a reality of ongoing historical change as well as the possibility of conscious reflection and conflict regarding these institutions (for example, historians might contest the idea that nation-states and concepts such as national sovereignty are age-old institutions rather than the product of particular historical dynamics that are constantly contested and in flux). Boyle’s own analysis, in fact, is more subtle and complex than this definition suggests. For example, she later offers an interesting historical sketch that connects the spread of practices of FGC on the African continent to the historical expansion of slave networks that linked Egypt with regions to the south. It would have been helpful had Boyle used such material to critique this overly-general definition of ‘institution’.

The linking of national and international dynamics to the micro level choices of individuals could also be explored in greater depth. In this section, Boyle utilises information collected from surveys and other secondary material gathered from Egypt, Tanzania and the United States. For an anthropologist, these chapters are somewhat unsatisfying to read, given the lack of attention to place, cultural context or differences among ethnic groups. Indeed the tendency towards generalisation can, in some cases, lead to potentially misleading outcomes. For example, Boyle hypothesises that religion plays a crucial role in whether women support or resist these practices, and throughout the book discusses the link between Islam and FGC (although she is careful to note that female genital cutting is not required by Islam, that most Muslim countries do not practice it, and that Christians and followers of traditional religion do engage in these practices). Although acknowledging early in the book that FGC is not correlated with Islam in Tanzania, the generalising tendency of the survey work in these later chapters fails to state clearly enough that in Tanzania (as well as other parts of East Africa), Muslim KiSwahili-speakers do not practice FGC, while those that do hail from ethnic groups that are Christian or mix Christianity and indigenous African religions. The failure to underscore this crucial point leaves the reader to assume that Islam is somehow associated with these practices (as it is in Egypt), and places an overly heavy load on religion as an explanatory factor. Indeed, greater attention to the social dynamics of patrilineal kinship practices, which
could arguably be viewed as a more common historical bond among groups that engage in FGC than religion, would have been helpful. Despite the sketchiness of the survey material, however, these latter chapters do provide insight into the relationship between the kinds of explanations that individuals offer (in this case to contest or support FGC), and the prevalence of particular international discourses. In sum, although some readers might wish for greater historical or cultural particularity, this book is ambitious in scope, balanced in its treatment of a highly controversial topic, and useful in thinking about international dynamics.

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Overcoming Apartheid: can truth reconcile a divided nation? by JAMES L. GIBSON
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Answering the question has truth led to reconciliation in South Africa? is the ambitious objective put forward by James Gibson. In order to answer this question, Gibson makes a number of assertions, some of which are quite challenging to traditional social science research. First of all, he considers both truth and reconciliation as concepts that can be measured and assessed ‘by using rigorous and systematic social science methods’ (p. 3). He then goes on by specifically defining reconciliation and truth. Reconciliation is seen as a construct referring to four independent sub-concepts, namely interracial reconciliation, political tolerance, support for the principles of human rights, and legitimacy of state institutions. Truth, on the other hand, refers here to the truth as promulgated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The dominant research question of this analysis can thus be formulated as follows: ‘Are those South Africans who accept the truth as documented by the TRC more likely to be reconciled?’ (pp. 7–8).

The investigation of this question, as reported in this book, is based on a public opinion survey conducted by the author in South Africa, in the years 2000–1. A sample of over 3,700 South Africans was drawn, representing the entire South African population. Nearly all relevant segments of the population were included in the sample and great care was taken in preparing the survey instrument.

In chapter 1 the research question is explained, paying considerable attention to the concept of reconciliation in South Africa. Important to note is that the book looks at reconciliation from the viewpoint of the individual. The author also tells us why racial categories are the key variable in his research. Namely, different racial groups experienced apartheid differently, and on a socio-economic level there are still important inequalities between races. In chapter 2 the stage is set for testing the truth-reconciliation hypothesis. A demographic profile of the sample is given and Gibson explains how apartheid was experienced by different racial groups. The purpose of the third chapter is to assess the degree to which South Africans accept the TRC truth. By listing some of the Commission’s findings, Gibson tries to define what exactly was the TRC’s
vision of the truth. According to Gibson, the main lessons the TRC wanted to teach the people were that apartheid was evil, that atrocities were committed by all sides of the struggle, and that the evil of the system was the evil of institutions (p. 75). The survey indicates that the TRC did capture the attention of large parts of the South African population, that the majority of South Africans seemed to accept the TRC truth, and that acceptance of this truth especially led to moderating views of the past. The first reconciliation dependent variable is investigated in chapter 4. A number of hypotheses are tested about the factors that have contributed to interracial reconciliation among South Africans. Chapter 5 analyses the second aspect of reconciliation – support for a human rights culture in South Africa and more specifically for the universal rule of law. Gibson finds out that South Africans do not seem to be very supportive of the rule of law, and that racial differences exist in commitments to law.

The next sub-concept of reconciliation, political tolerance, is analysed in chapter 6. Political tolerance does not seem to be very widespread in South Africa and, even more worrisome, levels of tolerance do not seem to have risen over the past five years. In chapter 7, the TRC amnesty process is scrutinised and more specifically its relationship to justice expectations. Apparently, the majority of South Africans approve of amnesty, although they judge it as unfair. The survey indicates that this deficit of justice was compensated for by other aspects of the amnesty process, namely procedural justice (giving voice to the victims and their families), restorative justice (apologies), and especially distributive justice (material compensation). This chapter thus demonstrates that justice is a multifaceted concept and that the government should provide adequate compensation for the apartheid victims, if it wants South Africans to judge the amnesty process as acceptable. The final empirical analysis of reconciliation, in chapter 8, investigates the legitimacy of South Africa’s political institutions. This chapter is probably the most pessimistic, since South Africans do not seem to uniformly recognise the legitimacy of their Parliament and Constitutional Court. Although the question of reconciliation can perhaps only be addressed through a longitudinal analysis, Gibson asserts in chapter 9 that this survey also provides useful insights into contemporary connections between truth and reconciliation. Based on the data regarding the four sub-dimensions of reconciliation, the survey reveals that about 44% of South Africans are at least somewhat reconciled. Although reconciliation was probably considerably lower under apartheid – and has thus been on the rise – there is still a long way to go before reconciliation will dominate in all sectors of the South African population. With regard to the basic research question, Gibson states that the people who accepted the TRC truth certainly did not contribute to irreconciliation (p. 335).

Throughout this survey, respondents are only identified by the four racial categories inherited from apartheid: African, white, Asian and Coloured. This is justified by Gibson in chapter 1, but still, one feels some uneasiness about the prevalence of these categories. Gibson could have allowed for the fact that South Africans have multiple identities, and he could also have taken into account that racial identities are surely modified by social class, gender, religion, age, geographical location, etcetera. According to the author, this analysis has proven that reconciliation and truth can indeed be considered as concrete and
unambiguous concepts, and that social science can indeed make important contributions to understanding the dynamics of reconciliation in South Africa. Although not everyone accepts this approach, it seems to be an original idea, definitely worth investigating. To the author’s credit, this controversial approach is extensively motivated. In addition, research hypotheses are explained, terminology is clearly defined and conclusions are tentatively formulated. Causal relations are not taken for granted, and certain findings are further developed through multivariate analyses. Controversial conclusions, such as the fact that interracial reconciliation is not very lively among black South Africans, are contextualised and put into perspective. Finally, the book concludes with some elaborate information on the design of the survey and questionnaire. An extensive list of notes and references definitely adds to the value of this work.

All in all, Overcoming Apartheid provides some interesting insight into reigning attitudes in contemporary South Africa. The relation between truth and reconciliation is approached in a unique and individualised way. Since all of the decisions taken in the course of the research are clearly motivated and theoretically well founded, this personal touch does not harm the significance of this work.

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Education In Exile: SOMAFCO, the ANC School in Tanzania 1978–1992 by Sean Morrow, Brown Maaba and Loyiso Pulumani
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The Solomon Mahlango Freedom College (SOMAFCO) was an educational complex of the South African ANC in Morogoro, Tanzania, that existed from 1977 until 1992. This history is in the first place a narrative that systematically discusses the institutions in the whole complex, and also contains thematic chapters on the curriculum, relations between Tanzanians and South Africans, and women at SOMAFCO amongst other issues. A summing up of its contents would not do justice to the book, as it is primarily an evocation of the complexities of living in exile set in the political culture of the ANC.

The evolution of the educational complex illustrates this plight. SOMAFCO was initially meant to be a secondary school, and its foundation was in great part motivated by the need to cater for the young refugees in the wake of the Soweto rising. However, to the secondary school were also added the Charlotte Maxeke Children’s Centre for pre-school education, a primary school, a farm, a furniture factory, and the Dakawa Development Centre. The Children’s Centre was needed because ‘There were increasing numbers of children born to those already in exile, including many to parents of mixed nationality. The children of parents who were studying overseas, or who had been sent abroad on political missions had to be catered for’, as well as the children born to the pupils of the school and of course the children of combatants in MK, the army (p. 41). At the other extreme, there was the Dakawa Development Centre, which was
established in the early 1980s. It was situated on an undeveloped, isolated flat area without services about 150 km from the other SOMAFCO institutions. The establishment of Dakawa became urgent when the Nkomati accord was signed, and many ANC cadres were expelled from Mozambique and Swaziland: ‘Education and development had to take place within the context of the occasionally tense atmosphere of these doubly displaced and sometimes frustrated people, among them, from 1988, alleged spies who had been pardoned’ (p. 143).

SOMAFCO was not merely an educational institution but also a place where an alternative to South African society was sought. The most radical attempt at this took place in the primary school under the leadership of Terry Bell, a South African member of the ANC who was based in New Zealand, and his wife Barbara, between 1980 and 1982. Bell believed in creating a better mankind through education, and put into practice a radical egalitarian philosophy. ‘Pupils’ power to make decisions extended to the suspension and expulsion of school members, including both teachers and students’ (p. 54). It is not surprising that this aroused resistance, and the Bells eventually resigned, making accusations about corporal punishment, flogging (even of women), night raids on those suspected of disloyalty, and brutality towards those accused of smoking dagga. Even so, their two years had definite achievements: their radical egalitarian and open approach led to ‘a decline in petty theft and other misdemeanours’ (p. 56).

This particular episode illustrates the strength of this book: it is deeply sympathetic to the SOMAFCO enterprise, but it is not blind to the dilemmas that are so trenchant in political exile. That is especially the case in the chapter on the relations between Tanzanians and South Africans. On the one hand, the generosity of Tanzanian politicians, especially the Regional Commissioner of Morogoro, Anna Abdallah, towards the cause was essential for the enterprise. On the other hand, the SOMAFCO complex was rich as compared to the neighbouring Tanzanian communities. It had, for example, a highly mechanised farm that employed Tanzanian workers. It produced a surplus that was coveted by Tanzanian communities when maize was scarce.

SOMAFCO was a sideshow on the canvas of South Africa’s liberation, and therefore this book can be read as ‘petite histoire’. However, such histories can deal with big issues. It is first and foremost a history of a thoroughly sympathetic attempt to create an alternative non-racial society in exile that is described with warts and all.

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**African Environment and Development: rhetoric, programs, realities**

Edited by W. G. Moseley and B. Ikubolajeh Logan


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This edited volume contains a series of fine case studies by mostly new generation academics in anthropology, geography, history, resource development, sociology
and political science. All use the framework of political ecology, and they make use of regional political ecology, environmental narrative approaches, the geographical literature on scale analysis, or political-economic approaches that deal with questions of gender, ethnicity or class. The volume fills a gap in the existing literature by using multiple political ecology approaches to explore a range of developmental and environmental issues in Africa.

As in Moses K. Tesi’s (2000) *The Environment and Development in Africa*, Moseley and Logan’s ‘Africa’ is limited to Africa south of the Sahara. After providing an introduction, chapters 2–4 of Moseley and Logan offer a critique of conservation meta-narratives such as sustainable development and poverty-induced environmental degradation, and explore the unfortunate impacts of such narratives on policy for water resource and fire management. The chapter authors point to the problem of national elites promoting environmental narratives that further their own interests, and recommend institutional changes that incorporate grassroots organisations into resource decisionmaking to enhance local livelihoods. It is often the wealthy who cause more environmental damage than the poor, but governments may support systems that promote the elite and preserve the status quo to meet debt obligations. In some cases, environmental narratives may have little impact on the ground without donor funding to support enforcement activities (an example would be the case of fire suppression in the Sahel prior to the droughts of the 1980s). Such activities may not only be of questionable value ecologically, but also may harm relations between community members and larger-scale resource management bodies, if enforcement measures are viewed as overly punitive or unjust.

As in previous chapters, chapters 5–8 address issues of scale, but more directly. They offer critiques of mega-scale institutions (international chemical companies, South Africa’s apartheid government), stressing the impact of politics on livelihoods and environmental degradation. Exceptions to the generally negative impacts for local people of engaging in the market may exist where there is growth of a regional economy with fewer connections to the global economy, such as the fruit and vegetable market in Bamako, Mali.

In chapters 9–11 the authors engage issues of community wildlife conservation and knowledge production, as well as grand narratives that privilege foreign experts and the scientific process. Also addressed are the means by which local people have shaped the way larger institutions such as Shell International view the environment and the rights of indigenous people.

Local people are the key to meeting resource and livelihood challenges in Africa, but need policies that will facilitate their input and counter existing power and knowledge structures. While political ecology is useful for analysing problems, it is less useful for predicting future directions. Logan’s framework of environmental security through conflict avoidance is offered as one possible approach to help solve resource-based tensions at multiple scales. In this framework indigenous knowledge is valued and resource scarcity is attributed to the distribution of power, not population growth. The volume is suitable for university-level courses and will be of interest to academics and practitioners.

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Higher Education in Mozambique by MOUZINHO MARIO, PETER FRY, LISBETH LEVEY and ARLINDO CHILUNDO
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Perhaps the first things that come to mind at the mention of Mozambique are poverty, a country ravaged by natural disasters and internal conflict, which nefariously involved apartheid South Africa since the country’s attainment of independence from Portugal in 1975. The socialist government that ascended to political power did not muster popular support among supranational bodies, which have a strong influence on international donor funding. As such, improving lives of Mozambicans after the war of independence, with skilled colonists whom the higher education (HE) system exclusively catered for having emigrated, was always going to be a mammoth challenge. Indeed, Mozambique continues to be one of the poorest countries in the world, despite, ironically, being one of the fastest growing economies in Southern Africa and despite its political changes and positive economic developments since early 1990s. The country still suffers a shortage of highly qualified professional skills, acute regional disparities in wealth and development, challenges that HE in Mozambique is called to address. This is the subject of the book. Using triangulated empirical and documented data, and in the context of broader transformation of the country, the authors skilfully craft the historical background of HE, and follow with an examination of the peculiarities of institutions; access and equity; the generation and transmission of knowledge; the relevance and quality of learning, as well as governance of HE institutions in Mozambique.

Currently, Mozambique has ten institutions of higher learning, of which one is regarded as dormant. Five are state owned, two are religion based, and three are privately owned for-profit institutions. This means that there are five public (governmental) institutions that are directly dependent on funding by the state, and five private (non-governmental) institutions, which receive no direct support from the state. Private institutions depend on tuition fees, sponsors and philanthropy. Of all these institutions, the authors argue that there are only two universities, one public (Eduardo Mondlane University) and the other private (Catholic University of Mozambique). The rest can be regarded, as ‘clusters of faculties’ and others ‘more like a teacher’s college’.

The authors argue that all forms of education are a scarce resource in Mozambique. As in many parts of the world, the demand for HE is greater than the supply, hence the mushrooming of private institutions from the mid-1990s to early 2000s. The new institutions attempt to absorb this demand, but there are still disparities with regard to fields of study, as arts, humanities, commerce and management studies attract more students than mathematical and physical sciences and engineering. Typically, as is the case globally, the three for-profit institutions concentrate on business, administration and information sciences and technology. Other disparities relate to women, people from the centre and north of the country, and the rural poor being less represented in HE. The authors note that the advent of private institutions reduced these imbalances, albeit minimally. However, a concern is that there are no policies aiming to address these inequalities. The only initiatives by individual institutions such
as selective provision of scholarships to women and other forms of affirmation are found at Eduardo Mondlane University and Catholic University of Mozambique. The Catholic University and the Higher Polytechnic and University Institute have established branch campuses in other regions of the country.

Despite the intervention of privately established HE institutions, there is still a shortage of qualified teachers, and both the public and private institutions have large components of foreign staff, although in varying degrees. Such shortage of teachers, together with training programmes identified as too long, curricula that reflect a compartmentalised and static view of knowledge, very heavy course loads, and outdated and irrelevant programmes, are identified by authors as contributory factors to the generally poor quality of HE and very low graduation rates in the country. On issues relating to quality, the book is detailed and covers all aspects necessary to ensure improvement of the system. Equally, this is the case with regard to information systems and utilisation of information technology in the higher education system. However, regarding ICT the authors become too absorbed in the comparison of institutions instead of a broader overview of the system as a whole and its required improvements. Overall, the book is very comprehensive and succinct in its coverage of HE in Mozambique. The authors not only examine challenges, but also make bold observations and good ground for solutions, which they also outline. Indeed, there is light at the end of the long dark tunnel that Mozambican HE has had to go through. The book is a useful resource for researchers and administrators.

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Higher Education in Tanzania by Daniel Mkude, Brian Cooksey and Lisbeth Levey
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This book focuses mainly on the reform programme of the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) since the early 1990s. The authors do not cast their net wide to cover the whole of higher education (HE) in the country. As such, the book title, Higher Education in Tanzania, is misleading.

Indeed, the HE system of Tanzania comprises twenty-eight HE institutions, which include three public and seven private university level institutions; seven university colleges of which two are constituent colleges of UDSM and three of Tumaini University; and eleven non-university level institutions. The book does not review the HE system as comprised by these institutions but only UDSM, leaving the impression that HE in Tanzania comprises only one university. Consequently, the profile of Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), one of the public universities, and some valuable contextual information are appended.

Chapter 1 begins with a brief outline of the historical evolution of HE in Tanzania from the early 1960s, setting a perfect scene for later trials and tribulations that led to the current state of affairs in Tanzanian HE. The chapter critically encapsulates the systematic demise of the independence of academia
at UDSM from the mid 1970s till late 1980s. Indeed, this was ‘a radical departure from the practice that had prevailed at the university in the first ten years of independence’ (p. 1). For it was Julius Nyerere, the first president of Tanzania and first chancellor of the University of East Africa, from which UDSM started as one of its three constituent colleges, who advised that the university must have within itself the spirit of truth; its members must come out and force politicians and citizens to think about the implications of what they are doing, and must volunteer to help with the thinking that should precede action (Nyerere, 1963 – Address at the Inauguration of the University of East Africa). It was through such visions that UDSM blossomed to become ‘one of the best known universities in Africa, if not the world’, for its reputed scholarly excellence and dedication (pp. 3–4). Subsequent governments systemically undermined this vision and the intellectually vibrant student body, and brought UDSM, and by implication the entire HE system, to its knees.

Over and above poor state policies on education and economy, the authors cite the collapse of the East African Community, the war against Idi Amin, underfunding, institutional mismanagement, among others, as contributing factors to the demise of UDSM. A glimmer of hope for the university’s resurrection arose in the late 1980s and early 1990s when, for the first time, its top management were academics. This change marked the beginning of the transformation of UDSM since the early 1990s, which the book covers extensively because it was realised that a ‘piecemeal approach would not provide any adequate solution’ (p. 10).

Chapters 2–3 detail the role that different sectors play in the Institutional Transformation Programme (ITP). It is evident that for such a programme to succeed, there has to be clear vision, mission and objectives; the determination of all sectors; willingness to cooperate, especially between state and the institution; clear channels of communication to ward off any misunderstandings and mistrust, and willful participation of all concerned. Indeed, the process is not a smooth one. For example, the authors cite lack of control of private consultancies conducted by academics. Thus, in many respects, the institution is losing revenue. The weakness on this coverage, though, is that it is largely reportorial and less analytic. The authors do not tackle issues in perspective and do not offer their personal experiences or draw from others (by referencing literature or even the citation of qualitative interviews), as a way of strengthening their argument or critiquing or finding solutions for the ITP.

In chapter 4 (out of 5) the book begins to broaden its coverage to include the current political and economic policy environment which impacts on the entire education system. The HE system, in particular, is expected to contribute to ‘a well-educated and learning society’, which is one of the five major attributes of Tanzania’s Development Vision 2025 (pp. 60–1) and ingredients for economic development of the country. However, in order to achieve these goals the authors suggest, among other things, that HE in Tanzania has to overcome the obstacles such as low student enrolments, gross imbalance between science and liberal arts enrolments, gender imbalance and poor financing (p. 60). The chapter begins with a captivating overview of HE and its role in the future development of the country, but from the middle, it drifts back into analysis of problems with equity, gender and student quality at UDSM. Even on the subject of HIV/AIDS,
which requires a national response, the chapter only exposes the UDSM’s plan of dealing with the challenge.

Overall, though, the book is written with clarity and offers rich text for lessons on institutional transformation, and UDSM’s journey to recovery is inspirational.

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Makerere University in Transition 1993–2000 by NAKANYIKE B. MUSISI and NANSOZI K. MUWANGA
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Once a towering lighthouse of higher education (HE) beaming its rays of knowledge production and leadership development to the rest of Africa and the world, is a befitting analogy of Makerere University (Makerere). In its heyday, Makerere was internationally reputed as a first-class institution (p. 7). A bright light of African scholarship in the 1960s, when many African states were in desperate need of home-grown leadership following the attainment of liberation from colonial rule, Makerere delivered.

The book briefly describes Makerere’s illustrious history (chapter 2), which was sadly cut short by the dictatorship of Idi Amin (1971–9) (chapter 3). The subsequent government of Milton Obote (1980–5) also dashed all glimmer of hope with its cutbacks on education spending and piecemeal provision of fractions of budgeted development by the university administration. The pressure on Makerere was further exerted by a policy shift in educational funding from tertiary towards primary and secondary education, and as a result of increased primary and secondary enrolments and the growing demand for higher education. In a captivating description of this dim period, the authors lament the towering ghost Makerere had become. The deteriorated quality of teaching and learning made Makerere a place of bare laboratories, empty library shelves, chronic shortage of scholastic materials, and overcrowded halls of residence, some of which were converted libraries, toilets and washroom facilities (p. 10).

Indeed, desperate situations called for desperate measures for the remaining lecturers, when some moonlighted as tutors or taxi drivers or went into business as a means of survival, and also gave that odd weekly lecture (p. 10). Makerere was a university teetering on its last legs, an ivory tower that had lost touch with its environment and was at odds with national development needs. A move to reform and revitalise was desperately needed (p. 15).

Since 1992, Makerere has embarked on a recovery path with an incredible measure of success. The authors give an eloquent and detailed account of Makerere’s transformation (chapter 4). Their examination of the transformation programme indicates that Makerere has begun to flash its light of knowledge far and wide within and outside Uganda again.

The book not only assesses gains made, but also sets out from the onset to help the university acquire a broad frame of reference for strategic thinking and planning of institutional development (p. 1), a theme yearned for by many HE institutions globally. Thus, chapter 5 interrogates challenges that remain in
order to complete the reform process. Among others, these include building an adequate financial base; strengthening management capacity; ensuring the quality of academic programmes; and equity in admissions and staffing (p. 41). The conclusion (chapter 7) even offers a SWOT analysis of the reform programme thus far.

Encouragingly, the book is grounded on empirical data gathered from the university: students, administrators, academics and policy documents. The resulting text is a compelling read for HE administrators, both at government and institutional level, and for researchers and scholars in HE. By interpretation, the book chronicles lessons on how to balance policy decisions, and acts as a guide on how to lead a HE institution into recovery. It is a simplified lesson on improving communication channels between government, university administration, academics, support staff and students. It is an envious state of affairs for many institutions around the world and, indeed, Makerere is on its way to reclaiming its position as the preeminent institution of HE in the Eastern Africa region. The book is a wealth of information for researchers and administrators alike and is highly recommended for academic libraries.

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