West Africa’s Security Challenges: building peace in a troubled region edited by Adekeye Adebajo and Ismail Rashid
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Long before 11 September 2001 presaged organised centres of terrorism confronting wide swaths of the world, West Africa had been encountering its own form of terror. Civil war, rebellion, anarchy, repression, autocracy, violent governance, the lack of democracy and security, economic mismanagement, excessive poverty, child soldiers, orphans, millions of refugees and the exploding HIV/AIDS calamity have marked much of West Africa’s landscape, especially since the end of the Cold War in 1991, predating 9/11 by ten years. Facing a failure of governance, ‘the peoples of West Africa’, according to Ismail Rashid, ‘found themselves at the depth of despondency … They now live in one of the poorest, most volatile, and most conflict-ridden regions of the world. The greatest challenge for the inhabitants and governments of West Africa is how to contain and resolve the ongoing violent conflicts, forestall the outbreak of new ones, and develop security frameworks that can guarantee durable peace.’ That is the core of what this book attempts to come to grips with. Life for West Africans has become a daunting struggle, and the effort it will take to construct a viable peace in this region is sombly recognised by the authors of the sixteen chapters that make up this volume, each one detailing, and offering solutions to, a different emergency.

Although the distinguished scholars and activists who have written for this book recognise the cataclysm that has assailed West Africa, all, without exception, stress the positive but largely emphasise only the possibility of resolving the plight that has beset civil society. It is striking that many of these essays are draped in frustration, underscoring what needs to be done, as well as what can be done. With few exceptions, these authors, who would undoubtedly appreciate pointing out what has been accomplished in successfully containing the problems they each concentrate on, are often unable to do so, and so must focus on the policy transformations that are necessary if long-term regional security and stability are to be shaped. So one gets the sense when reading these important and provoking essays that the authors are merely hopeful that their suggestions for resolution will be adopted and carried out. But they don’t seem to be overly confident that they will.

Events in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast and Guinea-Bissau are highlighted in many of these writings. In using these four states as prototypes, subjects such as regional or Pan-African approaches to problem solving, constraining rebel movements, altering historic civil–military relations, developing the role of civil society, empowering women, generating new structures of democratic governance, creating the conditions for economic development, limiting small arms and light weapons, reintegrating child soldiers into the social fabric, detailing
new functions for the United Nations in peacemaking, and suggesting a new approach to West Africa by non-African states, especially France, Great Britain, and the United States, as well as overall peace-building, are realistically and seriously dealt with.

A common theme shared by many of the contributors is the role that Nigeria, the African Union, the UN, ECOWAS, ECOMOG and other regional organisations must play in confronting the multiple crises of West Africa, and in seeing to it that the Francophile and Anglophile states work in unison. Although the actions already taken by regional and all-African institutions in trying to bring about the reduction or elimination of violence are praised, virtually all the essays in West Africa’s Security Challenges indicate that the obstructions, long-term commitment, and cost of peace-building may already be constraining these organisations, as well as Ghana and Nigeria, which provide the preponderance of military peacekeepers or peacemakers. The function of ECOWAS is stressed; but these writers share a concern that political divisions, continued disorder, and financial restraints may prohibit it from taking on the formidable role that may be required of it in the future.

There is, in this book, a clear reliance on an alphabet soup of regional bureaucracies to solve West Africa’s problems. But it will take more than that. Amos Sawyer’s essay on governance and democratisation stresses, quite rightly, what must be done within states, employing African organisations to buttress state or civil activity. Some of the other authors, I believe, rely too heavily on the role of regional institutions to bring about solutions. Consequently, some chapters read like a litany of acronyms.

Still, this is a very good book, and a distinguished reference work of exhaustive proportion. Almost everything of consequence that has occurred in West Africa over the past decade or so is examined. What needs to be accomplished to bring about good governance and citizen security is carefully explored. Each author provides a thoughtful analysis, within a historical context, of what must be realised if West Africa is to attain reconciliation, democracy, social normality, economic growth and development, regional and individual confidence.

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The Bright Lights Grow Fainter: livelihoods, migrations and a small town in Zimbabwe by AGNES ANDERSSON
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If I could abolish one word from academic literature on African urbanisation it would be ‘unabated’, as in ‘urban growth rates are unabated despite economic declines’. In fact there is clear evidence from many countries throughout sub-Saharan Africa that urban growth rates have declined for a variety of demographic, statistical and economic reasons. In terms of national urbanisation rates, an important element in this is changes in the net rates of rural–urban migration which, in turn, in the past 25 years, reflect the major shifts in rural and urban livelihoods created by structural adjustment programmes. However, such analysis of the
national scale of urbanisation neglects important new migration flows which may be occurring within the urban hierarchy, as the result of shifts in the balance of costs and benefits of urban living in the big cities versus smaller centres.

The contribution of Andersson’s *The Bright Lights Grow Fainter* is in showing that a part of the ‘abatement’ of net in-migration to large urban centres in Zimbabwe may have occurred because of strengthened urban–urban movements from large to small towns, where living costs are significantly lower, and formal and informal job markets somewhat less saturated. The book is her unrevised Ph.D. thesis, based on field research conducted in Rusape, a small town in Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe, about 170 km south-east of Harare. The main results come from a survey of 143 migrants, roughly equally divided between men and women, from the low-income housing area of Vengere. She provides clear evidence of important, recent, in-migration flows from other towns, particularly Harare and Mutare (the nearest large urban centre), and of such migrants’ reasoning for their movement. Almost half of the migrants surveyed had lived in centres classified as cities in the past. Their motives for moving out combined both the increasing disadvantages of life for the urban poor in, especially, Harare with the relative ease and lower costs of life in Rusape. Factors included very high food and transport costs, high rents for lodgers, and the sheer lack of both rental accommodation and houses or stands to buy in the cities. In Rusape, in contrast, accommodation was much easier to find and cheaper, it was much easier both to grow food in town as spare urban land was more available and to bring it in from rural landholdings, and transport costs could usually be avoided as the town was small enough to walk to work. Any idea that the larger cities offer more earning opportunities and higher formal or informal incomes to counterbalance their extra costs has to be firmly rejected, given the views of these migrants who were generally adamant that, in 2000, the reverse was true – typical incomes were felt to be higher in Rusape and it was also easier to find a job, or make one for yourself in the informal sector. This latter finding is perhaps the most interesting – clearly if this was the case, moving to Rusape was, economically, a win-win situation. I use ‘was’ because Andersson found indications that its own labour market was beginning to show signs of strain.

Zimbabwe is, of course, a special case in terms of economic decline, and one has to be careful not to use patterns established there from the late 1990s as templates for other African countries. The squeeze on urban formal jobs and saturation of the informal employment sector has been truly extreme. Nonetheless there is evidence from some other countries that small towns are attracting more residents, although the downward urban–urban migration found in Rusape has not come to the fore in most analyses. An important exception is Johan Pottier’s 1988 book, *Migrants No More*, in which he showed how, by the late 1970s, economic downturn in the Zambian Copperbelt was leading many former migrants to leave town and take up residence in Mbala, a small town in the district of their origin. They could thereby preserve access to at least some urban amenities and avoid the social difficulties that some, who had not maintained their linkages fully, felt they might encounter if they attempted to engage in rural livelihoods. While Andersson does refer to this work, and to Ferguson’s 1999 Zambian study on the Copperbelt which uncovered some similar themes, the comparison with Mbala could have been usefully extended. Her contention in
her conclusion that ‘the downward link from cities to smaller town and intermediate towns has not [other than in her thesis] been recorded yet’ (p. 181) thus does require modification.

The book is also strong on the importance of kinship linkages as influences on the specific places to which people choose to migrate. While not a new insight in the Africanist literature, the continuation of established patterns is always important to reiterate when found. Andersson also argues, however, that the exigencies of structural adjustment had adversely affected the capacity of such linkages to maintain dependent kin, a point which resonates with my own work among Harare migrants and the increasing prevalence of short-term, circular migration patterns as the country’s economic decline steepened. She eschews the conceptualisations of the new household economics, whereby households are argued to make collectively rational decisions to place members in different locations and sectors in order to minimise risk, for the results of her own survey suggest a more individualistic approach to migration decisions, albeit heavily mediated by structural realities.

The ultimate safety net of rural linkages for most respondents is also reiterated and analysed at some length. Andersson argues, however, that for urbanites ‘a network of relatively well-situated urban relatives was a much more important source of economic advantage’ (p. 183). I am tempted to think that such a fortuitous network would probably be top of the wish-list of most of the poor in Africa, be they urbanite or not. Quite what she means by urbanite is not clear, and it would have helped to have it defined, since I suspect that there is an element of circularity in the argument. That is, if urbanites are those who are most reluctant, or quite unable, to realise a rural economic option, then by definition it is they who would most benefit from some alternative. The same circularity is found earlier in the book (p. 56) where, in a discussion which touches on the significance of prostitution as a female livelihood strategy in Rusape, the author cites a local Town Council official’s opinion that ‘rural life had been rejected by the urbanites and that they consequently now had nowhere to seek refuge’. It is highly probable that in fact many of the women had been rejected by rural life, rather than the other way round.

A failure to define terms also leads to considerable potential for confusion in the early sections of chapter 5, in which various data on migration patterns to Rusape drawn from secondary sources, rather than from her own surveys, are presented. A table of population figures for Rusape is produced for which all the post-1992 data are highly dubious estimates which give ridiculously high growth rates. While careful reading of the text indicates the unreliability and, for 2005 downright absurdity, of the data, Rusape’s high growth in the 1990s and 2000s is thenceforward taken as read which, given the centrality of this point to the overall thesis, is rather worrying. The next table produces data from the 1992 census on what are clearly visitors to Rusape (i.e. not migrants) which are interpreted and analysed as evidence of migration patterns. This is followed by another table on her respondents’ employment patterns, where the unemployed category turns out to include homemakers and students. Her sampling method which, unusually, involved plucking people from the street and only surveying those who were keen to talk about their migratory experiences, must also have introduced some biases, but these are not examined.
Studies such as *The Bright Lights Grow Fainter* will help to overcome finally the ‘unabated migration and urbanisation’ idea. This is to be welcomed. It is widely accepted that harsh economic realities have led to increasingly diverse livelihood patterns in both rural and urban areas in sub-Saharan Africa. Given that migration is an element of many livelihoods, it is therefore not surprising that migration patterns themselves have become so much more complex, and work that contributes to an understanding of these patterns is valuable.

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**Justice Gained? Crime and crime control in South Africa’s transition**
edited by **BILL DIXON** and **ELRENA VAN DER Spuy**
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This volume of nine essays is the third in an occasional series of criminology collections initiated by *Crime and Power in South Africa* (Davis & Slabbert, eds. 1985) and continued in *Towards Justice? Crime and state control in South Africa* (Hansson & van Zyl Smit, eds. 1990). From the vantage point of a decade of democratic transition in South Africa, the contributors address diverse crime-related topics from a variety of perspectives. Common to all is, on the one hand, a recognition of the difficulties policy-makers have faced in South Africa’s political transition, and, on the other, awareness of the need for criminology to keep a critical distance from politicised policy-making itself. The latter task has perhaps been made easier by the tradition of leftist ‘New Criminology’ that the work’s predecessors so successfully transplanted to apartheid South Africa. Accordingly, policy suggestions are inevitably accompanied by a call for continuing structural transformation as a necessary condition of tackling the criminality which is haunting South Africa.

Graeme Simpson discusses the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the problems of retrospectively separating ‘crime’ from ‘political crime’. André Standing challenges the mainstream paradigm of organised crime (i.e. as irreducibly mercenary), and draws parallels with vigilantism, state corruption, and the criminogenic pressures of capitalism. Antony Altbeker offers both an overview of gun-related crime and an impressive analytical discussion of the relationship between ownership and deterrence. Rob Turell considers murder and the constitutional prohibition on capital punishment. Brian Stout and Catherine Wood analyse the growing influence of rights-centred approaches to child offenders, and consider intervention programmes that seek to avoid custodial sentences for sex-offenders. Dee Smythe and Penny Parenzee, addressing the Domestic Violence Act, reveal the dangers that women face in relying on laws that challenge cultural inertia. Bill Dixon deconstructs ‘cosmetic’ crime control policies, combining analysis of legislative strategies with discussion of the burgeoning phenomenon of private security. Elrena van der Spuy charts policing studies, from racist self-congratulation to nuanced contemporary discussions of crime, policing and society. Finally, Dirk van Zyl Smit considers the problem of rising prison populations and falling prison standards, with brave policy suggestions that are essential to tackle this immense problem.
This is an impressive volume drawing upon genuine expertise. All the
collections are accessible to the non-specialist and, with the exception of a
particularly dense introduction, all are highly readable. (Rob Turell’s chapter
contains a minor factual error: with reference to the crime against humanity of
apartheid he states, ‘the concept of a crime against humanity was coined at the
Nuremberg trials’ (p. 112). Although crimes against humanity were first codified
at Nuremberg, the term was coined 30 years earlier to describe systematic
Turkish attacks on Armenians.) The collection deserves a more comprehensive
index, but all in all this is an admirable volume that will be a first point of
reference for students and specialists concerned with the depressing preva-
lence of crime in the new South Africa, and the academic dynamism that is
confronting it.

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Blood, Land, and Sex: legal and political pluralism in Eritrea by
LYDA FAVALI and ROY PATEMAN
US$24.95 (pbk.).
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This book addresses the fascinating topic of legal pluralism in Eritrea by
examining the content and role of the exceptionally large numbers of written
traditional/customary codes in the country, in relation to religious law (Islamic
and Orthodox Christianity) and the development of state law under pre-colonial,
colonial and post-colonial regimes.

The first chapter presents a brief discussion of how to analyse legal and political
pluralism in general, and how the authors apply this to the Eritrea case. Four
actors constitute the focus of the book’s analysis: state, ethnic groups, religious
communities, and international/transnational society. Chapters 2 through 4
introduce the reader to the legal sources produced by each actor, and attempt to
show how they are interrelated. There follows a discussion on the importance of
‘blood’ – as in blood feuds and murder cases – in chapter 5; land tenure systems
and the management of land disputes and conflict resolution, in chapters 6 and 7
respectively; and in chapters 8 and 9, the authors discusses gender roles and
relations, and the issue of female genital mutilation. The concluding chapter
provides a brief overview of the status of the four actors in Eritrea today.

The authors should be praised for their commendable job of gathering and
translating a large number of written traditional codes from the nine ethnic
groups in Eritrea, and providing comparative insights into some of their features.
Although most of the material presented has previously been published in one
form/language or another, it is the first time that such a comprehensive collection
of ‘legal data’ from Eritrea has been made available in English. Thus the book
will form the point of departure for future research into legal pluralism in Eritrea.
Hopefully the authors will publish a compilation of the translated traditional
codes, so that future research can take advantage of the original texts in full.

Notwithstanding its positive qualities, the book has certain shortcomings. One
of its weakest parts is the historical outline of the development of legal pluralism in
the country, provided in chapters 3 and 4. Here, for instance, the authors have problems with interpreting the pre-colonial political status of the territory which later became the Italian colony of Eritrea. They attempt to analyse the highland region of Eritrea as disassociated from the imperial Ethiopian political and legal realm. Both authors express a passionate political commitment to and ‘love affair’ for the country (p. 212) – as many of us do – but this has seemingly created difficulties in fully acknowledging the intimate relationship between ‘Eritrean’ and ‘Ethiopian’ historical, political, legal and cultural elements. Sadly, this devalues the comparative strength of an otherwise detailed and engaging book. For instance, although the study includes a comprehensive bibliography of Eritrean material – and is excellent in providing references to Italian publications – several core historical academic texts on land tenure, legal and political organisation in the Ethiopian highlands (including Eritrea) and the ethnic groups straddling the Eritrean–Ethiopian border, are lacking. Even more noteworthy, however, is the deliberate (?) omission of references to the work of Tekeste Negash, one of the foremost experts on Eritrean political and legal history, probably since he has been critical of the ‘official’ interpretation of Eritrean history as provided by the Eritrean liberation movement turned government (EPLF). The strong pro-EPLF position is also visible throughout the text where contemporary issues are debated, and in particular in the rather embarrassing biased and misleading analysis of the recent Eritrean–Ethiopian war (pp. 152–5).

The main strength of the book is the detailed presentation of customary legal practices among a great variety of Eritrean groups. For instance, chapter 5 gives an impressive account of the many different juridical understandings and treatments of murder, and takes the reader through the various stages of blood feuds. This chapter may serve as an excellent point of departure for further analysis into the understanding of conflict and conflict resolution in contemporary Eritrea.

A general critique of the analysis may derive from the fact that the main author of the book is a jurist who has only a textual knowledge of traditional legal practices in the country. Hence, the analysis relies solely on written traditional, religious and state law. Aspects of agency and observations of actual social interaction/case studies are wanting. Written codes may provide a general insight into a legal tradition, but with little data on implementation and the practice of law, a broader understanding of the role that traditional, religious and state law played/plays in Eritrea is difficult to achieve.

The book is at its best when debating the role of ethnic and religious actors within the legal realm. The analysis of aspects of political pluralism – as indicated by the book’s title – is lacking. Moreover, the role of the state is somewhat sketchily presented, and lacks a proper power dimension. The influence of international/transnational society on the development of law in Eritrea is only emphasised as part of the historical backdrop, but not related to contemporary influences.

Despite its obvious weaknesses and lacunae, the book will form an important part of the growing literature on Eritrean studies, and should be compulsory reading for all students of Eritrean society and politics. Moreover, it may also serve as an interesting comparative study on legal pluralism in Africa.

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Jane Guyer explicitly wants the history and ethnography in this book to drive the analytical challenges as far as possible. The result is a book of economic anthropology that is important for its original and incisive ideas, and also marvellously rich in the range and depth of ethnographic and historical detail which underpins the argument. This not only makes for fascinating reading, but also grounds the conceptual discussions in illuminating reality.

The book is a collection of essays based on the Henry Morgan lectures given in 1997 and, following the recent trend in this series, is designed to have a broad appeal to a wider range of disciplines than just anthropology. It draws on an impressively wide range of literature to carry the discussion across disciplinary boundaries. Particularly interesting and stimulating ethnographic detail comes from a rearrangement of Paul Bohannan’s classic paper on spheres of exchange among the Tiv of Nigeria, from an expansion of Polly Hill’s work in Southern Ghana with data drawn from the Ghana Living Standards Survey, and from Jane Guyer’s own research, including two successive periods of fieldwork in the hinterland of Ibadan in Nigeria. But there is also lots more intriguing detail, including illustration of her points from Yoruba plays, her efforts to estimate the amount of manillas in circulation (the only indigenous currency for which this is possible), and accounts of the lengths to which Igbo would go to obtain the money needed to move up the Title system (which was a huge incentive for economic effort).

The idea of asymmetrical exchange as a fundamental feature recurring in African monetary practices, and the possibilities of gainful margin for exchange, are the underlying subjects of the inquiry. Each chapter is based on a different part of Guyer’s research. Chapter 2, based on the conversions of the Tiv in their exchange practices, starts the argument and structures the book. The other essays relate to this, because they are conceived of as only linkable to each other through this initial set of ideas. In Africa, money has been a medium for a relational life rather than a goal for storing wealth, and a ramifying set of options exists for converting money earned in the market into assets for pursuing diverse and enduring forms of return or security. Status for the wealthy has come from their capacity to deal with people’s needs, made possible by their claims on goods which in turn derive from money. Conversionary transactions have been widely used to transform ephemeral income into more enduring relational assets.

Having established the dynamic nature of the market in Atlantic Africa, Guyer addresses the question of how the small-scale popular economy copes when faced with an unpredictable or barely existent Western formal sector. She looks at the performances and charismatic resolutions that pull off transactions, dealing with various kinds of scales and numeric conventions and with mundane crises, and at the stabilising institutions that are formed in the process of creating marginal wealth.

This is a brilliant book. Its insights on economic transactions lead us to new investigations to advance our understanding of the interface between the popular
Given the widespread assumption among African media specialists and political commentators, as well as international donors, that a free and independent press is a requirement for and indicator of political democratisation, it is surprising that so little academic attention has been devoted to exploring the relationship between media and democratisation in Africa. The book under review, which grew out of a 1997 international conference of scholars and journalists in honour of the late Gwendolyn Carter at the University of Florida, is intended to address that gap.

The volume explores the potential for media to facilitate or limit the process of democratisation along four inter-related and overlapping domains: political, economic, cultural, and technological. It offers a valuable review of media policies, developments and constraints through the 1990s. The papers, which are clearly focused, and well researched, are primarily concerned with situations in Anglophone countries in southern and eastern Africa. The topics examined in the seven core chapters include media and the two waves of democracy, media laws, broadcasting and political reform, ownership, American reporting of African politics, the Internet, and alternative small media such as listserves, audio cassettes and ‘street buzz’. The approach throughout is historical. These papers are given coherence and set in a conceptual framework by Hyden and Leslie’s Introduction and Ogundimu’s Conclusion.

The editors argue that in the political domain, the relationship between the media and democratisation is reciprocal and generally positive: where democratic reforms have opened up the media to private ownership, newspapers and radio stations, along with civil society organisations, are pressing for greater transparency and accountability in governance. The relationship between media and democracy in the cultural domain is also seen as two-way. Political-economic liberalisation has meant greater exposure through FM radio, satellite TV and the Internet to a wide variety of cultural products and ideas. The new media landscape is regarded as positive for democratisation in that it can encourage tolerance of different points of view, but it also has the potential to lead to anti-democratic demands for censorship on the grounds that imported media products are culturally inappropriate.

In the economic domain, the relationship between media and democratisation is one-way. Privatisation of media ownership and the abolition of import and investment barriers (often demanded by international donors) tend to have negative consequences for genuine pluralism and social-economic development. These ‘reforms’ encourage penetration by foreign media products and capital, concentrate control of the media in the hands of elite entrepreneurs, and typically weaken public broadcasting services.
Evidence from this collection of papers suggests that new communication technologies: FM radio, the Internet, DTH-TV and cell phones, are leading to the reorganisation of space and power that may or may not aid democratisation. However, the links between democratisation in the current neo-liberal economic climate and the proliferation of these media are not examined in this volume, leading the editors to argue that the relationship between media and democracy in the technological domain is one-way. This interpretation bears reconsideration. Historically, new communication technologies have been developed and adopted to solve particular social-political needs and interests. Just what those needs and interests are in Africa today, and how they are shaping national telecommunications policies, is an important area for future communication research.

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Democratising Foreign Policy? Lessons from South Africa by
PHILIP NEL and JANIS VAN DER WESTHUIZEN
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Is South African foreign policy subject to democratic predispositions? Do citizens help make policy? Are South Africa’s external relations geared to democratic goals? Nel and van der Westhuizen believe that the increasing salience of global trade and international finance in affecting domestic politics make the case for democratising foreign policy-making all the more compelling, though the corresponding decline in national sovereignty has accentuated civic apathy and political disengagement. In South Africa, Thabo Mbeki’s presidency claims to ‘put people first’ in its conduct of foreign policy: this is an important dimension of its legitimating rhetoric, that the government invites popular participation in defining its policy aims and that these aims are democratic.

Are such protestations more than rhetorical? Not if you believe most of the contributors to this volume, members of a study group supported by the University of Stellenbosch. After a lengthy excursion into Frankfurt School critical theory, Ian Taylor arrives at the conclusion that South African democracy is limited to the barest kind of procedural polyarchy with no significant redistributive or substantive content. Hence to expect any kind of policy process to engender participation would be naively optimistic. Nel, Jo-Ansie van Wyk and Kristen Johnsen find more room than Taylor for consultative opportunities in their definition of the South African political system, ‘competitive elitist democracy’ allied with ‘clientelistic corporatism’. They suggest that during the first years of the Mandela administration, an assertive parliamentary portfolio committee was willing to interact with civil society. With Thabo Mbeki’s creation of a Policy Coordination and Advisory Service in the president’s office, Parliament’s ability to influence policy has been checked. Garth Le Pere and Brenden Vickers believe that government remains receptive to NGO inputs, but only rarely cooperates with them to the extent that think tanks and research organisations help shape policy. Certain organisations, notably the Institute for Security Studies, are occasionally asked to draft legislation. Such bodies may represent particular
interests but they are hardly channels for broad social engagement with policymakers.

Moral feminists think that if women made policy it would reflect those values that arise from the roles society assigns to women. In foreign affairs, policy would become conciliatory and peaceful. Though more women work today than before in South African diplomacy, Maxi Schoeman and Yolande Sadie find the Department of Foreign Affairs still dominated by men, and women within the Department are often confined to certain duties. A female minister has made little difference to the Department’s internal goals. However, Sadie and Schoeman do not investigate the Department’s or the minister’s influence in policy-making. For Patrick Bond, Thabo Mbeki in his embrace of the Washington Consensus embodies ‘neocolonial/comprador trickery’. South African democratic impulses in foreign policy are confined mainly to left-wing social movements that call for debt cancellation and global economic reform. Trade union opposition to the government’s privatisation policies hold out the hope that one day the radical left may yet combine with organised labour to compel government to take back its sovereignty. In a gentler treatment of South African trade policies, Talitha Bertelsmann-Scott finds quite impressive evidence of efforts to solicit public opinion by the negotiators of the trade agreement with the European Union. However, in this context such efforts mainly supplied a legitimating function, rather than influencing the content of the negotiations, for in its attempts to secure access to European agricultural markets South Africa had little room for manoeuvre. With respect to the contracting of a massive and economically debilitating arms purchase in 1999, David Black asks questions about why the decision was made to buy equipment so unsuited to South African external security requirements. He finds answers in the weakness of parliamentary oversight, the influence exercised by ex-guerrilla generals in Thabo Mbeki’s cabinet and, more interestingly, the strategic importance of the local defence industry (a beneficiary of the contract’s ‘offsets’), one of the few economic sectors in which national as opposed to global and public as opposed to private interests can shape industrial strategy. Pierre du Toit supplies a final case study of policy-making in his examination of the role played by the Southern African Development Community in the South African invasion of Lesotho. Regional entities such as the SADC can remove the location of decision-making even further from citizens, especially if they lack any mechanisms for public accountability. A compensation for this shortcoming may be internal decision-making procedures within such bodies that are at least in an elitist fashion consensual. Pierre du Toit’s chapter emphasises theoretical concerns, and his treatment of Lesotho is perfunctory, but even so he makes it quite clear that South Africa did not follow SADC protocol in dispatching its soldiers to Maseru.

In a global political order in which national policy options are so constrained, can South African foreign policy be more democratic? The editors think so, pointing to the possibilities afforded by corporatist ‘co-optation’ of organised labour and NGOs, as well as the occasions when social movement protest succeeds in obtaining concessions or reforms. The Treatment Action Campaign’s victory in forcing foreign pharmaceutical companies to drop their legal action against South African use of generic AIDS drugs is a case in point. It is in this prescriptive vein that the contributions to *Democratising Foreign
Policy? are most helpful. Otherwise much of the analysis is theory-heavy and fact-thin.

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Shadows of War: violence, power, and international profiteering in the twenty-first century by CAROLYN NORDSTROM
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The conflicts in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Sierra Leone, have highlighted the war economies that support the illicit and profitable trade in natural resources – a development that policymakers and scholars generally attribute to a weak institutional environment and the chaos of wartime. This book supports such prevailing wisdom, but goes much further. Nordstrom depicts the vast international and local networks of illicit trade in conflict and post-conflict environments that support markets for basic goods, pharmaceuticals, arms, and natural resources. Equally important, she draws our attention to the strategies used by war survivors, the difficulties of implementing peacetime institutions following a war, and the widespread exploitation of the poor and politically powerless.

Nordstrom’s empirical data, culled largely from extensive fieldwork in Mozambique, Angola and Sri Lanka, should spur scholars and policymakers to re-think their descriptions of war, methods for negotiating peace, and strategies for implementing peace agreements. The first two parts of the book define violence and power in war, while the remaining parts provide striking insights into the breadth of ‘international profiteering’ in illicit markets by focusing on the functioning, institutionalisation and profit-making potential of these markets during war and peace. Nordstrom appropriately describes the widespread illicit trading system that exists in conflict and, frequently, in the uncertain post-conflict period as shadow networks due to the ‘the complex set of cross state economic and political linkages that move outside formally recognised state-based channels’ (p. 106).

A recurrent theme in Nordstrom’s work is determining the locus of power in relationships within the shadow networks. Ironically, as she highlights, the local merchants, while certainly exploiting the needs of consumers and being exploited themselves, hold a great deal of power: ‘without the poor and the powerless doing this work, neither the official nor the illicit system can be maintained’ (p. 128). Large international organisations depend on needs for basic goods, pharmaceuticals, and arms by poorer merchants and consumers – a symbiotic relationship that gives shadow markets staying power beyond war (pp. 200–1).

However, despite the compelling anecdotal evidence used to illustrate exploitation and profit, an important drawback of the book, and of most work in this field, is the lack of quantifiable data. Indeed, as Nordstrom points out, researching in this field is not only difficult, but can be dangerous (p. 232). Nor does she investigate the extent to which shadow markets existed before a conflict. In other words, do weak, pre-war institutions encourage shadow markets?
Still, Nordstrom’s fieldwork is an important contribution to policymaking and scholarship. It richly describes a profitable network that reaches into even the most remote areas of a war-torn country, and outlines the enabling institutional environment that sustains it – illuminating deeply vested interests and rules of engagement that support the shadows (pp. 130–1). For policymakers, this fieldwork reveals that the implementation of peace agreements faces difficulties because shadow networks are not easily dismantled (pp. 200–1). Furthermore, Nordstrom vividly portrays the conundrum that networks ensuring the survival of the poor depend on a system of corruption, criminality, and duplicity by some of the world’s governments and respected international organisations. Finally, in an area where formal markets and research methodologies offer little explanatory power, Nordstrom’s work provides a good first set of questions that scholars should begin to ask.

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Development and Communication in Africa edited by CHARLES C. OKIGBO and FESTUS ERIBO
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A well-chosen subject receives patchy and intellectually unsatisfying treatment in this volume, which seems unclear about its audience: readers who have already thought about the relationship between development and communication might expect to find up-to-date surveys and engagement with contemporary theories; readers new to the field might look for a well-constructed introduction. Both will be disappointed. A major rhetorical strand of the volume invokes some particularly African cultural resolution to promoting development through communication. But quite what this might be in practical terms remains fuzzy.

Problems begin with a mere two and a half page, otherwise untitled, ‘Introduction’ telling us both that the chapters offer a ‘wide array of perspectives on the problems and prospects of developing Africa’, and that these approaches are ‘desirable and useful’, without noting that the contributors’ views are inconsistent amongst themselves.

Papers are grouped into five sections. I had hoped that the first, ‘Foundations’, would provide the bearings missing from the ‘Introduction’. It opens with Molefi Kete Asante’s recommendations for Afrocentricity in communication, which combine Cheikh Anta Diop with a critique of narcissism in the West, and illustrations from the author’s childhood in Georgia. An article jointly authored by Okigbo and Ali Mazrui looks at communication in terms of the latter’s ‘triple heritage’ argument, but is more rhetorical than practical in conclusion. Okigbo’s own chapter then emphasises the need to balance civic and primordial publics, ‘The Kikuyu physician in Nairobi and the Zulu professor in Durban may dress up in Western fashion, but cannot escape from their native souls’ (p. 42). By the end of this section, the volume’s purpose was no clearer.

A second section on ‘Theory’ offers a mixture of general thoughts on communication only loosely related to Africa, and some ‘notes’ on the African
philosophy debate calling for philosophers to participate in ‘building Africa’ (p. 76). Jan Servaes begins from the premises that ‘neither capitalism nor socialism has taken root in Africa, suggesting that African development requires a liberal dose of African culture and philosophy’ (p. 56) which leaves this reader pondering irrelevantly whether a pair of meaningless statements can be combined into a non sequitur. Part III on ‘Media Practice’ seems to have been designed for a US student readership, since it is largely concerned with coverage of Africa in American media, and offers only the sketchiest outline of media trends within Africa. Of three chapters in the part on ‘African Culture’, the first concerns the need to build ‘meta-ethnic’ solidarities, and the others are on development; the second of these is exceptional in this collection for offering a grounded description of programming from South Africa. Part V, ‘Communication Technology’, is indeed predominantly concerned with new communication technologies, but fails to provide a coherent synthesis of the African situation at the end of the last century. Finally, ‘Unity, Debt, and Communication’ offers usefully succinct accounts of challenges facing the African Union and of African indebtedness, in two chapters that make only perfunctory nods in the direction of communication. In conclusion, Cecil Blake recommends the idea of ‘cultural warrants’ derived from deep-seated cultural values to back up the messages of development.

Given the timeliness of the subject – and the communications revolution underway in African radio, television, telephone and IT – this is a missed opportunity. Among an extensive list of names not cited by contributors are Bayart, Chabal and Daloz, the Comaroffs, Ellis, Mamdani, Mbembe, Mudimbe … and one could continue easily. Writings in French, including André-Jean Tudesq’s which virtually defined this field, are wholly neglected. Most disappointingly, one learns almost nothing about the recent state of communications in Sub-Saharan Africa: the index has only four entries for cellular/mobile phones, and not a mention of the commercial interests driving their expansion.

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Inside Sudan: political Islam, conflict, and catastrophe by
D. PETTERSON
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This updated version of Don Petterson’s book comes at a time of utmost relevance in Sudan’s history. The 21-year-old civil war between Northern and Southern Sudan is drawing to a close as a comprehensive peace agreement is in sight: the Khartoum government and the SPLM opposition are due to finalise their talks under Kenya’s auspices. At the same time, Sudan’s Darfur region is the unfortunate host of what the international media has repeatedly called the world’s ‘worst humanitarian catastrophe’ in 2004.

Understanding the complex reality of Sudanese politics is far from easy, and requires a thorough look at the country’s past and the origins of present developments. For such an endeavour, Inside Sudan proves to be a valuable lecture. The book reflects on the author’s personal experience as the US ambassador to Sudan, and provides a true insider’s account of US–Sudanese relations during
Petterson’s posting from 1989 until 1994. The revisions added in 2003 capture the most relevant events after his departure from Sudan, and make for a valuable annex to the 1999 edition.

The author tells a chronologically sound story of how the work of the US embassy unfolded under his supervision, and how US–Sudanese relations developed as a result. He goes into detail about the regime’s human rights policies, its supportive stand towards international terrorists, and describes how and why the execution of two USAID workers led to the drastic deterioration of the US relations with Sudan’s Bashir regime in the mid-1990s. Using original notes and internal communications such as cabled reports between the embassy and Washington, Petterson succeeds in creating an interesting balance between personal interpretations and political realities at the time. Reflecting on overall US policy towards Sudan, the author presents an insightful list of seven factors that – according to his personal analysis – gave way to the US State Department’s Sudan policy, concluding that ‘it was an aggregation of events and actions by the Bashir regime that, taken as a whole, put Sudan in such a bad light with the US government’.

While such clear-cut analysis is certainly welcome to the interested reader, it makes one wonder what elements an equivalent Sudanese list of factors would include as the cornerstones for its US policy. Apart from Petterson’s occasional accounts of Sudanese individual (mis-)perceptions of the US stand towards the country, the book refrains from analysing the Sudanese outlook with the same sharpness. This however does not compromise the quality of the lecture.

Petterson’s unique Sudan experience shows how personal affiliation can make a difference in the most trying circumstances, and the virtue of cherishing a vital diplomatic divide between personal relationships and state representation. The author describes in great detail how he managed to establish and maintain close personal yet professional ties with the Sudanese state, a host government disliked by and in open defiance of US policy. Still, he closes with the admission that the US did not succeed in isolating Sudan, as intended, for its deplorable human rights record and implicit support to terrorists.

He also notes that the international community as a whole failed to act in response to Southern Sudan’s unfolding catastrophe. In his words, this book is ‘yet one more piece of evidence to show how reluctant the international community is to get meaningfully involved in this part of the world’. The current crisis in Darfur is an alarming reminder of this conclusion, and should encourage reading Petterson’s account of Sudan’s inside story.

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Eastern and Southern Africa: development challenges in a volatile region edited by D. Potts and T. Bowyer-Bower
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This text is part of a new series from the Developing Areas Research Group of the Institute of British Geographers, designed for use in conjunction with regional or
theoretical volumes in the series. In this book, 16 countries are discussed which are joined through economic organisations, colonial past, or other significant factors. These include most of those typically considered part of Eastern or Southern Africa, as well as some arguably in Central Africa. Somalia, Ethiopia, and ‘island Africa’ are excluded. Each chapter covers a contemporary issue in geography, but they are integrated through a discussion of HIV/AIDS in the whole volume. Common threads in most chapters include an emphasis on the complexity of the issues covered, difficulties in obtaining reliable data, and a dim outlook for the sub-region’s future.

The chapter by Akim J. Mturi reveals the complexity related to demographic change. Whereas increased education for women generally is associated with lower fertility, if educational increases are minor, fertility rates typically increase. Polygny generally enhances child spacing which reduces fertility, but is negatively associated with contraceptive use. In another chapter, Colin Stoneman views structural adjustment programmes as harmful, because they targeted internal factors such as the overextended role of the state and overvalued currencies as responsible for deteriorating economic situations, thus completely ignoring the more important external economic factors such as oil-price hikes as the main cause of the debt crisis. Stoneman cynically suggests that to avoid the ‘threat of a good example’ (p. 80) international financial organisations (IFIs) target countries doing well economically, but without formal IFI associations.

Anthony O’Conner explores the extent and nature of poverty, and notes difficulties encountered in generating meaningful data in poverty studies. Whereas access to satisfactory sanitation is an important indicator of social welfare, what constitutes ‘satisfactory’ or counts as ‘access’ varies greatly by country. Although South Asia’s poor have experienced development, the phrase ‘developing countries’ is presently inappropriate for most of Africa and is likely to remain so for some time.

The chapters devoted to discussion of the environment parallel arguments made by O’Conner. Richard Taylor notes that definitions of water quality vary by country, data on water use for irrigated agriculture and domestic purposes are frequently unavailable, and projected water needs are complicated by considerable differences in estimates for population growth. Tanya Bowyer-Bower’s exploration of desertification stresses disagreement among experts with regard to the causes, ways of measuring, and effective means of addressing land degradation in dry lands.

The foci of the final chapters are globalisation, governance and trade. Marcus Power points to warfare’s ability to disable democratic practices and thereby development. Richard Gibb highlights the gloomy situation for a continent which accounts for less than 2.5 per cent of global imports and exports. Coverage of urbanisation and urban livelihoods by Deborah Potts focuses on processes within cities, and changes in the ways urban people earn a living. As in other chapters, country-level statistical data is provided but a sense of how individuals’ lives are changing is not conveyed.

The chapters are well cross-referenced, each concluding with a considerable reference list, sometimes including web sites. Tables summarise and add to the text, but there are no photographs and a scarcity of maps. Overall, the authors do
a good job of elucidating why African countries have largely failed to develop, and the book is well suited to university classroom use.

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Africa Shoots Back: alternative perspectives in Sub-Saharan francophone African film by MELISSA THACKWAY
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Africa Shoots Back provides an overview of francophone African film, and is published in a new and attractive format (with illustrations). Its organisation into six chapters follows a well-worn path set by earlier writers on African film.

In her first chapter, ‘Critical Paradigms’, Melissa Thackway presents a useful summary of theoretical approaches for analysing African film. In chapter 2 she focuses on issues of cultural identity, representation and voice, iterating the arguments about stereotypes and their use as an ‘essentialist construct’ (p. 36). Her aim in covering this familiar territory is to indicate the extent to which African filmmakers are not negotiating innocent terrain (p. 37). This presumably also accounts for her choice of title Africa Shoots Back, with its primarily re-active connotation, even although she strongly asserts that ‘confining francophone African film to a purely oppositional role would be reductive’ (p. 41). In chapter 3 she explores the relationship between storytelling and the cinematographic medium (p. 92), and once again one is conscious that this is well-worn territory in the relevant literature. She takes up ‘Memory, History’ in chapter 4, using Manthia Diawara’s (1992) phrase ‘Colonial confrontation’ as an initial category (p. 94).

Greater aesthetic focus on the films would have been a welcome addition to her contextualising approach (p. 28), which becomes slightly tedious as a strategy of communication. Concluding her account, Thackway considers ‘Filming the Immigrant Experience’ before turning to ‘African Women and Film’, her final chapter. Here she seems to find the confidence to analyse the relationship between the form of the film, its shots, angles and its ‘shifting gaze’ (p. 162), and thus presents a welcome assessment of Safi Faye’s (pp. 151–6) and Anne Laura Folly’s output (pp. 156–60). She continues in the same chapter with a look at how male directors have represented women on film (pp. 164–78), but this is a lost opportunity since her assessments of Sarraounia (directed by Hondo) and Xala (directed by Sembene) are standard rather than incisive. There is no reference here to Ceddo and Guelwaar (directed by Sembene), films in which the women are important characters, but then there is only passing reference to Ceddo (p. 11) and Guelwaar (pp. 11 and 38) throughout. In this respect, the omission of reference (even in the bibliography) to David Murphy’s (2000) work on Sembene is perplexing. Guelwaar (1992) is not, of course, Sembene’s ‘most recent film’ (p. 38), and her filmography (p. 222) actually lists his later film Faat Kine (2001). In a book claiming to present alternative perspectives, a mere 13 pages dedicated to women on film and women filmmakers is unsatisfactory. The book would have greatly benefited from having women as part of the body of African filmmakers, rather than in the present form with its tacked on quality.
The main strengths of this volume lie in the specific focus on francophone African films, and the author’s account of newer films which updates the current published literature. As an addition to the growing body of literature on African film, its accessibility should make it useful to students and lecturers as part of a broader discussion forum.

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