Natural Resources and Violent Conflict: options and actions edited by IAN BANNON and PAUL COLLIER
DOI: 10.1017/S0022278X04210771

Ian Bannon and Paul Collier are established scholars in this field, and Natural Resources and Violent Conflict: options and actions extends their previous contributions on the link between resource dependence and conflict. The difference between this study and many previous works is the focus on recommendations for action. As Bannon explains in the Preface (p. x): ‘While there is much that individual developing countries can do to reduce the risk of conflict – by addressing genuine grievances in their societies, adopting economic and social policies that are more inclusive, and improving transparency and accountability – there is also a need to articulate a convincing and practical agenda for global action.’

Commissioned by the World Bank’s Governance and Natural Resources Project, the volume consists of eight chapters. The first, ‘Natural resources and conflict: what we can do’, by the two editors, reviews the results of the work by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler in recent years on the link between natural resources and conflict, and concludes with a call for global action. This, the authors maintain, should consist in successful development (‘the best protection against civil war’, p. 8), and improved governance of natural resources. The subsequent chapters seek practical responses for global action in five areas:

1. increasing transparency of natural resource revenues;
2. shutting rebel organisations out of markets;
3. combatting the financing of illicit commodities;
4. tightening scrutiny on illicit payments;
5. attracting reputable companies to risky environments.

In the second chapter, ‘The natural resource curse: how wealth can make you poor’, Michael Ross provides an overview of what recent scholarship can tell us about the role that natural resources play in civil wars. He argues that resource dependence can promote civil war through four types of effects: harming economic performance; making governance weaker, more corrupt and less accountable; giving people who live in resource rich regions an incentive to form secessionist movements; and helping to finance rebel movements. He concludes with a series of global policy measures to stop these patterns.

The third chapter, ‘Who gets the money? Reporting resource revenues’, by Philip Swanson, Mai Oldgard and Leiv Lunde, looks at the reporting of resource revenues that host governments receive, i.e. commodities that are legally traded, with a particular focus on oil. It deals with both host-government reporting and
company reporting, and includes policy recommendations for global action. In ‘Where did it come from? Commodity tracking systems’, Corene Crossin, Gavin Hayman and Simon Taylor then outline the main elements of a generic commodity control system, subject to five contextual considerations to be taken into account when applying this to any commodity-specific tracking regimes. This then provides useful lessons that are applied in addressing the link between natural resources and civil wars.

Jonathon Winer and Trifin Roule, in ‘Follow the money: the finance of illicit resource extraction’, first outline a conceptual framework to understand the financial infrastructure used in connection with violent conflict, corruption and poor governance, and then turn to a series of case studies, including a series of proposed initiatives to respond to the problems and capacity gaps.

Philippe Le Billon’s chapter, ‘Getting it done: instruments of enforcement’, surveys the key existing international enforcement instruments relating to the trade of conflict resources, concluding with an analysis of the challenges that face the development of a new, inclusive, global regulatory framework. John Bray then considers the risk factors that influence petroleum and mining company decisions when considering an investment in a zone of actual or potential conflict. The final chapter by Patrick Guillaumont and Sylviane Guillaumont Jeanneney examines global measures that might be taken to help developing countries overcome price shocks.

This is not a light read. The book is packed with examples and statistics, drawing from the rich research that Collier and others have done on this area in recent years. Apart from the use of examples in the main text, a number of chapters also have very informative case studies attached as appendixes. The chapter length and depth is sometimes uneven, but none of this detracts from the depth of the work presented. Global governance is a complex matter, never mind the state of governance in much of Africa, and many of the recommendations implausibly assume a global consensus and desire to improve standards of global governance on these matters, that is in practice often lacking. Despite some unevenness and the overlap of chapters, this is an invaluable resource for students and policy makers engaged in working to combat what some have termed ‘the resource curse’.

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Africa Since 1940: the past of the present by FREDERICK COOPER
DOI: 10.1017/S0022278X04220778

Aren’t textbooks the hardest things to write? Getting a balance between expressing a view (no-one wants to write ‘just’ a textbook), being ‘objective’, or at least sensitive enough to differing analytical stances so as not to mislead students, while telling a coherent story, in accessible language, so as to keep them interested – one wonders why anyone embarks on such a daunting task; even more so when the subject is modern sub-Saharan Africa, a continent of prodigious
diversity, where any claims to ‘expertise’ are more than usually dubious, and which is as emotionally charged a terrain as can be found anywhere in political and moral debate.

So admiration for anyone brave enough to attempt it is tempered by the realisation that there are many things that can go wrong. Admiration first. The author’s big pitch is to downplay independence as the great divide and begin his story in the 1930s, essentially as a story of a crisis of imperialism but also of late colonialism as a ‘development’ project. No perspective on human affairs is ever completely put to rest, of course, but the idea of colonialism as just ‘oppression’ seems increasingly absurd, and it is nice to see this registered in a textbook. The first cluster of chapters develops this picture, covering the political demands generated by the crisis of imperialism and the responses to those demands. The emphases, not surprisingly given Cooper’s previous work, tend to be placed on social and particularly labour unrest, while factors which some of us would rate as rather more important, international norms say, get fleeting mention (p. 66). But he covers a lot of ground well here and presents a nuanced picture, even if current political correctness requires more words devoted to gender than seem to actually illuminate anything about politics.

The book then pivots on a short (six page) ‘interlude’, followed by four chapters on the independence period proper. Here I think the author falters. Six pages won’t do even as an elementary presentation of analytical perspectives, and the text here too often resorts to an openness that almost amounts to vacuity. On almost every page, something or other is ‘much debated’ or ‘much in question’ (p. 87), but the student is never really told why. The strength of the book continues into chapter 5 on development. There are some very nice graphs and some good revisionism on Africa’s economic performance, but Cooper tacks on the big question (heaven knows it is a big question) of how to explain Africa’s economies, and the historian’s verbal cleverness about ‘continuities’ (‘redefine the temporal boundaries of the question’, p. 130) is revealed for what it is – verbal cleverness that explains nothing. Cramming the politics in proves difficult, and a whole chapter 6 on ‘late decolonisations’ (southern Africa) rather unbalances the book and tends to drift into narrative. This also mars chapter 7 (the recurrent crises of the gatekeeper state), where the author’s analytical boldness deserts him, and he resorts to thumb-nail sketches of particular countries, the selection of which is not explained, and the content of which often does not connect with analytical points he wants to make (e.g. Kalenjin is rather different from Kikuyu, p. 175). Here Cooper tends to fall back on the standard political science accounts and tell something like the neo-patrimonialism story. A last grumble then: that while he tells this story, he also intermittently tells another one (very clearly, see for example, p. 199) about the sheer difficulties of transforming African societies in the direction of liberal modernity. This is brave stuff, and I would have liked him to have thought harder about these issues even in a textbook. One shouldn’t end on a grumble though, so a last comment that there are some nice polemical points against Western arrogance, and the last few pages are excellent prompts for getting students to think about the big question.

TOM YOUNG
SOAS
South Africa and the Communist International: a documentary history edited by A. Davidson, I. Filatova, V. Gorodnov and S. Johns
DOI: 10.1017/S0022278X04230774

This two-volume collection is the product of years of dedicated research, making available to the English-speaking public previously unavailable documents of considerable importance to students of Communist and nationalist history. The work covers a turbulent period of the history of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), and one aspect of the wide-ranging activities of the Communist International (Comintern or CI).

The editors, all very distinguished scholars, provide a very useful and substantial introduction locating the documents and emphasising the importance of the Comintern, the extent of its influence and range of its activities. They stress that even people who do know something of the CI were generally unable, because of its secrecy, to appreciate the scale and character of its activities.

The Communist Party of South Africa was the first such Party established on the African continent and after being dissolved in 1950 in the face of legislation of the then newly elected Nationalist Party government, reconstituted itself underground as the South African Communist Party (SACP). Throughout the period of existence of the CI – until 1939 – there was regular communication between it and the CPSA. In this relationship there is a clear hierarchy, and the documents reveal great deference towards the CI. This relates to how all Communist Parties were then constituted – as ‘sections’ of the CI; but it also reflects respect shown to those who were seen as having already made a socialist revolution, who were the main force behind the CI.

Communism continues to be a significant factor in South Africa, the SACP being one of the few Communist Parties in the world whose membership is growing. It is therefore interesting to look at the historical evolution of the organisation and its doctrine, through these documents. From the outset one is struck by the great difficulty the Party had in establishing itself. It experienced great repression and attempts at police infiltration and surveillance. But the main problem encountered at the outset was how to establish itself in the South African environment. Who precisely would be the basic force on which it built itself and through whom it spread its message? In looking at its surroundings, the developed working class they encountered consisted mainly of white immigrants. The African majority of the population was only partially proletarianised, and often retained deep roots in the rural areas. In this situation, early Communists focused their attention on the ‘more advanced elements’, who were the white workers, most of whom were infected with the racism of the country. Ideas of class solidarity with an emerging black proletariat were very far from their minds.

This problem was exacerbated by capitalist enterprises seeking out African workers as much cheaper labour in order to supplant whites. This was one of the reasons for the Rand Revolt of 1922, where workers marched under the uniquely South African banner, ‘workers of the world unite for a white South Africa’. Some of the early communist leaders were concerned with drawing in African workers and struggled to combat racism, but these efforts were essentially limited.
A substantial part of the documentation in the first volume relates to the Comintern attempts to address this problem through the slogan calling in 1928 for the establishment of an ‘independent Native Republic’ in South Africa. Although initial discussion leading to the resolution involved a South African communist, James la Guma, the leadership of the Party resisted the slogan. Their argument was that it would impede class solidarity between black and white workers.

It is surprising that the editors of the volume reduce the significance of this intervention to the global interests of the Soviet Union, and focus primarily on its undemocratic mode of introduction. Thus (p. 4) they speak of directives to member parties being prompted by the interests of these parties ‘only to the extent to which they coincided with the global plans and concrete regional ideas of the “centre” itself at any given moment. These latter were dictated by the interests of the Soviet Union …’ And again (p. 13) they speak of the slogan purely as part of the Comintern’s ‘global strategy’. This is a curious interpretation in the light of it specifically relating to the failure of South African communists to accept the political importance of the African majority. The intervention was of distinct local relevance, which is not to deny some connection to the CI’s ‘global strategy’.

It is also of wider interest than the authoritarian mode of CI operation, because over the decades that followed, the development of what is known as the ‘national democratic revolution’, headed by the ANC, came to put the question of an African-led popular state in the forefront. The slogan is the forerunner of the SACP depiction of the South African social formation as constituting a ‘colonialism of a special type’, where oppressor and oppressed stood in a colonial relationship despite sharing the same territory. This came also to be the analytical perspective of the African National Congress.

It is not easy to review such a collection of documents. How useful one finds them depends partly on one’s research focus. For some, many of the documents may seem to contain unnecessary details. Yet for others, these may confirm or illuminate part of a wider picture and specific features in South African history. Unfortunately the research is presented in a way that may limit its readership. There are many people who would be interested in its contents, especially the discussions of the ‘native republic’ and the Party schisms. But few concessions are made to the reader beyond the opening introduction and footnoting, mainly related to identifying the origins of documents and deciphering pseudonyms of the authors of documents and dates. The work would be more accessible if it had individual introductions before phases and subjects. Many readers will not wade through a document where its content is not initially identified, even in a limited way. There is no introduction at all for the second volume.

Nevertheless, by making these documents available to the public (albeit at a price that only some libraries can afford), the publishers and editors are doing a great service to scholars in this field. That service would be enhanced by further editorial intervention and the provision of a cheap paperback edition.
Emma Guest’s book explores the reality of AIDS orphans in Africa by letting ‘people tell their own stories’. She presents emotive, hard-hitting and very easy-to-read stories about what is occurring on a daily basis in Zambia, Uganda and South Africa. The stories, often in the words of the people themselves, span the many different responses by the communities, children and international communities; from the realities of child-headed households, grandmothers looking after up to eight grandchildren, small ad hoc fostering homes through to the institutional response. The stories share an important truth of what is happening in terms of the orphan crisis facing Africa. Guest’s emotive writing makes them compelling, and reminds us of the human face behind the AIDS statistics to which we are all becoming numb.

However, her attempts at understanding the socio-political factors and context, and analysing the spread of the pandemic, are simplistic and at times uninformed. For example, she comments that: ‘Having children is extremely important in Africa. With or without the threat of AIDS, most Africans will continue to have lots of them.’ This comment is made as a statement of fact, without exploring the context or recognising that it is clearly an over-generalisation. She also comments that leadership ‘making noise’ is what Africa needs to curtail the epidemic. She alludes to the importance of political leadership in addressing the crisis, but simplifies this role to: ‘if he (a president) slips a “ safe sex” message into every speech it will eventually sink in’. It is not merely about a safe sex ‘message sinking in’. Guest repeatedly misunderstands the broader political and social realities driving this pandemic, and applies the traditional Western paternal attitude towards the pandemic and its impacts.

Furthermore, she creates the impression that Africa’s solution to the crisis is dependent on support from the West. The reader is left with the impression that without the good will of the Western donor and organisations or white South Africans, there would be no hope for Africa’s orphans. Indeed, of the ten case studies, all but three have a Western or white ‘philanthropist’, who is funding or assisting the local community in its response. Guest has failed to include many examples of community responses not dependent on Western or white champions or donors. Ironically, she has highlighted the brilliant work of the local communities and the phenomenal resilience of the children, and indeed acknowledges that many of the responses are coming from the African communities. But throughout her book, she creates an underlying impression that these responses would not succeed if run exclusively by black Africans. The failing of the book in part is due to this selection of case studies, biased towards those highlighting Western involvement.

However, despite these glaring problems, the book does make two important contributions to the extensive literature on AIDS and children in Africa. The first has already been mentioned: that is the value of documenting these stories and experiences; the second is in chapter 4. Here we read the story of Bongi Zengele, a social worker in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Bongi is trying to bridge the transition from ‘the old, First World-style services to a more developmental
approach ... in order to reach more orphans, and getting communities to take care of children so that they are kept out of orphanages’. This story is very different from most of the others, and through following Bongi’s story we develop a clearer understanding of the need for an African response to the question of vulnerable children, reinforcing the message that we cannot be simply importing foreign solutions. It documents Bongi’s own frustrations with the different approaches of traditional social welfare, and follows her transition, with the community, towards a more appropriate community and social welfare response. In this chapter we see a refreshing move away from Guest’s emphasis on Western involvement, and see an acknowledgement of local solutions.

Children of AIDS will leave the reader with an enhanced understanding of the daily realities of the children, care-givers and communities which are ravished by AIDS in Africa. However, the book is weak in its analysis and does not address issues that would help us to develop our understanding of the long-term, African, solutions to this crisis. Nor does it allow us to adequately explore whether existing African community responses will be able to continue absorbing the orphans, nor whether these small-scale responses can be replicated elsewhere. Questions such as whether the existing community responses can continue to cope, and how best social services should be responding, are briefly touched upon but are then lost.

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African Film: re-imagining a continent by JOSEF GUGLER
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This interesting but somewhat flawed book is a timely addition to the field of sub-Saharan African film studies. The author is a respected sociologist who has taught and researched African cinema for many years, and his book analyses 17 films in total, 15 by directors from Africa south of the Sahara, and 2 clichéd visions of Africa (one from Hollywood, the other from apartheid South Africa). This focus on a key set of films is a very welcome departure in the field – especially for those colleagues looking for texts around which to structure African film courses – allowing Gugler’s text to complement general surveys of African cinema such as those by Diawara and Ukadike. His academic training seems to dictate his choice of films, as he has a ‘predilection for films that address social, cultural and political issues’ (p. 8), although this categorisation of African films seems rather literal, leading him to omit from his text major films such as Yeelen and Hyènes, which both address important social, cultural and political issues, albeit in an indirect fashion. Gugler reveals an impressive knowledge of the range of African cinema – providing an invaluable guide in each chapter to the availability of the films under discussion, as well as giving extremely helpful information on the material conditions in which many of the films were made – and displays an impressive erudition in discussing the vast array of African cultures depicted in the films under analysis. This attention to specific socio-cultural contexts is to be welcomed, as African film criticism has often engaged in abstract generalisation based on flimsy knowledge of the cultures depicted. The virtues of this approach are to be found in various chapters: the discussion of Taaba in which Gugler deftly
points out the inconsistencies in Ouédraogo’s depiction of the pristine, ‘untouched’ African village; the analysis of Islamic brotherhoods in relation to Tableau Ferraille.

Despite the strength of Gugler’s sociological framework, he is far less assured in the formal analysis of the films themselves. From the beginning, there are worryingly vague and unsubstantiated statements about the nature of African cinema and its various audiences. The very first sentence of the introduction claims that ‘African films offer us a window on Africa’ (p. 1), immediately placing the concerns of the Western viewer at the heart of his text. Later in the introduction, he goes on to argue that ‘African filmmakers set out to re-image Africa, and Western viewers are given an opportunity to re-imagine the continent and its people’ (p. 4). We can see here Gugler’s debt to the work of Olivier Barlet, which speaks of African cinema ‘decolonising the gaze’ of the West; however, this effective homogenisation of African cinema, which is declared *sui generis* to be ‘reacting’ to the West, is simply asserted and is not substantiated by the analysis of the films. The final chapter on the rise of a less ideological and more commercially orientated African cinema offers a tantalising glimpse of potential answers to some of these questions about ‘popularity’ and ‘audience’ – the material on Nigerian and Ghanaian video films is particularly strong – but the subsequent analysis of *Kini* and *Adams* and *La vie est belle*, which Gugler defines as examples of this new school of filmmaking, is not very illuminating and becomes bogged down in plot summary.

Indeed, the level of analysis of the films throughout the book is quite disappointing. It is not that a sociological reading of African cinema is intrinsically flawed; on the contrary, as I have argued above, there is a desperate need for criticism that places African films within their socio-cultural contexts. However, Gugler provides little sustained analysis of his 17 films as cinematic ‘texts’, displaying scant awareness of the ‘representational’ nature of cinema. The discussion of adaptations of books and plays (e.g. Sembene’s *Xala*, Soyinka’s *Kongi’s Harvest*) attempts to raise questions of style, but rarely goes beyond a simple enumeration of the plot differences between the film and the original.

In conclusion, this book would make excellent reading for students and scholars of African cinema looking to understand the socio-cultural contexts of the African films discussed therein. However, those looking to understand the complex and varied nature of African film art will be disappointed.

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**A Short History of African Philosophy** by BARRY HALLEN


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This is simultaneously a valuable and frustrating book. It is valuable in that the material it covers is wide and synoptic, and I cannot think of another work that is written so accessibly. It means that Africanist scholars can have a brief reference book on this subject in their own homes without the need for tomes of library research – often in university libraries far afield. It is frustrating chiefly because it is brief. But it is also frustrating because the author, while acknowledging the
difficulties he is transferring to his readership, often widens what might be called philosophy. An entire chapter might properly fall into the realm of ethnography and sociology; another into the area of political philosophy where the distinction between philosophy and policy is often blurred. Two divergent approaches to philosophy, the analytic and hermeneutic, are dealt with well – although, as the author indicates, African philosophers belonging to these two schools often talk past each other, and there is no general African philosophical movement, or even communion of philosophers.

This last point is of some definitional significance, for the book is not really about African philosophy as much as it gives brief renditions of the work of quite diverse African philosophers. That African philosophy can only advance by means of a concentration on philosophers is the point of view of at least one of those surveyed in Hallen’s book, but this view is reinforced by Hallen’s own observation, both direct and by default, that there is no organisational or disciplinary commonality among those who are now called African philosophers.

Because the book is brief, and races – for a book on philosophy and philosophers it is positively racey – a philosopher’s work is no sooner introduced than it is passed over in the race to introduce another’s. The book does not, by and large, discuss the merits of the work it introduces, nor enter deeply any real debate between the philosophers. A rare exception is right towards the end, where a debate on gender is not only introduced but tantalisingly briefly entertained. Having said that, whether the foundations of that debate were philosophical or ethnographical remains a question, although Hallen does point out that the debate is important for the foundations of an African philosophy to come.

What is to come? The ambitions of so many African philosophers are transparent here, and that is to correct an historically assumed and inflammatory view that Africa had no formal and rigorous philosophical thought, and provides no autochthonous foundations for such thought. Certainly, in the twentieth century, a very great deal of philosophy was written by African philosophers – some published internationally and some in obscure local journals. I was simply unaware of many of those uncovered and discussed by Hallen. Perhaps the great gift of his book is the quite remarkable bibliography at the end. Kwasi Wiredu alone covers four pages of bibliography. If Hallen is familiar with all that he has introduced, then it is to be hoped he will write a longer version of this book.

Having said that, the philosophers in the book are drawn primarily from west Africa. There are some Congolese, and I counted two Eritreans and one Tanzanian (the Tanzanian being Nyerere), if I discount Wamba-dia-Wamba as Congolese rather than Tanzanian (since despite his somewhat pastoral views on how to operationalise an African democracy, he became a Congolese faction fighter). I came across no southern Africans, nor any novelists who, as with many French writers for instance, have introduced philosophy into their fiction. The Ugandan poet and writer, p’Bitek, is cited, as are Ngugi and Soyinka, but only briefly and not by means of novels. Finally, Hallen’s survey of anthologies and journals does contain a forced hopeful note or two. The Zambian journal, Quest, has not been published for some years and was never properly philosophical.

All these seem harping notes to what is still a valuable book. I learnt a great deal. It rescued me from lamenting the theoretical apparatus used in many Black Studies courses, i.e. something more rigorously stated is possible; and Hallen
himself knows how to write simply and cleanly. Both those with and without philosophical training will be able to read this book, and that was probably Hallen’s purpose in the first place.

**STEPHEN CHAN**

**SOAS**

**The Lion and the Springbok: Britain and South Africa since the Boer War** by RONALD HYAM and PETER HENSHAW


DOI: 10.1017/S0022278X0427077X

For a book that claims to provide a comprehensive, realistic and accurate historical treatment of British–South African relations since the Boer War, this is a disappointing read. Disappointing first of all because the title of the book is not representative of what is contained between its covers. This is a focused historical analysis of ‘high policy’ between the respective governments (1902–61), set within the context of Commonwealth relations. Further, the scope and depth of the subsequent analysis is seriously limited by the authors’ dominant reliance on British government archives as primary source material. While Hyam and Henshaw do recognise this, the claim that they were unable to access South African government archives due to the apartheid state’s blocking of access in the 1980s and early 1990s rings hollow. Why could the authors not have gone back to South Africa after 1994 to access these archives, something that would have contributed immensely to a more balanced and fuller historical work?

One of the key underlying arguments in the book – that the relationship between the two countries suffered from a constant ‘uncertainty’ – is not particularly convincing. Rather, the authors’ own historical evidence strongly suggests a large degree of continuity in respect of the relational determinants that they identify as dominant (i.e. strategic and geopolitical concerns). The ‘uncertainty’ appears to be more applicable in the arena of personal relations between top politicians and government officials rather than in the ‘world’ of international realpolitik. While the authors contend that the complexities of governmental decision-making in the ‘real world … make clear-cut, overwhelmingly supported conclusions difficult’, the theoretical framework of the book rests upon precisely the opposite – i.e. that geopolitics is both a conclusive and primary lens through which to understand, analyse and interpret the relationship.

Despite their theoretical sureties, Hyam and Henshaw are clearly uneasy when it comes to the counter-argument that the twentieth-century relationship between Britain and South Africa was defined predominately by economic interests. They consistently deny that this is the case but, once again, the historical evidence presented in the book itself and their own analysis contradicts such assertions. The answer to the question they pose (‘What were the links that tended to bind Britain and SA together?’), is revealing enough – ‘The most persistent were the economic connections.’

Similarly, Hyam and Henshaw’s attempt to convince readers that ‘there is no necessary connection between industrialisation and racial oppression’ (i.e. that apartheid was not functional to capitalism), is hoisted on the petard of their own analytical conclusions. They state that ‘the mining industry had to be developed
to finance a programme of imperial land settlement and stimulate British immigration’, and also recognise that the mining industry in particular and ‘the South African economy in general … could not be developed without substantial overseas development’. One is then only left to wonder exactly what the authors believe provided the economic and social foundation for apartheid, if not capitalist development?

Throughout the book, the authors appear preoccupied with ‘proving’ that successive British governments were consistently opposed to apartheid, despite the parallel consistency of British inaction against the apartheid state, solidaristic economic relations and symbiotic understandings of respective ‘national interests’. For example, the authors’ claim that after 1948, ‘a seismic shift took place from pragmatic, occasional and limited measures of discrimination and separation … to something dogmatic, rigorous and totalising’, not only contradicts the logic of their own earlier analysis, but smacks of convenient rationalisation for what, in the ‘real world’ of history, was a continuation of socio-economic content even if pursued within differential forms.

It is unfortunate that Hyam and Henshaw do not pay attention to their own advice: i.e. in order to understand history one must understand its ‘realities’.  

DALE T. MCKINLEY

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Knowledge for Development? Comparing British, Japanese, Swedish, and World Bank aid by KENNETH KING and SIMON McGRATH


Over the past five years, international donors have started to pay increasing attention to the role of knowledge. This new interest is linked on the one hand to the growth of knowledge management strategies designed to make foreign aid more effective, and on the other to the crucial role that knowledge plays in promoting economic and social development. The main research questions of this book, which is based on interviews, participant observation, and detailed analysis of policy documents, speeches, official reports and texts, are the following: What does the emergence of knowledge-based aid amount to in practice? What explains this emergence? Why do agency approaches differ and how significant is this? Whose knowledge and whose visions of development are prioritised, and whose are marginalised? Does knowledge-based aid make for more efficient and effective agencies?

To answer these questions, the authors examine the theory and practice of four major agencies: the World Bank, DFID (the UK’s Department for International Development), SIDA (the Swedish International Development Agency), and JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency). The selection of cases, although based on convenience, is convincing. The World Bank, the only multilateral agency analysed by the authors, has been chosen not only because it is the biggest player in international development cooperation, but also because it is a trend-setter. As for the bilateral agencies, DFID has been selected because of its innovative internal reform process, SIDA for its sector-wide and partnership
approaches, JICA because, as a non-Western agency, it may present a different cultural approach to knowledge.

Of these four agencies, the World Bank is certainly the one that has made the most progress in this area. The idea of knowledge for development came from Jim Wolfensohn, who in a speech made in 1996 emphasised the future role of the World Bank as a ‘knowledge bank’. The subsequent *World Development Report*, entitled *Knowledge for Development*, argued that developing countries lacked not only capital, but also knowledge. Thus, to bridge the ‘digital divide’ between rich and poor, it was necessary to invest substantially in education and to liberalise the telecommunications sector. A major role was also given to development institutions and agencies and, in particular, to the World Bank for its supposed technical and value-free expertise. Yet, as often happens in the World Bank’s analyses, knowledge was seen in terms of ‘southern deficit’ versus ‘northern transmission’, whereas ‘knowledge that is culturally, socially and spiritually valuable was not part of the vision, which remained resolutely in the economic sphere’ (p. 41). The initial key concern in this new approach was the ability of the North to produce knowledge, rather than the capability of Southern countries to absorb it. But more recently, the World Bank has moved from its tendency to see itself as the source of all knowledge, towards more of a role as facilitator in knowledge sharing.

The pioneer example of the World Bank in knowledge-based aid was followed by several other donors. DFID, though, did not show as much interest as other agencies in capacity development, on how knowledge-based aid could foster progress in the South, but dealt more with its own internal knowledge management needs. In the past two or three years, however, it has started to shift towards a more learning-centred approach to development. SIDA, on the contrary, has always placed more emphasis on externally oriented knowledge that internally oriented knowledge. This approach is to be seen in the context of SIDA’s discourse on partnership and, in particular, the mutual learning/construction of knowledge led by the South and facilitated by SIDA. As for JICA, the discussion on knowledge management and knowledge sharing became prominent only in 2000, clearly influenced by the World Bank, and it was only in mid-2002 that it started to have an impact on the agency’s mission. The only two major projects which were started have yet to show their effect.

In sum, this book is about ways in which knowledge (both internally and externally oriented) has become a central element for development agencies. The knowledge revolution, which sees ‘knowledge as the light’, is not complete; in fact, it is made up of a series of uncoordinated projects, lacking a clear overall vision. To complete it there needs to be a re-conceptualisation of knowledge. Learning, as a dual relationship, was not initially emphasised enough by donors, who were primarily concerned about what they could teach, and not necessarily about what recipients needed or wished to learn. The challenge for Northern agencies, but also for their Southern partners, as the authors cogently argue, lies not so much in managing knowledge as in supporting social learning as a means of knowledge generation and sharing. The importance of this book is that it is the first contribution to deal with knowledge-based aid; its added value is that it uses empirical evidence in its critical analysis of four major development agencies. There is only one flaw: the reader sometimes gets lost among the various types of
knowledge. This is probably due to the fact that, rather than providing a precise definition of what knowledge is, the authors focus on the different ways in which it has been used by various agencies. But this is a minor flaw. This book represents a valuable addition to the literature on international development, and in particular to the studies on aid effectiveness.

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Africa: another side of the coin: Northern Rhodesia’s final years and Zambia’s nationhood by ANDREW SARDANIS
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Andrew Sardanis proves himself in these memoirs to be a gifted raconteur who writes well about his most interesting life. The book starts with an idyllic description of his youth in Cyprus. Although he was well educated, he did not pursue further education, nor did he continue the journalistic beginnings of his professional life. Instead, he joined his family in their transport business in Northern Rhodesia. After a few years, he developed a chain of buying posts and stores in the North Western Province, which was motivated originally by the economic necessity of having return loads for lorries going there. As a Cypriot, he felt a natural affinity for the emerging Zambian nationalism. His career after independence, however, was not in politics as such, but in between politics and business. He was the central figure in Zambia’s attempts to gain nationalist control over the economy in the 1960s. His significance stems especially from his role negotiating the 51% ownership of the copper mines. Sardanis was the lynchpin in the new economic dispensation. He combined high office in the civil service with managing directorships in the new economic conglomerates. However, he left these citadels of economic power when these reforms had run out of steam and most of the takeovers were completed. After a brief and unhappy stint at Lonrho, he founded Sardanis Associates and went into business for himself: operating from London and New York into Africa. He continued to spend much time in Africa, and he now lives in Lusaka where he seems to have semi-retired.

The book is a good read – probably a result of Sardanis’ journalistic training – that conveys a vivid feeling of the 1950s and 1960s in Zambia. His anti-colonialism and intense dislike of racial discrimination emerge convincingly as personal qualities that shaped his career. He shows a great capacity for friendships across the racial divide. The most moving example is the relationship with Valentine Musakanya that is a thread running through the whole book. The references to Musakanya’s tragic career demonstrate that he should be the subject of a biography in his own right to give insight into the period under discussion. The book is a stimulating source for historical study. Sardanis conveys well the smugness of late colonial rule, and the exhilarating feeling of being part of the winning nationalist movement. The lively trade that Sardanis established in the North Western Province belies the popular description of that area as a labour reserve. However, it is a source to be handled with care. For example, he portrays the relation between trade unions and the nationalist movement as unequivocally
harmonious. Tensions and rivalry between these movements may be more significant in interpreting Zambian history.

Students of Zambia’s political economy, however, will turn to the book primarily for possible insight into Zambia’s mining sector. The decline of the copper mines is little studied, while it is the central issue in understanding Zambia’s economic decline. Does it stem from declining prices, exhaustion of the mines, or sheer mismanagement? Sardanis argues clearly that the last is the primary cause. He considers the abrogation in 1973 of the agreement that he negotiated as the root cause: the Zambian government then redeemed, at full value, with immediate effect, the bonds that had been issued to acquire ownership. At that time, these bonds were being traded at a discount. Sardanis suggests that, in particular, Tiny Rowland of Lonrho fame and probably also Humphrey Mulemba, the then Minister of Mines, benefited greatly from insider trading: buying the bonds at a discount and getting immediate redemption at 100%. More importantly, he shows how this move released the Zambian government from all checks and controls by the minority shareholders that had been inserted for the benefit of the continuity of the mining industry. He writes (p. 30) about the revenue from the mines being raided as a consequence. That may indeed be the heart of the matter, and, if so, the history of that raiding has to be written to understand Zambia’s economic decline.

While reading this book, I was struck by the great charm of Sardanis. However, this charm fades more and more towards the end of the book, especially when he writes about issues to which I have been close. He describes the lawyer, Pearce Annfield, as a mere South African agent and says ‘Annfield had first befriended Kapwepwe, an unlikely relationship because I cannot imagine the two men had anything in common’ (p. 289). The fact that Kapwepwe was hunted by the state is not considered a reason for Annfield’s efforts on his behalf. He does not consider first and foremost that Annfield was a lawyer from whose office political detentions were challenged courageously – a challenge that was also voiced by his partner Ali Hamir – at a time when human rights were not on the international agenda. This is especially painful, as Sardanis, in a chapter called ‘Hunted’, gives a very good description of how ‘Prosecution in an arbitrary state, as Zambia was turning into at that time, is a frightening experience’ (p. 280). In this context, Annfield deserves another judgement.

The most problematic aspect of the book is Sardanis’ omission of an account of the collapse of Meridien–BIAO bank. Sardanis was founder and chairman of the bank whose main operation was in Zambia. Many depositors lost money in this collapse. There had been a rescue attempt by the Bank of Zambia, and the accusation is made in Zambian politics that just before the final collapse a huge remittance was made to the Bahamas. The rise and fall of Sardanis’ ITM and Meridian groups however, ‘will be the subject of a different book’ (p. 261). This omission may be part of a more general issue: Sardanis portrays himself as a businessman and upholds a separation of political interference from business as central in the way he operates. Does he not ask the reader to be gullible here, and did he himself not operate exactly in a mixture of business and politics? This professed belief in the separation of politics from commercial considerations does not prevent him from demythologising belief in foreign direct investment, and pleading for a significant state role in agricultural marketing, including a fertiliser
subsidy. In regard to these issues, Sardanis allows nationalist considerations to prevail over belief in the market. That must have been the common ground that existed between him and African politicians and is a laudable position. Socialist and Marxist leanings, according to Sardanis, destroyed the nationalist project. But why did so many things then go disastrously wrong, as with the Meridian–MBIO bank? It seems farfetched to see socialism as the cause here.

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**Foreign Aid and Development: lessons learnt and directions for the future** edited by F. TARP


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A group of predominantly British and Danish scholars have collaborated in this book to provide us with a broad and well-researched look at trends and issues in overseas development assistance (ODA). Despite the passage of time, most of the collected essays are still of current relevance and represent an excellent presentation of the Northern European perspective on ODA. It is impossible for a reviewer to do justice to 20 essays, but the following are some of those that address themes of current debate, and give a taste of the quality of discourse the reader will find.

In recent years, one of the most cited pieces of research on ODA has been that of Burnside and Dollar, who argue that it will not have a positive effect on economic development unless it is accompanied by sound economic policies in the recipient countries. ‘Aid effectiveness disputed’ by Hansen and Tarp directly challenges this piece of now conventional wisdom. They provide a highly technical (and to me persuasive) review of 131 studies on the impact of aid on economic growth. They conclude that the evidence for a positive impact of ODA is overwhelming. Their work supports the Burnside and Dollar conviction that good economic policies add to the effect of aid, but the great preponderance of studies does not support the idea that ODA will have no positive impact in a poor policy environment. Hansen and Tarp therefore are unwilling to rule out aid to those states with weak economic policies, for these countries frequently are the most needy.

A second set of papers addresses the cancellation of the foreign debts of heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC). In ‘Aid, conditionality and debt in Africa’, Kanbur argues the desirability of substantially writing off Africa’s (unpayable) debts. They create dependence without bestowing effective conditionality. Thus the incentives they create for African governments and the World Bank are all wrong. This argument is all the more striking as Kanbur was the bank’s resident representative in Ghana for a time. His case is strongly supported by ‘Foreign aid and the macroeconomy’, by Hjertholm, Laursen and White. They provide a useful examination of the details of managing ODA and macro-economic policy so as to enhance economic growth. The long-term difficulties posed by debt repayments, even when highly subsidised, are enlightening, as they require specific development programmes to generate the needed foreign exchange and the taxes to lay hands upon it. The need to invest in export-oriented growth and
in infrastructure are in direct contradiction to the priorities espoused in Healey and Killick’s ‘Using aid to reduce poverty’. This fact goes a long way to explain Healey and Killick’s disappointing conclusion that most donors are not doing much effective poverty reduction work – despite their rhetoric. One notes that for Africa not much poverty reduction is likely to follow from a growth-led strategy. The cumulative effect of these three chapters is to build a strong case for debt cancellation. The counter to this conclusion is made by Easterly in a 2002 article in World Development, where he provides evidence that debt relief has only prompted the states that benefit from it to borrow again up to the old limits. Contrary to Easterly’s conclusion that debt relief is therefore futile, I think the Tarp book’s case for relief is persuasive. Together these conflicting pieces of research suggest a need to revisit the idea that sovereign debt obligations are absolute, no matter the conditions under which they are assumed. As the emerging discourse on ‘odious debt’ suggests, the incentives of both the borrower and the lender need to change if this development problem is going to be solved. Not only must unrepayable debt by poor countries be cancelled, but those that lend to questionable regimes for obviously unsuitable purposes must bear a financial burden from the cancellation – as they do when lending to private parties.

A final theme concerns efforts to improve governance in poor countries. ‘Aid and failed reforms: the case of public sector management’ by Berg provides a devastating critique of the World Bank’s failures at public sector reform. Although Berg acknowledges negative contextual factors, he is convinced the Bank itself has failed fundamentally in this area – it has had bad ideas and has been inflexible in the face of evidence of their failure. The Bank is unable or unwilling to invest in the processes that would produce local appropriateness or buy-in. A contrasting perspective is provided in ‘Technical co-operation’ by Arndt, a former collaborator with Berg. She argues that the critiques of technical cooperation made in the early 1990s were too pessimistic because the economic and public sector context in developing countries was extremely hostile to any kind of sustained institutional development. With an improvement in the development context in most of the world (but much less so in sub-Saharan Africa), there are some promising examples of success. In Africa, however, the best one (the African Economic Research Consortium – AERC) is regional and supports a profession in multiple institutions. In effect this supports the ideas that ODA money should go to enhancing the terms of service of local talent (where it is available), should emphasise professions, and should enable talented individuals to escape the shackles of poor local organisations.

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Dark Age: the political odyssey of Emperor Bokassa by BRIAN TITLEY
£17.50 (pbk.).
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This is the reprinted paperback edition of a book originally published in 1997, and partly based on research carried by the author in the Central African Republic (CAR) and in France in 1990. Although it is a bit dated, it remains
posterior to the death of Bokassa in 1996 and manages to cover all the important events of his rule and after, including his trial in 1986–87 and subsequent pardon. For anyone with an interest in the CAR, it is therefore essential reading and an excellent point of entry. Given its main character, it is also an easy read, both entertaining and disturbing. Yet it falls somewhat short of contributing much value added to the study of Bokassa, dictators in general, or the CAR.

The book is chronologically structured, starting with Bokassa’s early life (following a chapter providing historical context) and ending with his death. Its main focus is on the years of rule (1966–79), the exile in Côte d’Ivoire (1979–83) and France (1983–86), and the return to the CAR and trial. Details are abundant and the writing benefits from interviews the author managed to get with some crucial actors, including Bokassa’s son Georges, Roger Delpy (his biographer and the man responsible for leaking the diamond story about President Giscard d’Estaing to the French weekly Canard Enchaîné), and even former president David Dacko. The extent to which the Central African political class has failed to rejuvenate since the 1960s is one of the book’s most interesting insights. While we may think of Bokassa as belonging to a past era of the CAR’s difficult history, the book makes clear that characters such as David Dacko, François Bozize and Ange Patassé were already at the core of state power before or during the Bokassa years, and were deeply involved in his rule.

It is unfortunate, however, that such findings are not fodder for greater analytical reach on the nature and reproduction of power in the CAR. The book attempts to link local events to the neopatrimonial paradigm, but this is hardly an original contribution and does not distinguish the personalistic excesses of the Bokassa regime. In the end, works by Samuel Decalo (Psychoses of Power) or Dider Bigo (Pouvoir et Obéissance en Centrafrique) may provide more theoretical substance. The author’s training in education could have been a liability in this respect. Nor does the book break new ground in factual terms, greatly relying as it does on material previously published in French (articles in Jeune Afrique and books by Pierre Péan are frequent sources). The author’s interviews usually corroborate facts but contribute little new knowledge.

Apart from offering a good work of synthesis in English, one remains a bit puzzled as to the book’s purpose. In the author’s words, it is to give Bokassa a ‘fair hearing’ and ‘disentangle fact from fiction, fantasy, folklore, and sheer fabrication’ (p. x). As the book makes clear, however, fiction, fantasy, folklore and fabrication were intrinsic parts of Bokassa’s life and mind, and their blending somehow defined the subject’s pathology (together with fear, finance, folly and France, to keep the alliteration). In attempting to isolate the facts, the book ends up excessively banalising Bokassa’s rule. To refer to his imperial coronation as ‘not inconsistent with the practice of cultural and institutional adaptation that characterized Africa’s interaction with Europe’ (p. 98) makes short shrift of his deviance and of African agency in institutional syncretism. Although Bokassa no doubt killed fewer than Idi Amin and stole less than Mobutu, these are hardly exonerating features of his regime. A Central African case study of what generates such regime features would have made a more substantive contribution.

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‘Civil Disorder Is the Disease of Ibadan’ ‘Ijo Igboro Larun Ibadan’: 
chieftaincy and civic culture in a Yoruba city by Ruth Watson
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By a twist of fate, I attended the seminars at the University of London where sections of this book were presented in 1998/99. Both then and now, the subject of Watson’s inquiry into chieftaincy and civic culture in Ibadan, the leading metropolis and military power of the Yoruba in the nineteenth century, remains enthralling. *Civil Disorder* contains seven main chapters and a short conclusion which detail developments between 1829 and 1939. The basic argument is that, contrary to received wisdom, ‘a civic political culture is made, not given’ (p. 2). In sustaining it, Watson skilfully dissects an array of episodes and manages to yield fresh insights into Ibadan history, culture and politics in the pre-colonial and colonial contexts. A remarkable achievement of the book is the author’s ability to piece together a welter of disparate source material, especially oral traditions, and to (re)interpret them in a refreshing way. Fortunately for her, material objects like the ‘body’ of Salu, Mapo Hall and the Olubadan damask of 1939, and a large body of documentary and oral data provided a rich subject for discourse. Perhaps more striking is the discursive style which entails a multi-layered analysis and (re)interpretation of events. Watson is at her interdisciplinary best drawing data and analytical tools from history and other disciplines. The literary style is lucid and most engaging.

This is not a run-of-the-mill account of local politics and the encounter between colonial rulers and their subjects. It is a complex story that is told within a chronological framework, with helpful flashbacks. Colonial officials like Lugard, MacGregor, Clifford, Cameron, Ross and Ward Price; Alaafin Ladigbolu; various Ibadan chiefs from Lagelu to Abasi; the men of wealth (*ile owo*) Salami Agbaje and Adebisi Giwa; and ‘warriors of pen’ – Samuel Johnson, the Akinyele brothers, Akinpelu Obisesan, and, even, Herbert Macaulay in Lagos – feature prominently in the events described in this book.

Watson demonstrates how and why intrigues, murder, banishment, ‘institutionalised suicide’ (p. 28) and ‘civil disorder’ characterised chieftaincy politics throughout the entire period. The book successfully contextualises the political and social significance of material objects, particular decisions, statements and political manoeuvres in colonial Ibadan. In the process, Watson challenges received wisdom, and revises certain assertions by earlier writers on Ibadan, including Bolanle Awe, P. C. Lloyd, G. Jenkins and Toyin Falola. She also places her study in the wider context of Yoruba history, enriching her analysis with cross-references from work on the Ijesa (by John Peel) and on Okuku (by Karin Barber).

However, the author implicitly endorses the myth that everyone was capable of attaining the highest offices in Ibadan, contrary to a major conclusion in Falola’s essay on *Ibadan and Strangers* that only the Oyo-Yoruba had access to the key offices in ‘republican’ Ibadan. She failed to critique the statements attributed to some of her informants in this regard (pp. 1–3). Moreover, given the emphasis on the nuances in the pronouncements of several actors, the use of diacritical marks
(cf. p. xi) would have enhanced understanding of some expressions, and permitted the differentiation and appreciation of words with the same spellings but different meanings, such as ‘ola’ (‘honour’) and ‘ola’ (‘wealth’)—only one of which appears in the index. In addition, part of the oriki of Ibadan—‘mesi ogo’ (p. v)—is not translated as if it was part of the name of the community. It actually means ‘one who “knows the answer” but whose reticence is mistaken for stupidity’, an allusion to the guile of the Ibadan, even by their own self-perception. Besides, ‘abuse, buse’, transliterated as ‘Everything is finished’ (pp. 150, 154) could have been translated as ‘Mission accomplished’, ‘fait accompli’, ‘Take it or leave it’, or ‘The deed is done’, to better convey Ibadan’s triumphalism and defiance vis-à-vis Oyo. The point is that, according to a popular expression—‘Ibadan l’o mo, o mo layipo’—you really cannot fathom (the depths of) the Ibadan! This alludes to their mastery of craft and tact. One must be grounded in the indigenous language and culture to grasp such nuances. Moreover, Watson was heavily, though not uncritically, dependent upon Samuel Johnson’s History of the Yorubas for events of the nineteenth century.

In spite of the high literary quality and excellent production of Civil Disorder, it contains, among others, a few spelling mistakes: ‘Ijo Igboro’ [Ija Igboro] (front cover and p. i); ‘Bashir Ikora’ [Bashir Ikara] (pp. 21, 169); ‘Lademeji’ [Ladimeji] (pp. 130, 175); ‘Adhire’ [Adire] (Plate 6.10, p. 142); and ‘Ogunmefun’ [Ogunmefun] (p. 178). ‘Ijo (sic) Igboro Larun Ibadan’ on the cover (and p. i) is missing in the title page! The expression ‘coming terms’ (p. 141) should read ‘coming to terms’. D. T. Akinbiyi (p. 122, note 43) did become Olubadan before his death. The photograph of Folarin Solaja (p. 121) is too foggy to be useful and my review copy could do with more resilient binding.

The foregoing comments do not diminish the great strengths of this book: the depth and detail of the author’s analysis, and her deft and sensitive handling of the subject. The book successfully unravels the order or logic in Ibadan’s characteristic ‘ija igboro’ (civil disorder) and permits an appreciation of developments at Ibadan in comparative perspective. Civil Disorder is a path-breaking book that re-interprets Ibadan and its influence will transcend Yoruba studies. It is, in the metaphor of the author’s subject, a ‘model of historical writing’ for subsequent interpretive studies.

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