

**Land, Mobility and Belonging in West Africa by Carola Lentz. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013.**

Hundsbæk, Rasmus; Buur, Lars

*Published in:*  
Governance in Africa

*Publication date:*  
2014

*Document Version*  
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Citation for published version (APA):*  
Hundsbæk, R., & Buur, L. (2014). Land, Mobility and Belonging in West Africa by Carola Lentz. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013. *Governance in Africa*, 1(1), 2-4.  
<http://www.govafricajournal.org/article/view/gia.af/12>

**General rights**

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain.
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal.

**Take down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact [rucforsk@ruc.dk](mailto:rucforsk@ruc.dk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

## Book Reviews

Göran Hydén\*, Rasmus Hundsbaek Pedersen†, Lars Buur†, Giulia Piccolino‡, Christine Cubitt§, Matthew Graham||, Kenneth Omeje¶ and Jacqueline Klopp\*\*

This publication includes reviews of the following books:

*Challenges for the Democratisation Process in Tanzania: Moving Towards Consolidation 50 Years After Independence?* by Jonas Ewald. Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publisher, 2013. Review by Göran Hydén

*The New Scramble for Africa* by Pádraig Carmody. Cambridge: Polity, 2011. Review by Rasmus Hundsbaek Pedersen and Lars Buur.

*Land, Mobility and Belonging in West Africa* by Carola Lentz. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013. Review by Rasmus Hundsbaek Pedersen and Lars Buur.

*Business, Politics and the State in Africa: Challenging the Orthodoxies on Growth and Transformation* by Tim Kelsall. London: Zed Books, 2013. Review by Giulia Piccolino.

*Governance for Development in Africa: Solving Collective Action Problems* by David Booth and Diana Cammack. London and New York: Zed Books, 2013. Review by Christine Cubitt.

*Songs and Secrets: South Africa from Liberation to Governance* by Barry Gilder. London: Hurst, 2012. Review by Matthew Graham.

*War and Conflict in Africa* by Paul D. Williams. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011. Review by Kenneth Omeje.

*Law Reform in Eastern Africa Traditional or Transformational?* by Patrick McAuslan. Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2013. Review by Jacqueline Klopp.

### Democratisation in Tanzania

#### Göran Hydén

*Challenges for the Democratisation Process in Tanzania: Moving towards consolidation 50 years after independence?* by Jonas Ewald. Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publisher, 2013. ISBN 978-9987082506.

Good monographs about African politics have become increasingly rare in the last twenty years as political scientists have turned their interest in comparative studies toward the use of the Afro-Barometer survey or various data sets measuring democratisation or governance. While this trend toward mainstreaming the study of African politics in the comparative politics field is welcome, it also

comes with its own 'costs'. For example, by focusing on only one set of data, for example citizen views and attitudes or election indicators, the political reality is sliced in a narrow way with conclusions about a country's state of politics being drawn from a less solid base.

There is room, therefore, for political monographs that take a more holistic view of political development than election studies or citizen surveys can accomplish. It is in this context that Ewald's study of the democratisation process in Tanzania with a special focus on the period after 2000 is welcome. While a good deal of articles or special studies have been written about the elections in Tanzania and other specific aspects of its governance, his book is one of a very small number of monographs on Tanzanian politics that has been produced since the country turned back to multi-party politics in the early 1990s. Like some of the others, his is the result of fieldwork for a doctoral dissertation.

Ewald has been in touch with Tanzania ever since 1980 although his interaction with the country has been especially frequent during the period that he covers in his book. He has a multi-disciplinary background and has spent most of his academic career at the Peace and Development Research Institute (now the Centre for Global Studies) at the University of Gothenburg. He is currently a Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) in Political Science at Linnaeus University in Växjö, Sweden.

The theoretical starting-point for his work is the distinction between procedural or formal democracy, on

\* Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of Florida, USA  
ghyden@polisci.ufl.edu

† Danish Institute for International Studies, Denmark  
rhp@diis.dk, lbu@diis.dk

‡ German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Germany  
giulia.piccolino@giga-hamburg.de

§ Editor, Governance in Africa, UK  
christine.cubitt@reiga.org

|| University of Dundee, UK and University of the Free State,  
South Africa  
m.v.graham@dundee.ac.uk

¶ University of Bradford, UK  
komeje@usiu.ac.ke

\*\* Columbia University, USA  
jk2002@columbia.edu

the one hand, and substantive democracy, on the other. The bulk of the democratisation literature has been concerned with the former, usually at the cost of the other. Socio-economic variables have at best featured as explanations of individual behaviour or attitudes but not as structural factors that underpin democracy. Development has been treated as an outcome of good governance or successful transition to democracy rather than the other way around.

Ewald draws attention to how politics in Tanzania since independence has shifted in response to changes in the structure of the state. The socialist period which ended in the mid-1980s gave no room for dissension or multiple parties; the state controlled not only the economy but also attempted to rein in popular views and behaviour in ways that boosted the attempted socialist transformation. As many scholars have concluded, this attempt fell far short of its goals. The state lost touch with social and economic reality in the country and 'sat as a balloon in mid-air' unable to steer the country toward socialism.

It is no surprise, therefore, that the Tanzanian state eventually, albeit grudgingly, had to succumb to pressures from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and bilateral donors to embark on wide ranging economic reforms in a neo-liberal direction. The full weight of the 'Washington Consensus' was brought to bear on Tanzania and its public sector: the civil service was reduced in numbers; new financial policies were enforced to liberalise the economy; and, public enterprises were privatised as was much else that affected the daily life of people.

It also paved the way for the democratic transition. Ewald's analysis of the relation between liberalisation and democratisation suggests that it has not been mutually reinforcing. The premise, often made in the 1990s, that democracy will flourish in a market economy has not come true in Tanzania (or in most African countries, for that matter). The economic and social structures in a poor country with a majority of the population living in the rural areas have limited the impact that the democratisation process has been able to accomplish. The pressures and support from the international donor community notwithstanding, Tanzanians are, as Michael Bratton has concluded, voters but not citizens, indicating that there is a democratic deficit in the country.

Ewald's study traces Tanzania's political development over time with reference to four 'spheres': the state, political society, economic society and civil society. He does so with reference to a select number of indicators identified in relation to key institutions. This gives the basic structures of the book but one would have liked to see him do more in terms of analysis based on this framework. How do the spheres interact over time? What is the aggregate outcome of these interactions? How has democracy in Tanzania matured or been consolidated? These and related questions could have been addressed in the concluding chapter which, as it stands, amounts more to a summary of what has been said on earlier pages.

This shortcoming notwithstanding, his book is an interesting and valuable overview of Tanzania's democratisation

in the past couple of decades. It is rich in content and Ewald draws on a wide range of sources that enhances the value of his study. His book provides material that should be of interest to both students and policy practitioners who wish to familiarise themselves with this process in Tanzania.

Finally, it is in place to praise Mkuki na Nyota, a local Tanzanian publisher to take on this book and make it available where it is potentially of greatest value and relevance – Tanzania. Both Ewald and the publisher should be congratulated on ensuring that the domestic market comes first. One can only hope that professors and lecturers at Tanzania's rapidly growing number of universities take advantage and grab this 'low-hanging fruit'.

### Land, Belonging and Post-Colonial Analysis In Africa

**Rasmus Hundsbaek Pedersen and Lars Buur**

*The New Scramble for Africa* by Pádraig Carmody. Cambridge: Polity, 2011. Pp.244 incl. notes, bibliography, index. £15.99 (pbk). ISBN 9780745647852.

*Land, Mobility and Belonging in West Africa* by Carola Lentz. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013. Pp.348. \$85 (pbk). ISBN 978-0-253-00957-9.

Few who follow African politics would question that there is a scramble for natural resources going on in many countries on the continent. Local citizens and foreigners alike roam the countryside – or the surrounding oceans – on the lookout for extractable resources. The way the scramble is played out is informed by what French historian Fernand Braudel has termed the *longue durée* – the primacy of long-term historical structures over contemporary events. At least this is how the two books – *The New Scramble for Africa* by Pádraig Carmody, and *Land, Mobility and Belonging in West Africa* by Carola Lentz – approach questions related to land and natural resource extraction in Africa. Still, the two authors differ widely. Whereas Carmody emphasises the international power dimension of the exploitation of Africa's resources, Lentz approaches the question of land from the perspective of belonging and alternating struggles between 'first-comers' and 'new-comers' at the local level that have taken and are taking place in pre-colonial, colonial, post-colonial and current times.

The title reveals a great deal about Carmody's take on natural resource extraction in Africa. In some ways, he claims, the current 'scramble' for resources is similar to the European competition for African colonies at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. African countries today may be legally independent, but foreign power interests undercut this independence. Throughout the book he discusses the differences and similarities between then and now. And whereas the author acknowledges that the increased levels of investments in natural resources represent an opportunity to promote economic development, his main interest lies in the analysis of unequal international power relations.

This focus on foreign economic and strategic interests gives the book a slanted view of contemporary Africa. His chapter on the old Western powers, for instance, focuses

on how they mix aid, military interventions and economic interests in natural resources in fragile and authoritarian states. The critique is highly relevant. But are things always this way? The diagnosis may make some sense in an unstable country like Chad, but how about the more stable countries like Tanzania, Ghana or Namibia? We do not really get to know because the author's focus is on conflict over cooperation, inequality over poverty-reduction, and foreign interests over local ones. Therefore, though Carmody warns against depicting Africans as statists in their own development trajectories, his analysis is dangerously close to doing just that. From this perspective, the last half of the book provides good introductions to a selection of resource conflicts on the African continent (oil, uranium and coltan, timber, biofuels, plants, food and fisheries).

For the same reason, the book's main thesis – that the resource curse is a specific kind of governance – is challenged whenever it is confronted with in-depth knowledge of specific contexts and actors. The chapters (written with Ian Taylor) on China's and other emerging economic powers' behaviour are relevant because of these powers' increased influence on the continent. But they appear less urgent to the author, maybe because of these powers' hands-off approach to African governance relations; they are harder to fit into the scramble analogy and the focus on foreign interests. There is a similar chapter on Zambia (written with Godfrey Hampwaye). Zambia is the site of some of China's biggest investments in Africa. We learn that the structural adjustment policies and economic liberalisation that the West pushed through in the 1990s (and which Carmody does not like) are important preconditions for this: they made the investment climate more favourable. We also learn that around 10,000 jobs have been created in the country by Asian investment between 2000 and 2007 and that job creation is on its increase in Zambia. One should expect this to be a success. But this is not really the case, we are told, because the jobs are in the extractive industries and they 'are not decent' jobs (p.170). For the same reason, Carmody describes how the different regions that have received the biggest Chinese investments are also the regions that have reduced poverty the most as a 'paradox' (p.88). Is it really?

Given the author's focus it is logical that he asks, in the concluding chapter, if Africa can 'unscramble' the continent. Thereby, he inscribes himself in a strong tradition of critical post-colonial analysis, or, as he diagnoses in the beginning of the book, the current post-imperial relations. Indeed, it does make sense to ask if African countries could get more out of the investments they receive. However, he does not provide much substance to this discussion. In a couple of places he acknowledges that national elites have substantial power when bargaining with external actors. A shame, then, that he focuses so much on foreign interests and so little on the role of national elites and governance systems that have evolved in Africa in managing land and resources. This, in contrast, is exactly what Carola Lentz does in her compact and dense book *Land, Mobility and Belonging in West Africa*.

If Carmody's starting point is foreign investment strategies for land then Lentz's is local strategies for dealing with competition over land predating the colonial encounters, and how they become intertwined with colonial and post-colonial forms of governing land and property. This fine ethnographic work clearly has its merits in tracing the relationships between land as property, the politics of belonging, and the delicate ways in which competition over land relates to struggles between 'first-comers' and 'late-comers' on the border between northwest Ghana and southwestern Burkina Faso. By tracing how these processes have evolved from the pre-colonial era until today Lentz argues that both the autochthone 'first-comers' and the immigrant 'late-comers' have managed to 'constrain the outright commercialization of land' (p.153). This includes both attempts by urban political elites to grab land as property on the one hand, and increased competition from commercial farming that manipulated customary tenure practices (p.247).

How they have done so is eloquently traced in five ethnographically dense and multi-layered chapters. The scene is set in Chapter One with an overview of how forms and strategies for mobility in the Black Volta region have pushed property relations into a competition between 'first-comers' and 'late-comers' from the pre-colonial era to this day. Lentz explores these themes without disregarding the possible influence of 'external events' for setting in motion competition over land but firmly argues that 'internal dynamics and strategies of territorial expansion' (p.32) for the most part account for competition over land.

These themes are further explored in Chapter Two where ritual power and its relationship to property rights are delineated. Lentz argues that later 'statist' ideas related to rights, property and land in the 'rights-oriented view' have tended to overlook or disregard the 'importance of ritual politics for defending, challenging, or redefining land tenure' (p.83). Key here is to understand how ritual protection of land as property has evolved in the absence of – or maybe because of – the dysfunctional modern institutions like land registers, courts, and written contracts. Orally transmitted narratives of rights and claims continue to play an important role for claims and different types of 'contestants in conflicts over land and land-related resources' in colonial governance of land as well as in post-colonial modern courts (p.101).

In chapters Three and Four Lentz forcefully challenges much of the current literature on continued dispossession and victimisation of African populations from the colonial regimes' reification of customary norms and chieftaincy systems to the present-day commercialisation of land. She traces how land as property has been contested and protected from the pre-colonial era until today through a 'complex bundle of socially and politically embedded rights over land and land-related resources' (p.127). The argument is not that changes don't take place. Due to regulations, hunting and gathering activities are changing, as is the organisation of agriculture 'in an increasingly densely populated region' (p.163). But 'bundles of rights' and the bundle of owners of such rights (p.148), the

author writes, are negotiable and flexible and therefore able to adapt to changing circumstances. This is important as 'state-led attempts to standardize and formalize land transfers [...] have generally not been successfully implemented' (p.152).

Chapter Five, the concluding chapter, discusses in detail how contemporary land claims and conflicts are informed by the longer history of migration, settlement, first possession, and shifts in organisation. Lentz returns to the issue of 'bundle of rights' as land and rights evolve in 'the context of legal and institutional pluralism, and the various actors draw on multiple resources, both conceptual and political, to (re)define, assert, defend or recover property rights' (p.212). Here Lentz more directly addresses questions related to power as a key question. Instead of walking the neo-Marxist class differentiation road suggested by scholars like Pauline Peters and Henry Bernstein, she suggests – though acknowledging that the 'playing field is certainly not level' – that we follow scholars like Hall, Hirsch and Li, who focus on 'the changing ways in which people are excluded from access to land' (p.247). Here one of the ways can be intimately related to the processes at international level that Carmody points to. But this cannot, according to Lentz, be taken for granted. In her optic it seems that local urban elites and agricultural commercialisation are stronger forces than any external drivers of increased dispossession and exclusion. The question is whether these trends may be complementary – and if so, surely we need analyses that shed light on how they are intertwined in different settings?

Each book has its merits. But their differences also make clear the weaknesses of *longue durée* one-dimensional approaches when analysing contemporary competition for natural resources in African settings. Though it is fascinating to follow the authors' accounts of how struggles over land and resources have developed at the international and local level respectively over large time spans, one is left with the feeling that something is missing in the analyses. And what that is could be the multi-faceted stories of struggles for land and natural resources in Africa in which both foreign investment strategies and host governments' needs to mobilise resources for development, combined with how land is and has been governed locally, are accounted for.

## The Revolt Against Good Governance

**Giulia Piccolino**

*Business, Politics and the State in Africa: Challenging the Orthodoxies on Growth and Transformation* by Tim Kelsall. London: Zed Books, 2013. Pp.190 incl. notes, bibliography and index. £18.99 (pbk). ISBN 978-1-78032-421-0.

In the last two decades, 'good governance' has been sold by aid agencies, international financial institutions (IFIs) and NGOs as the solution to the problems of poverty and stagnating economic performance across Africa. Whilst there is a general lack of clarity about what good governance really is, with the emphasis alternatively put either on sound macroeconomic management or on democracy and rule of law, the good governance agenda has been premised on a series of assumptions. One is that economic

development is better ensured by a state that follows the Weberian ideal of a rational, corruption-free administration and another is that best practices from western industrialised countries are transferable to developing states.

Billions have been spent on the good governance agenda, but there is today a widespread sense of disillusionment. On the one hand, aid and technical assistance, whether aiming at improving the capacity of state bureaucracies or at reinforcing the accountability of the public sector, do not seem to have yielded many tangible results. On the other hand, it has appeared increasingly evident that the good governance agenda reposes on unproven assumptions about how countries escape from underdevelopment and poverty and how public accountability on economic management is built.

Tim Kelsall's book has grown out of such disillusionment. Together with Booth and Cammack's *Governance for Development in Africa*, Kelsall's book stems from a large and ambitious collective research project – the Africa Power and Politics (APPP) programme led by the UK's Overseas Development Institute (ODI). Kelsall's book looks at the conditions that favour constructive relations between business and politics in Africa that lead to sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction. The introduction presents two opposite perspectives that have guided practitioner and academic understanding of African development. The first, labelled 'neo-liberal orthodoxy' and supported by the IFIs and by most donors, posits that too much government intervention in the economy will inevitably result in corruption and unproductive rent seeking. Thus, the government's role when it comes to industrial development must be limited to providing the 'right' environment for the private sector to grow. The second perspective, labelled by Kelsall 'heterodox' and favoured by an increasingly influential group of economic thinkers, posits that economic growth can be sustained only if governments get actively involved in industrial policy. According to this view, development requires a structural transformation of the economy. Collective action problems and initial costs prevent the private sector alone triggering this transformation; only public intervention and sustained support for new productive sectors can allow potential businessmen to overcome these constraints.

Kelsall argues that both the orthodox and heterodox perspectives are ultimately unsatisfactory. Heterodox alternatives seem to offer a recipe for sustainable growth more firmly anchored in the historical experience of countries that have overcome poverty but also greatly underestimate the problems of governance in most African states – will public officials implement the 'right' industrial policies or succumb to the temptations of corruption and mismanagement? After all, there is an established argument that African regimes are 'neo-patrimonial' and dominated by patron-client relations.

Kelsall's response is provocative. Not all neo-patrimonial regimes are equal and corruption is not necessarily an obstacle to good industrial policy and development. Central to his analysis is the concept of rents and the way rents are managed. Rent seeking can generate a waste



of resources, but rents can also be essential to stimulate high levels of investment in innovative and risky fields, as well as sustain political coalitions that support good industrial policies. There are two conditions for this: the centralisation of rents, and a long-term orientation towards development. Kelsall draws inspiration from South Asianist Mushtaq Khan, but his attempt to apply Khan's framework to Africa is quite innovative. Different configurations of rent management (short-termist and decentralised, long-termist and decentralised, short-termist and centralised and long-termist and centralised) are presented and illustrated with reference to three examples of development – Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and Malawi – and four fieldwork-based studies that are regarded as economic success stories – Tanzania, Ghana, Ethiopia and Rwanda. According to Kelsall, Ethiopia and Rwanda have come closer to implementing the model of the long-term, centralised rent-management system necessary to sustain growth while, although achieving impressive growth rates, Tanzania and Ghana show worrying trends towards short-termism.

It is refreshing to read a book that poses the right questions about African development. Kelsall's ability to eschew Afro-optimist and Afro-pessimist stereotypes (which surface in literature on neo-patrimonialism and rent seeking in Africa) is also welcome. His contribution is a seminal book-length addition to the emerging heterodox literature on African development likely to inspire further research.

The book does have some weaknesses, however. One issue, which Kelsall seems to acknowledge but to which he is unable to provide a satisfactory response, is the overstretching of the notion of 'developmental patrimonialism'. While this seems applicable to Félix Houphouët-Boigny's Côte d'Ivoire or Jomo Kenyatta's Kenya, many would question the use of the label for Ethiopia and Rwanda unless the definition is meant to encompass any form of unorthodox political economic management.

The particular circumstances that push some political leaders to pursue the long-term path to rent management and the centralisation of rents are also not clear. In one passage about Ethiopia, Kelsall acknowledges that the country's leadership could have chosen to manage the country's ethnic and regional diversity by adopting 'a low growth strategy that focused on providing narrow patronage pay-off to ethnic groups', but does not explain why they chose instead to rely on a broad based development strategy in order to reinforce their nation-wide legitimacy. Further, Kelsall only mentions *en passant* the body of work that deals with the origins of the current African governance problem and seems unaware of the fact that his two favourite examples of developmental African states – Ethiopia and Rwanda – share two quite unique features in the panorama of Sub-Saharan Africa. Both are among the very few contemporary African polities that have roots in pre-colonial time, and both are ruled by former insurgent movements that fought a long and successful armed battle against their predecessors.

The author could also have given the policy implications of his findings. One conclusion that seems to emerge is

that an authoritarian, but politically inclusive, political system is more likely to lead to the emergence of a developmental state than an electoral democracy. This raises delicate issues about the trade off between economic development and civil and political rights. It also runs counter to the strategy pursued by most donors in the last twenty years, which has been premised on the assumption that, in order to improve governance, electoral and democratic mechanisms of accountability have to be strengthened.

In spite of these minor flaws, Kelsall's book is a much welcome and thought provoking contribution to a major debate. It will be a must read for anyone interested in African development and looking for a critical approach that escapes the unquestioned assumptions often dominating the debate.

## Governance for Development

**Christine Cubitt**

*Governance for Development in Africa: Solving Collective Action Problems* by David Booth and Diana Cammack. London and New York: Zed Books, 2013. Pp.139+bibliography+index. £16.99 (pbk). ISBN 978-1-78032-594-1.

This interesting short volume brings together the findings of research conducted under the UK government's African Power and Politics Programme which set out to establish what kind of institutions and forms of governance were most successful in the delivery of public goods in selected low-income sub-Saharan countries. The four countries central to the study were Niger, Rwanda, Uganda and Malawi but empirical evidence was drawn from additional studies in West Africa. The starting point for the research was the contradiction seemingly inherent in Africa's spurt in economic growth – the substantial increase in revenue flows to national treasuries and the concurrent suffering of the majority among African populations. The objective was to find out what works and what does not work in public service delivery by identifying both the 'bottlenecks' and any locally anchored solutions that had achieved some success.

The research builds on the critique of others in this field; that evidence based thinking and locally sourced solutions are needed to develop better governance for development in Africa, that multi-party politics create short-term development approaches among local politicians, and that principal-agent solutions are missing the point of governance in Africa. Despite a wealth of critique in this field, development agencies persist in implementing unhelpful and sometimes counter-productive policies. The authors of the book therefore re-emphasise the point that what is needed to understand political power equilibriums in African states, and how they affect development, is locally based research.

The authors' central argument is that governance challenges for development are more to do with collective action problems than principal-agent challenges. For example, local actors across Africa face similar collective action challenges – whether they be public servants or the general citizenry – and that getting better governance for

development is about different sets of people overcoming challenges 'to act collectively in their own and other's best interests' (p.15). This is a departure from the orthodox development approach that identifies development challenges as embedded in problematic principal-agent relations; either the principles (citizenry) have no capacity to demand better governance or the agents (public servants) have limited capacity (or desire) to deliver it. The inference in the authors' argument is that everyone wants better governance but no one has capacity to achieve it, yet they acknowledge that this commitment is not necessarily the case in all circumstances.

For a fresh approach, the researchers set out to find examples of 'working with the grain' – successful governance models that tap into the 'cultural repertoires' of local institutions and embrace traditional ways of doing things. By searching for 'the grain' the authors claim to offer an alternative vision of governance for development in Africa (p.31). The current solution – to democratise, incentivise leadership and strengthen civil society – does not work if there is no discipline at the top and little capacity at the bottom. 'It makes no more sense to treat voters as development principals committed to calling political leaders to account than to treat leaders in competitive clientelistic systems as their agents' (p.95). The authors argue that fragmentation and mistrust, poor information sharing and perverse incentives to act, or not, are 'ubiquitous' challenges; that poor collective action among elites creates incoherent policy frameworks and toleration of indiscipline, and that democracy in the style of winner-takes-all multi-party politics promotes the breakdown of vertical disciplines and undermines the ability of public administrations to perform their duty.

So in the search for local problem solving mechanisms, or hybrid global/local solutions, the research team provides a wealth of empirical evidence from the studies. This contextual detail brings richness and authority to the themes and arguments of the book, and is a welcome contrast to standard generic studies that offer little in practical and grounded solutions. Examples of 'the grain' working at local level – described as 'pockets of effectiveness' (p.82) – include policing and local *bwalo* courts in Malawi, the local justice system in Ghana, management of cattle markets in Sierra Leone, Senegal and Niger, and the Islamisation of education in parts of West Africa. But generally these are examples of successful privatisation of public services, not better governance for development, and examples of success are disappointingly few.

The most successful of the case studies is Rwanda, where the rigorous and coherent implementation of good policies has been a deciding factor. It was found that regular payments and incentives to staff improved outcomes, as did respect and high expectations for professional performance. An effective vertical accountability and motivational chain was part of the local solution for addressing bottlenecks to improved maternal health, for example, and in both Rwanda and Mali it was found that development works best when the accountability of civil servants such as health workers is directed upwards not downwards

towards service users (p.62). Although the authors stress the importance of Rwanda's favourable set of institutional arrangements and acknowledge the importance of strong leadership, not enough emphasis is given to the huge benefits of a visionary, motivated and authoritative leadership that is essential for putting in place favourable institutional arrangements in the first place. It is possible that this argument was muted due to the controversial nature of Rwanda's current leadership.

The research initial findings concluded that a coordinated approach to service delivery was needed, as was a motivated leadership and hospitable environment for problem solving at sub-regional level. As none of these 'revelations' was exactly ground breaking, the authors focussed on how the persistent and pervasive problem of effective collective action for development was resolved at local level. Their account of collective action challenges among governing elites, and what inhibits good decision making for development, was compelling and central for research and policy agendas going forward.

The authors achieved their objectives of advancing the critique of orthodox principal-agent development theorising by bringing an interesting selection of grounded local evidence to the debate. Their focus on elite collective action and the importance of upward accountability of public officials is an innovative addition to the knowledge base, but there appear to be two arguments at work here; the issue of 'collective action' versus principal-agent theory, and the issue of power equilibrium and elite settlement. It is not clear whether this second argument is a collective action challenge or a structural issue, and the implications of the authors' critique for models of democratisation in Africa are huge. This critique is not new, but research into the impact of multi-party systems and their negative impact on development is an area worth exploring in much greater contextual detail. This is because there is an underlying assumption in the authors' 'collective action' approach that, given the right set of circumstances, governing elites do have the welfare of their populations at heart. The connection of this argument with the issue of political settlement is therefore an advance and the authors have left a tantalising space for more research. What are the real drivers of decision-making in the local political space, and the sources of elite political preference? What conditions are necessary for the kind of elite bargaining that has positive implications for public welfare? What is the local political dimension of governance for development, and where does this take the development aid agenda?

The authors argue there is still a role for 'enabling' kinds of development assistance – but they do not argue this convincingly when they draw from the established critique that aid exacerbates challenges for collective action because actors are prevented from, or disincentivised from, coming together to find local solutions (p.114). The author's solution – to de-politicise certain areas of development (e.g. infrastructure renewal) – are risky because they involve interventions to support local reformers, and external influence such as this can never

be agenda-free. Is this book a 'profound and radical departure' from critiques of development theory that lack clarity in the policy implications of their arguments, as the authors claim? *Governance for Development in Africa* tries to address this issue, but not altogether successfully, however it sets interesting new parameters and new evidence for the debate.

### From Liberation to Governance in South Africa

**Matthew Graham**

*Songs and Secrets: South Africa from Liberation to Governance by Barry Gilder. London: Hurst, 2012. Pp.359 + notes + bibliography + index. £20 (hbk). ISBN 978-1-84904-237-6.*

The life story of Barry Gilder is remarkable, and his book *Songs and Secrets* offers a unique account of his unusual career trajectory from singer/song-writer, through revolutionary freedom fighter, to top intelligence officer for the African National Congress (ANC) both in exile and in government. Few white South Africans ever took steps to protest against the state; fewer still would join the armed wing of the ANC, Umkhonto weSizwe (MK), and Gilder's memoir, *Songs and Secrets*, provides an informative, poignant, reflective, and sometime humorous account of his role to end apartheid and his position in the ANC government after 1994.

The history of the ANC and its struggle are well known, but every so often a book like *Songs and Secrets* emerges which adds an extra level of depth and insight to our understanding of this period. While this is ostensibly a memoir of Gilder's life, the book is structured in such a way that it can recount his experiences within the movement, while intertwining it with the evolution of the ANC, in exile and power, within the context of wider global events. This is an important dimension, as it demonstrates the internationality of the struggle against apartheid, and the ways in which actions and decisions taken in far-flung places impacted upon the ANC and South Africa.

Gilder's journey to become a fully-fledged MK freedom fighter and later an intelligence official is intriguing and far from the usual path taken by many white anti-apartheid activists. Gilder recognises the irony in his decision to join MK, in that he fled South Africa to avoid military service in Angola yet three years later ended up in the same country in the ranks of MK; but his reasoning behind this was 'I hated war. But I hated apartheid more' (p.5). The experiences of camp life in Angola are fascinating, delving into the hardships that were endured by the guerrilla fighters, the constant threat of attack from enemies, the training and political education in the bush, as well as the camaraderie and lasting sentimental bonds formed between Gilder's 'comrades' in the training camps. The narrative is interwoven with song lyrics of the revolution, often written or performed by Gilder, and these offer an interesting counterpoint to some of his experiences. The book is also full anecdotes that help demonstrate aspects of his life, such as when the entire high command of the ANC in Botswana was driving around the capital Gaborone due to lack of a safe house,

but with a car boot full of limpet mines that could have killed them all (p.99).

The core component of the book revolves around the decision by the ANC leadership to select Gilder for training as an intelligence officer for the movement; this choice by the ANC set him upon an unusual life of espionage, counter-surveillance and intelligence gathering both in exile, and in the post-apartheid government. In the course of exile, Gilder is sent to the Soviet Union for training, and is later tasked by the ANC to create an underground network in Botswana. This section of the book offers a tantalising glimpse into the way in which the ANC operated in the Frontline States of Southern Africa, the role of an intelligence gatherer and the impact this had upon his personal life. Indeed, the author's personal recollections of this period offer a different angle on the history of the movement and ensure that the 'individuals' who contributed are not lost in the wider narrative of the struggle.

The work that Gilder carried out in exile meant he played a prominent role during the transition from apartheid to democracy, and after 1994 as the Deputy Director-General of the South African Secret Service, Home Affairs and later in the Operations of the National Intelligence Agency. These aspects of the book neatly demonstrate the optimism of the ANC in trying to transform South Africa, the compromises that had to be made by individuals and organisations, the confusion and suspicions of former opponents now working together, and the domestic and international pressures the newly returned freedom fighters faced. Yet, it is clear that Gilder is critical of the ANC in power, and he depicts how the movement has strayed from the idealism and principles that he had gone into exile for. For example, he rallies against the ANC-government's repeated practice of 'cadre deployment' across the civil service, and the collapse of the movement as a 'family', as comrades turn against one another fuelled by jealousy and personal enmity (p.175). Although critical of the ANC at times, Gilder points to 'darker forces' that have undermined aspects of the transformative project. For example, he accredits the growing divisions in the ANC to old order prosecutors, the western powers and the media, which are described as 'the still-kicking enemies of our revolution' (p.288). Linked to this, there is a tendency to try and protect the image of the ANC's top cadres, and some of his attempts to explain/shield the reputations of Selebi and Zuma, both of whom were investigated for corruption, appear slightly strained. Furthermore, his criticism that South Africans are taught an 'anaemic version of our [ANC] history' (p.318) appears misplaced given that the ANC since 1994 has systematically attempted to co-opt and rewrite the history of the anti-apartheid struggle, to the detriment of any other contributions such as the UDF and Black Consciousness Movement.

The insights that Gilder offers into the post-apartheid state and the evolution of the ANC since 1994 are extremely valuable, providing an important contribution to our understanding of the tumultuous period as the conflict between Mbeki and Zuma escalated. The reflections provided throughout *Songs and Secrets* are stimulating



and provocative, urging the reader to think more deeply not only about South Africa's present and future, but also the world around us. Barry Gilder's memoir is an accessible account of the ANC from exile to power, and provides a number of fascinating perspectives into some of the main events and decisions during this time period. *Songs and Secrets* will help readers to develop a deeper knowledge of the ANC and South Africa, contributing to the on-going debates about its past and future.

## War and Conflict in Africa

**Kenneth Omeje**

*War and Conflict in Africa* by Paul D. Williams. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011. Pp.306+ index. \$22 (pbk). ISBN-13: 978-0-7456-4544-5.

In *War and Conflict in Africa*, Paul D. Williams presents a well-researched account of the post-Cold War political environment in Africa (1990 – 2009), interrogating and explaining the *raison d'être* for the proliferation of armed conflicts on the continent, any underlying trends in the conflicts and what the international community has done to mitigate the situation. Contrary to the views in mainstream Afro-pessimists' literature about the structural catastrophe, extreme disorder and pathological obscenity often depicting ethno-religious vendetta as unique vestiges of pre-modern barbarism immanent in wars in Africa, Williams contests the exceptionalism thesis ubiquitously attributed to African wars. He argues that, 'African wars are fought for reasons as complex as those fought elsewhere' (p.4). Williams is, among other things, inspired to focus on warfare in Africa because of the sheer volume of armed conflicts (state and non-state centred) the continent experienced in the preceding two decades, the conceptual naivety often exhibited by most influential experts in explaining African conflicts, as well as the protracted nature and seeming intractability of some of the conflicts. These factors, observes the author, have aggravated the cost of armed conflicts in Africa and the challenges of humanitarian intervention and assistance.

Williams divides the book into three parts, each comprising a number of relevant chapters. Part 1 explores the contexts of wars and organised armed violence in Africa in which the author reviews the various scholarly efforts aimed at establishing conceptual benchmarks for wars and armed conflicts; counting and documenting the number of armed conflicts Africa has witnessed in the post-Cold War period; and reporting the number of casualties recorded in various conflicts. What is evident from this analysis is the extreme variation in extant statistics on African wars, which raises concerns about issues of empirical validity and reliability of data – things that most African war experts and researchers frequently take for granted. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, this section delves into the complexly interconnected spatial levels in which African conflicts are structured – local, national, regional and global levels. Understanding the role that various actors and social forces play within and between these contending levels, their driving goals and interests, as well as the changing nature of relationships

they forge is key to explaining what happens in African conflicts and perhaps why. Apparently, in explaining African conflicts, most analysts and researchers hardly adopt this sort of multi-level analytical approach, thereby creating what the author calls 'a levels-of-analysis problem' in African wars (p.36).

Adopting a culinary metaphor, Part 2 analyses the 'ingredients' of warfare and armed conflicts in Africa by examining some of the debate intrinsic to most conventional explanations such as neo-patrimonial misrule, rentier politics and the curse of natural resources, the proliferation of unpopular sovereignties and the continuing struggle of diverse communities for self-determination, the bogey of ethnicity and the manipulation of religion to prosecute wider animosities. Rejecting a mono-causal explanation of the post-Cold War armed conflict recipes in Africa, Williams churns out a plethora of evidence to argue that just like particular dishes consist of multiple ingredients added and mixed together in varied proportions by a chef, wars don't literally cook themselves but are the outcome of the interplay and devices of interest-driven social agents who use the aforementioned ingredients to produce wars and invent different things to fight about.

In Part 3, Williams discusses the dynamics, reverberations and challenges of international conflict interventions in Africa. Some of the major concerns of this section include the nexus of cooperative efforts between African and international stakeholders aimed at building a new African Peace and Security Architecture, as well as the imperatives and politics of peace making and peace support operations. The author evaluates the various regional and international mediation and peacekeeping efforts (including cooperative and hybrid peacekeeping between African regional institutions and the UN) in African conflicts since the end of the Cold War, highlighting their major achievements, limitations and challenges. Furthermore, the author analyses in this section the efforts made by the international community at providing humanitarian aid (emergency food aid, shelter, clean water, medical care, and so forth) in African war zones and in supporting post-conflict development assistance. Notwithstanding these well-meaning international support programmes, Williams remarks that 'neither of these instruments proved capable of transforming political dynamics within neo-patrimonial regimes, persuading the belligerents of the merits of abiding by humanitarian principles or pursuing genuinely national development policies' (p.228). He nonetheless concludes by making a spirited case for expanded international development assistance to African states. The rationale for this, he argues, is to help in pushing African states above a GNI per capita of more than \$1,000 – to see if that can help immunise them from armed conflict.

There is no doubt that Williams has written a highly informative and innovative book, but his concluding proposal to push the GNI per capita of African states over \$1,000 is a rather patronising, if not condescending remark. African states are certainly not sitting and waiting

for a compassionate international community to intervene and push them up the development ladder when it is clear from previous authoritative studies that sections and agencies of the so called international community are the same forces responsible for Africa's continued underdevelopment through a variety of unsalutary contrivances. Some of these contrivances include tax evasion and avoidance on foreign direct investments on the continent, foisting of devastating development policies and programmes on African states (e.g. the ill-fated Structural Adjustments Programmes), extreme environmental damage in oil and solid mineral resource mining areas, supplying arms to anti-government rebel groups and insurgents, etc. The international community is certainly not as well meaning and charitable to Africa as Williams has presented in his book.

Notwithstanding the preceding critique, Williams must be commended for putting together a very well researched book in armed conflict in post-Cold War Africa. This book is a **MUST READ** for all students, researchers and practitioners of African peace, conflict, security and development studies.

### Land Law Reform in Eastern Africa

*Jacqueline M Klopp*

*Land Law Reform in Eastern Africa Traditional or Transformational? by Patrick McAuslan. Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2013. Pp.240+notes+bibliography+index. £80.00 (hbk). ISBN 978 0 41583 143 7.*

Governance over land is one of the most profoundly difficult yet critical issues facing Africa. Crafted during the colonial period, African land laws were never meant to serve a 'public' but instead their 'predatory' nature helped facilitate alienation of indigenes for the particular interests of colonial agents. As a result, they typically included two tiers of rights: statutory and 'customary' rights to land. 'Customary rights' were generally lesser rights that 'natives' could claim under the colonial system and, in theory, were supposed to be based on more localised cultural and collectively negotiated practices and understandings around land. In practice, what constituted 'customary' was often contested and in the face of unjust use of existing land laws, 'customary law' was resorted to as a counter-narrative of resistance – especially by the rural poor.

Similar to colonial times, central state authority and statutory law still tend to trump the 'customary' and with similar consequences: displacement of the politically weak, poor and 'indigenous' people; enclosure of important commons; and the highly inequitable, unproductive and environmentally unsustainable development of land as a resource. Recent intensified global interest in investment in agricultural land has exacerbated this situation. The struggle to shake off this problematic legal and institutional legacy and address historical inequities as well as create a more accountable, transparent and just system for allocating land rights, still rages on. It is this important struggle that *Land Law Reform in Eastern Africa* addresses.

Since the 1990s, governments in Eastern Africa have undertaken numerous land law reform programs and

*Land Law Reform* asks how well these have worked and whether they have succeeded in moving land governance towards more democratic and just patterns. In his book, Patrick McAuslan presents a unique perspective on these questions through a set of reflections drawn from a lifetime of intellectual inquiry and practical engagement re-writing African land laws. In 1961, McAuslan went to Dar es Salaam to help build Africa's first Law School and for the rest of his life worked extensively as an advisor on the numerous law reform projects profiled in the book. He also interacted with, and graciously acknowledged his debt to, Africa's great thinkers on this subject, including Okoth Ogendo, Issa Shivji, Yash Ghai and Justice George Kanyehamba among others. Sadly, McAuslan passed away this year, and therefore *Land Law Reform* represents his last words and wisdom.

The book reveals that 'tradition' or conservatism mostly trumps any deeper more *just* transformation. With an ambitious overview of land law changes in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Mozambique and Somaliland – all places where the author was involved in reform – the book dissects and diagnoses what happened to reform efforts, and why more inclusive land laws that might have better protected the average person – including women – did not take hold, or remain un-implemented. He notes some progress within the law in relation to gender and land rights, which is one legal arena where questions of justice have been raised prominently by African feminist lawyers, many who interestingly tend to turn to statutory not customary law. However, the practice of enforcing and implementing these, often imperfect, changes in statutory law remains weak, and 'gender' remains a ghetto subject in international academic discussions on land in Africa, much as it does in practice (p.201).

At least in respect to gender, the author notes, the notion of justice sometimes comes into play in the discussion of law reform but laments that little writing takes a similar concern with justice as a central organising concept in discussing land law and policy more generally. He notes that the main policy document of the African Union, the African Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa (2010) did not use the word 'justice' once (p.3). He also correctly raises the lack of concern about Africa's growing urban areas; usually either no legal basis exists for much of African urban planning and/or what does exist is 'top down' and bereft of democratic principles, much like its colonial predecessor. This is indeed a serious gap for a continent that is in the midst of a flurry of city building that will shape its future.

Of course, a large historical and political literature exists on the profound injustices involved in the current governance systems that allocate rights over land. However, the key point is that much discussion of land law reform is addressed through the ahistorical 'market' approach, as if 'markets' fix governance problems rather than require better public authority and regulation. McAuslan points critically to the international push by the World Bank and donor agencies like USAID in the 1990s to extend simplistic market based approaches to land. Sadly, in his view 'the

World Bank has, quite simply, won: land markets are the preferred official national approach to land management' (p.229). He also notes a strong element of path dependency as 'old colonial habits of centralized control live on' –sometimes despite new laws that decentralise some control over land (p.231). 'Customary rights' that many poorer people rely on for protection from eviction from land because they cannot show or afford private rights are thus destined to be undermined by this collection of forces that has more of an interest in making land – and the resources below and above it – accessible for foreign or state corporations and particularistic local interests, often politicising access in precarious ways.

The book is a realistic assessment of the 1990s reforms and a strong argument for concepts of justice to be applied to land law reform recognising that a deeper change entails political transformation. As the author notes at

the end, the reason why land law reform has not gone far enough lies more in politics than law. Centralised – and often arbitrary and unencumbered – power over assigning state sanctioned rights to land is a profoundly useful political tool. However, provided some democratic space exists, new mobilisations can form around change. Kenya is one example where this has happened; even though land policy and legal reform has not gone far enough and is in the process of being starved of state finance as McAuslan predicted, it suggests the possibility of new coalitions forming that have a common interest in more openness, fairness and public regulation as well as justice in the land rights allocation system. Sadly, in many countries in East Africa space for such mobilisation is small or narrowing. McAuslan's passionate call for renewed efforts to challenge the status quo is timely; much hard work remains if African land law is to be put on a just path.

**How to cite this article:** Hydén, G, Pedersen, R H, Buur, L, Piccolino, G, Cubitt, C, Graham, M, Omeje, K and Klopp, J 2014 Book Reviews. *Governance in Africa*, 1(1): 6, pp.1-10, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/gia.af>

**Published:** 09 September 2014

**Copyright:** © 2014 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License (CC-BY 3.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>.

