

Political Science as an Obstacle to Understanding the Problem of the State and Political Violence in Africa

Michael Chege

States and Power in Africa

by Jeffrey Herbst
Princeton University Press, 296 pp.,
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The Graves Are Not Yet Full

by Bill Berkeley
Basic Books, 2002, 320 pp., \$17.00,
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Some thirty-two years ago, Albert O. Hirschman published an article in the journal *World Politics* entitled “The Search for Paradigms as a Hindrance to Our Understanding”.¹ In that article, he inveighed against what he called “the mindless use of paradigms” in Latin America by North American scholars who imagined that with the use of a single sharp edged analytical model, they could unlock the door to the mystery of underdevelopment in Latin America. By way of illustration, he analysed what were then two newly published books on Latin America: John Womack’s now classic book, *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* (New York, Alfred Knopf, 1968), and James L. Payne’s *Conflict in Colombia* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968).

Womack’s book provided a well-balanced survey of Zapata’s role in the Mexican revolution, juxtaposed to the rivals and the socio-political forces he had to reckon with. By producing a fine textured narrative in that manner, Womack provided the reader with clear evidence that in a number of key junctures of the revolution, things might have gone some other way had key political actors decided differently; that is, he provided for what is now called the role of human agency without compromising the structural limits (physical, economic or social) which Zapata among others confronted. Payne’s book by contrast was judged an exemplar of bad social science in Latin American studies. It explained that continual and perverse domestic violence in Colombia, as he saw it, originated from deeply-rooted culture of mistrust, cynicism and lack of principles, and fatalism among Colombian political leaders and their ever-divided following. “Colombians” he wrote, “are never on the brink of anything”. That, of course, is quite unlike their counterparts in North America. To Payne, Colombian political culture explained *all* the puzzles of what lay behind the factional violence in Colombia. One key causal variable

explained the entire Colombian political tragedy, at least till the late 1960s. This conclusion provoked a withering attack from Hirschman, who pointed out that, contrary to that sweeping conclusion, there had been long periods of political calm and functioning democratic rule in Colombia. In addition, North America had its share of untrustworthy politicians, citing the then US president Richard Nixon, a year before the Watergate scandal broke. In sum, Hirschman recommended, it paid to examine the plurality of the causes behind the cataclysmic events we see in the developing world, rather than become transfixed by elegant, sure-fire models that mislead fundamentally. “After so many failed prophesies”, he asked, “is it not in the interest of social science to embrace complexity be it at some sacrifice of its claim to predictive power?”

Between 1970 and 2003, the bulk of social sciences have gone in the opposite direction from this injunction. And nowhere is this felt as much as it is in African development studies. Africa south of the Sahara is home to forty-five states that in some ways share little with each other except a continent. The region has more languages (over 1,000) than any other region on earth, and its geographical and cultural diversity is reinforced by different legal and educational systems that draw heavily on the ex-colonial powers—Great Britain, France, Belgium, Italy, and Portugal. In response to external pressures during the slave trade, colonialism and years of anti-black racism from the West, the people of Africa have evolved a reactive identity—as Africans—which tends to be taken at face value; that is, they tend to be considered as owners of an ancient homogenous “African culture” with an all-African political behaviour to go with it. No region in the developing world is more subject to the crass modelling and generalities that Hirschman rails against than Africa. Few areas have been subjected to as much academic stereotyping. And this is especially true with respect to the recurring violence and state failure in different parts of the continent in the last decade. The object of this article is to illustrate this phenomenon with two recent publications. We limit ourselves to the 1990s.

The State and Political Violence in Africa in the 1990s

The 1990s opened with much hope for African politics. Nelson Mandela was released from prison after 28 years of incarceration for opposition to white supremacist rule in South Africa—a system whose very affront to African dignity provoked near-unanimity among African peoples. With most economies in distress—a result of the agricultural commodity crash and structural adjustment policies in the

1980s—mass protest against authoritarian regimes began to pick up especially in francophone West Africa (Benin, Togo, Cote d’Ivoire, Mali, Cameroon). But this was also true in the English-speaking countries of Africa—Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, as well as Mobutu’s Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi (all ex-Belgian colonies). And with the Cold War winding down, Western support for incumbent anti-communist dictators lacked justification. The withdrawal of US support to the Siad Barre regime in Somalia and Samuel Doe’s tyranny in Liberia sent them tottering into collapse since they had no local roots. Democratic rule and market economies were expected to be the rule.

Much has been written by way of evaluation of democratic governance in Africa in the 1990s.² To make a long story short, there have been successes but also many disappointments. Ghana, Senegal, Kenya, Zambia, Malawi, South Africa and Benin have managed to switch government from the old ruling parties at least once peacefully through the ballot. On the roster of disappointments, Burundi’s elections led to a Tutsi-led coup d’état in 1993 (against an elected Hutu government) that partially inspired the 1994 Rwanda genocide (of 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutus by Hutu extremists). That disappointment must be extended to the countries now embroiled in violent domestic conflict that had their origins in the aborted transitions of the 1990s: civil war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, factional violence in neighbouring Congo-Brazzaville, anarchy and lack of a central government in Somalia since 1991, a thirty-year old civil war in the Sudan, and violence and chaos in Liberia, Cote d’Ivoire since December 1999, and the Central African Republic since 1994. Especially in Southern and Eastern Africa, HIV-AIDS threatens to alter the demographic profile of African societies in drastically negative ways. The population profile is expected to reflect a bulge in the very young and the very old, which amounts to an economic and social catastrophe. And yet there are exceptions, like Senegal and Uganda, where government-backed anti-AIDS education has drastically reduced the spread of the disease.

Still, in the theme of diversity of African states mentioned earlier, there are many African states that never make the headlines, where life, though characterized by poverty and underdevelopment, goes on normally, notwithstanding the emaciated UNICEF “African” poster child, who presumably represents all of Africa. No African country in the end is like any other; and no region in a state is quite like another. Tanzania, Uganda, and Senegal come to mind. To say that good scholarship must reflect that is

SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION The Swaziland Case

edited by
Nomtheto Simelane



This rare book provides the social and economic history of Swaziland and portrays the ways in which the colonial experience dramatically transformed the Swazi population and unleashed new social forces. Among the various topics that the book explores in fresh and insightful ways are labour migration, the impact of colonial rule on the aristocracy, the growth of settler and cash crop farmers, the industrialization of agriculture and the appropriation of peasant labour as well as the mining industry.

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not to argue against overarching theories of politics in Africa. Rather it is to insist that we distinguish good theory by its capacity to survive empirical tests drawn from these diverse experiences. Otherwise it should be rejected.

A Tale of Two Books on States on Political Conflict in Africa

The reversal of this baleful trend in at least ten African states is required in and of itself for the sake of the lives of the people who live there. But political stability is also important because it tends to affect neighboring countries in fundamental economic and political ways: the strain from refugees streaming across borders, the dangers of “hot pursuit” across state frontiers, the importation of illegal arms into stable and peaceful regions. Political instability in any region is a seamless web that affects all the neighbouring states. We can see this in the spillover of the Colombia war into the frontier regions of Brazil, Bolivia, and Venezuela. National security in African sub-regions (i.e. the Horn of Africa, West Africa, and the Great Lakes region) will have to be a collective effort. In the past year, a group of concerned African leaders have pledged themselves to accomplish that goal under the newly constituted African Union and the New Partnership for African Development. In June of 2002, the G-8 summit of the leading developed nations in Canada pledged initial support for African peace-making and economic reforms. Against the backdrop of these new initiatives, it is

worth taking a closer look at the root sources of political instability and domestic violence in African states.

The debate about the causes and cures of African political instability is not new. In the Victorian era, David Livingstone recommended European colonization and the “three C’s” - Christianity, civilization and commerce - as antidote. Under the aegis of the IMF and the World Bank, the three C’s today translate into “good governance” (i.e. like that of European countries), civil society and market economies. Behind these nostrums lie two conflicting kinds of explanation for Africa’s special susceptibility to predatory politics. One kind of explanation seeks to identify a single all-encompassing malevolent factor, in the manner of James L. Payne. Thus Victorian-era “race science” was fascinated by the supposed impact of Africa’s torrid climate and inclement geography on the Negro psyche, one of the theories that blossomed at Yale in the 1920s in the Ellsworth Huntington school of “geographical determinism”. Huntington, whose academic escapes might have led to the closure of the Geography Department at Yale after Nazi propaganda became better known following the Second World War, argued that the process of natural selection among the races was stimulated by climate. Colder and temperate climates, like that of New Haven, produced people with a commitment to hard work as compared to the impoverished whites he had observed in “sub-tropical” South Africa.³ Another version of the single-factor causal variable is the idea that there is a violently intractable and erratic quality inherent in all African cultures. Credit for the prime exponents of this perspective in recent times deserves to be given to Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, who argue that, given their cultural background (witchcraft included), African elites have a vested interest in perpetuating a violent disorder in Africa because they gain from it.⁴ Predictably, white-ruled South Africa and Arab North Africa are exempted from the Chabal-Daloz rules of African politics.

Both the “geography” and “culture” causal variables have been embraced at various times by right-wing thinkers in the West. Varieties of both were used to justify British colonization in Africa; a phenomenon the author is personally familiar with. In the post-colonial era, however, proponents of single-factor theories have been drawn from the opposite end of the political spectrum. Thus the classic left-wing, nationalist explanation for Africa’s political woes puts the blame on Western exploitation of the natural and human resources of the continent under the slave trade, colonialism and then “neo-colonialism.” Walter Rodney’s *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* is the

paradigmatic text for this line of thinking.⁵ Just as the new right argues that the causes for African state failure is to be traced to *domestic* causes (physical or cultural), the old African left attributed all African economic and political crises to *external* factors: Africa’s exploitation by the North through the slave trade and colonialism in the past and by multinational corporations today using the local “petit bourgeoisie” as a front. Single factor explanations are in fact nothing but the polemical arguments of the old left turned on their head.⁶

The search for the single cause thus spans the ideological spectrum. But there is an alternative and more profitable approach that distances itself from such single-factor theories, whether these derive from Victorian racism or leftist anti-imperialism. Rather than seek one culprit, this approach examines the plurality of possible causes for Africa’s catastrophic politics—among them poor leadership, reckless social and economic policies, corruption involving local and external parties, contrived ethnic and religious hatreds and meddling at the regional and international level. This favours a country-specific approach over continent-wide generalizations. In a particular case of national decline different combinations of all or some of these factors may be at work. The debate between those who favour complex explanations of this type and those who seek a single answer dominates African studies to this day. This is true of analyses of political violence.

In contemporary American political science, *States and Power in Africa* represents the latest version of the first kind of theory, a holistic theory that aspires to explain, once and for all, what has bedevilled Africans in their traditional, colonial and post-colonial efforts to build viable states. It has received spectacular pre-publication accolades from leading scholars at Harvard and Columbia universities. Though persuasively written and highly impressive in its theoretical formulation, it is tendentious in its use of factual information about African politics and insufferably condescending towards African political capabilities. That this book provoked praise rather than criticism is a sign of how little some sections of the political science community expect of African leaders and peoples. For the message it conveys is that in the “last several centuries” Africans (rulers and subjects) have rationally adjusted to Sisyphean-like failures to build functional governments, unable to counteract the geographical adversities that lie at the root of their political problems.

Bill Berkeley’s *The Graves Are Not Yet Full* (a phrase taken from Government-sponsored hate radio during the 1994 Rwanda genocide),

despite its misleading title, is a different and more informative book. Written by a professional investigative journalist, the book is based on eyewitness evidence and personal interviews, often undertaken at some personal risk, regarding the actual causes of political violence in the continent’s worst trouble spots in the 1990s: Liberia, Congo, Sudan, KwaZulu (South Africa), and Rwanda. Berkeley interviewed some of the most unsavoury characters in recent African history and some of them did not like the findings he confronted them with. Gatsha Buthelezi ejected Berkeley from his office in Cape Town; the Mobutu regime imprisoned and deported him from Zaire in 1993. In clear and refreshing prose, Berkeley disparages commonplace assertions that political conflict arises from “ancient tribal rivalries” or from demographic pressure or the absence of functioning states, or irrational national boundaries (a factor that Jeffrey Herbst makes much of in *States and Power*). Instead, he traces many of Africa’s wars to a strategy favoured by besieged tyrants who, often with external support, deliberately instigate new-fangled ethnic hatreds against their reformist opponents, using hired thugs and militias recruited from the burgeoning population of restive and despairing youth produced by decaying economies.

Jeffrey Herbst starts from the premise that distribution of governmental authority over a defined geographic space determines whether “the government will be stable or unstable, whether it will be a dictatorship ... (and) whether we shall have rule of law”. *States and Power in Africa* skilfully marries Victorian-era geopolitics with trendy “soft rational choice theory” (my term) derived from economics, to produce an erudite and initially persuasive “huge comparison” to explain the comparative absence of stable and functioning governments in African countries. Its core argument is that given Africa’s “inhospitable” geography (bad soil, heat, poor rainfall) and low population densities, pre-colonial African rulers, European colonialists, and post-independence governments chose to “broadcast” their power only as far as the high costs of doing so permitted them to. In effect, this meant that the reach of governmental authority did not extend very far from African capital cities, many of which are located on the coast, far from the heartland. Given the vastness of the land, its poor soil and low population densities, inhabitants of the interior, according to this argument, can defy central authority and prevail. Since, “states are only viable if they are able to control the territory defined by their borders”, African governments have repeatedly failed the test of establishing order nationwide. The result is “civil war in some countries,

the presence of millions of refugees throughout the continent, and the adoption of highly dysfunctional policies by many leaders”.

According to this argument, pre-colonial African rulers - monarchs, tribal chiefs, or clan heads - avoided establishing firm territorial boundaries and hence needed no maps; instead, they sought to control people, warring for “women, cattle and slaves”, it is not stated in which order. Fixed territory, however, is one thing the Africans will not fight over. European colonial powers did no better: in fact they reinforced the pre-existing trend. They too pretended that they governed the colonies from border to border without ever doing so, because they lacked the coercive capacity to do so. They did not have sufficient armed forces and covering the “hostile geography” set the limits of how far in the land they could travel—mostly on horseback. But the colonial powers were recognized as the incumbent government at the Berlin conference of 1884. African states therefore survived by dint of international recognition, rather than the Weberian “monopoly of the use of force in a given territory”.

The colonial experience set the stage for similar pretensions by post-independence governments. The colonization of Africa, we are informed, was a superficial and incomplete affair that, contrary to accepted wisdom, changed hardly African rulership at all. It was this shallow colonization and incomplete presence of power in entire territories that sowed the seed for Africa’s current crop of political disasters in national governance. Thus, in the post-colonial era, international benefits like foreign aid and international legal recognition of statehood were accorded to incumbent ruling elites without any demand on them to demonstrate full internal governmental control. This approach on the part of donor governments (faithfully followed by the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations) removed the incentive for African governments to “broadcast power” from the capital to the districts in the remote periphery. To get the external benefits of international recognition all one needed was control of the capital and its immediate environs. The result is that African rulers have had no incentive to build effective road networks to cover entire territories, no compelling reason to tax entire populations, to register land ownership nationwide, to control the circulation of national currencies, or to establish practical citizenship codes. In Roman times, Pliny made the famous statement that there is “always something new out of Africa.” Writing from America, Herbst now declares that “there is nothing new out of Africa”. All we are witnessing are variations of the chaotic traditional rule clumsily failing to extend power to all parts of

the land, which results in violence and instability.

Comparison is an integral part of Herbst's project. So Africa's experience in state making is juxtaposed to that of Western Europe. Unlike Africa, he argues, Europe was blessed with politically congenial geographic conditions and a compact population, the control of which became the obsession of European state-makers in their perennial wars from the tenth century onwards. European war-making over population, land and state frontiers, in turn, produced an attachment to boundaries and national monuments, a national consciousness and patriotism that Africans have no experience of. From Charles Tilly's *Coercion, Capital and European States*, he distils the lesson that European war-making required the financial and human mobilization that became essential features of national states. So states made war, then war made states. To her detriment, we are informed, Africa has historically avoided such constructive inter-state violence—one that produces political supremacy over whole territories. Africa's colonial conquest in the nineteenth century and her decolonization in the mid-twentieth century were both "astonishingly peaceful" processes.

This in itself is an astonishing statement. Consider the fact that the extermination of the Herero people in present-day Namibia by German colonialists is listed by Hannah Arendt in her *Origins of Totalitarianism* as the trial phase of the Nazi holocaust. The skeletons are being reburied en masse as I write these lines and there is a pending international case filed against Germany by the Herero people. In Britain's conquest of the Kenyan highlands, Richard Meinertzhagen, a leader in the military campaigns against the Nandi peoples made the following entry in his diary in December 1902: "I gave orders that every living thing except children should be killed without mercy... Every soul was either shot or bayoneted"⁷ One could go on to describe the horrors of Leopold's Congo Free State that appear in Adam Hirsch's much-praised *King Leopold's Ghost*. The roster of colonial massacres in Africa is a long one. May be it does not cover the entire continent, and there could very well have been cases of "astonishingly peaceful" colonization. But that is beside the point. In a world of objective scholarship, generalizations about Africa as a whole must not only reflect the diversity in modes of conquest but also explain it. The same things have to be said about Herbst's comment on peaceful decolonisation.

Having been denied the experience of full-blooded nationalistic wars over borders by historic experience as ordered by geography, Herbst argues, Africans lack state-legitimising

militaristic monuments like the Nelson Column at Trafalgar Square in London, the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin (where the Nazi Wehrmacht commenced its marches to broadcast German power across European borders), and the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. Rather than emotion-arousing, country-specific songs, African national anthems are but hymns shared with neighbouring states (like South Africa's *Nkosi Sikelele Africa*, God Bless Africa). Even though no continent can be said to be regular, Africa is said to be an "irregularly sized continent" containing a "geography of losers" in West Africa. Malians are judged "schizophrenic" for holding to a national anthem that pledges loyalty to both Mali and Africa. Though he stops short of actually advocating the benefits of European style war-making for Africans, Herbst recommends international support only for states and breakaway regions which successfully establish effective control and order, irrespective of current African boundaries. The cure for African political instability, in other words, lies in external donors providing support only to states that "broadcast power" in all the land they claim, ignoring current boundaries. But why should foreign aid be expected to do the trick after a heavy dosage of it, as we know, failed to induce even the minimal task of macroeconomic management under structural adjustment in the 1990s?

States and Power in Africa makes much of the intellectual benefits of sweeping generalizations, of "huge comparisons" across continents. But if its basic theory were true, the Australian continent would have been the most politically desolate place on the planet earth. Semi-tropical Australia violates all the rules of successful state building as laid down by Herbst to an even greater extent than Africa does. Unless one wants to perceive the extermination of Australian Aborigines as an international war, Australia has fought no border wars in a century of existence as an independent state. Its most memorable nationalistic battle took place in Gallipoli in modern Turkey in 1915, in the course of the First World War. In fact sports, not war, has been the instrument of choice in consolidating Australian nationhood; witness the skilful use of the Sydney Olympics to heal the wounds between whites and the Aborigines. As for "hostile geography", only seven per cent of Australian soil is classified as arable. The rest is a combination of arid scrubland and desert, the "outbacks". It has a population density of two people per square kilometre compared to 28 for sub-Saharan Africa. Nearly 60 percent of the population lives in the small south-east corner of Victoria and New South Wales, with the rest scattered in distant peripheries - just the kind of "hinterland state"

format which Herbst insists poses "severe difficulties in state consolidation of power". And yet Australia is not Mauritania or Chad, which Herbst typifies as African "hinterland states". This would suggest that the power of human agency, the initiative of state-builders (or lack thereof), rather than nature or war, greatly determines Africa's political outcomes—something Berkeley's narrative never ignores.

Or consider the case of the Middle East, the real bastion of boundary wars in densely populated lands: Israel versus Palestine from 1948 to the present; Lebanon versus Syria (1972-89); Iran versus Iraq for eight years in the 1980s; the Six Day War of 1967, and the 1973 Yom Kippur War, all the way down to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1991. Population density in Middle East and North Africa is higher than that of Eastern and Western Europe. A recent collection of papers commissioned by the US Social Science Research Council and edited by Steven Heinemann, (*War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East*) found that, overall, interstate wars had actually set back the process of state-formation and consolidation. This is contrary to the Herbst thesis. In Africa likewise, a case-by-case examination that we have done of African states, past and present, as well as by geographic zone, yielded no discernible statistical correlation between governmental effectiveness and the physical environment. Functioning, failing and failed states can be found in the same environment and the same historical circumstances.

Herbst's huge comparisons and the grand theory then are intellectually provocative - to say the very least - but they do not stand empirical tests. Bill Berkeley, by contrast, stays clear of formal grand theories and yet provides an illuminating discussion of a number of actual wars observed at first hand. Yet, like Womack, Berkeley has a low-key theory of political violence in Africa that is keenly supported by first hand evidence. The domestic wars of the 1990s in the countries he visited had no redeeming value, even when they traversed state frontiers. None of them could have survived without the underhand support of an external actor supporting one side in its own interests. He thus flays the United States, and especially its Africa policy under Ronald Reagan as conducted by Chester Crocker, the then US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa. And yet he never strays from the centrality of the role of domestic causes that sparked these wars: the comical but deadly Samuel Doe regime in Liberia (supported by the US) as it rigged elections and attempted ethnocide in Nimba country; the northern Sudanese Islamic front which espoused a racist-cum-religious crusade against the Christians and animists of Southern Sudan, who are

further victimized by local predators in the guise of liberators, like John Garang and Riek Macher; the apartheid regime's covert support (with US clandestine assistance) for "Zulu warriors" who butchered African National Congress supporters in what came to be wrongly called "black-on-black violence" in line with western stereotypes of African and African-American propensity for fratricide. In all these scenes, Berkeley brings you penetrating and critical interviews with the authors of the violence, as clear a source as one would wish for on whence and why violence emerges.

In explaining the general nature of these wars, Berkeley considers the appropriate comparison to be that with specific acts of Twentieth Century mass slaughter in Europe, Asia and the Americas. The South African judge, Richard Goldstone, who has worked in Rwanda, ex-Yugoslavia and post-apartheid South Africa, tells Berkeley at one point that "inter-ethnic violence usually gets stoked by specific individuals intent on immediate political and material advantage". The most potent catalyst in the escalating cycle of violence, Berkeley shows, is fear-mongering and systematic propaganda that fosters ethnic hatred by specific power elites. Making perpetrators of mass killings accountable for their actions is the most likely solution to this. The book ends with an account of the convictions of the alleged organizers of Rwanda's 1994 genocide at the ongoing International Criminal Tribunal in Arusha, Tanzania. Here is a good reason why those interested in reducing political violence in Africa should welcome the new UN International Criminal Court at The Hague. More than anything else, the culture of impunity which lets perpetrators of massacres go free must be brought to a halt if the situation is to improve.

There is a growing intellectual gap in the search for the origins of political instability in Africa, a gap that opens between the sterile grand theorizing of ranking political scientists, and more informative field-based observations from writers without academic attachment. This divide recalls the famous dichotomy in Isaiah Berlin's essay "The Hedgehog and the Fox".⁸ The hedgehog knows one big thing, while the fox knows many useful little things. Being a pluralist in both politics and research methods, Berlin was obviously partial to the foxes. In contemporary political studies on the state and violence in Africa, political scientists avidly pursue the one big cure-all theory. Following a tradition increasingly lost to political scientists, there is a new tradition based on field research and interview by independent writers and journalists. Such writers give a voice to ordinary Africans - as victims, villains, and as heroes - and bring us closer to an understanding of

the huge diversity in African states and in political conflicts in Africa. *The Graves Are Not Yet Full* falls into this emerging tradition of case studies by well-informed and committed writers and journalists such as Adam Hochschild, author of *King Leopold's Ghost*, and Michela Wrong's *In the Footsteps of*

Mr. Kurtz, easily the best book on the terminal years of the unmourned Mobutu regime.

As they seek solutions to Africa's deadly state crises, whether through multilateral channels like NEPAD or the UN or individually, African statesmen and scholars should do themselves a

favour by avoiding demeaning language about their capabilities and the cataloguing of structural reasons why Africa is condemned to poor state management and recurrent violence. Given the tender mercies of the grand theorists, they should count themselves lucky that Berkeley and other journal-

ists continue to write objective and well-informed books, especially now that, pace Jeffrey Herbst, there is a reasonable prospect for peace and renewed state-building in Angola, Sierra Leone, and – possibly – Congo and the Sudan. ■

Notes

¹Albert O. Hirschman, "The Search for Paradigms as a Hindrance to Our Understanding", *World Politics*, Vol.22, No3, 1970.

²Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1997; John A. Wiseman, ed., *Democracy and Political Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*, London, Routledge, 1995; John F.

Clark and David E. Gardiner, *Political Reform in Francophone West Africa*, Boulder, Westview Press, 1997.

³Saul Dubow, *Scientific Racism in Modern South Africa*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp 177-8

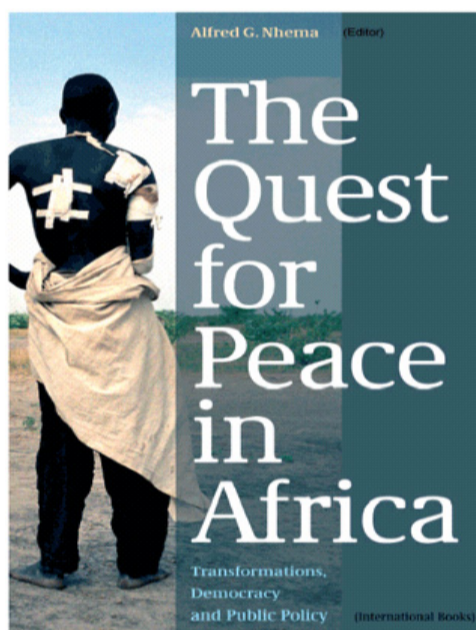
⁴Patrick Chabal and Jean-Paul Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1999.

⁵Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Washington DC, Howard University Press, 1974.

⁶Like the dependency thesis, the new right emphasizes stagnation as an inevitable outcome of the processes they espouse. Both sides deride the capacity of African ruling classes to deliver. Both sides also stress the ineluctable determinism of history in shaping the unwelcome events in Africa today.

⁷Colonel R. Meinertzhagen, *Kenya Diary 1902-1906*, London, Oliver and Boyd, 1957, p.51.

⁸Isaiah Berlin, "The Hegdehog and the Fox" in Berlin, *Russian Thinkers*, London, Penguin Press, 1978.



Africa is mired in a range of intra- to inter-state conflicts, caused by the fragile nature of the African states, endemic poverty, economic inequality and exclusionary governance systems that do not allow participatory political arrangements.

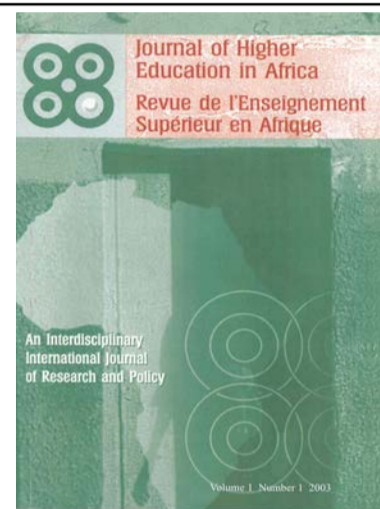
So, conflict has become the distinguishing feature of Africa. Apart from the HIV/AIDS scourge, the plague of war is the most devastating challenge to the African people. Hence, the quest for peace. To be able to come up with practical solutions we need a better understanding of African conflicts. The 17 essays of this book address these complex issues.

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