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REVIEW ARTICLE

UNDERSTANDING RECENT AFRICAN WARS

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CYNTHIA J. ARNSON AND WILLIAM ZARTMAN (eds), *Rethinking the Economics of War: the intersection of need, creed, and greed.* Washington DC and Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Johns Hopkins University Press (pb $55 – 978 0 8018 8297 5). 2005, 320 pp.

KRISTINA A. BENTLEY AND ROGER SOUTHALL, *An African Peace Process: Mandela, South Africa and Burundi.* Cape Town: HSRC Press (pb R140 – 978 07969 2090 7). 2005, 240 pp.

VIGDIS BROCH-DUE (ed.), *Violence and Belonging: the quest for identity in post-colonial Africa.* London and New York: Routledge (pb £21.99 – 0415290074). 2005, 261 pp.

DAVID KEEN, *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone.* Oxford: James Currey (pb £16.95 – 978 0852558836). 2005, 320 pp.

TOBY SHELLEY, *Oil: politics, poverty and the planet.* London: Zed Books (pb £9.95 – 978 1842775219). 2005, 256 pp.

HELEN YANACOPULOS AND JOSEPH HANLON (eds), *Civil War, Civil Peace*. Milton Keynes: The Open University (in conjunction with James Currey and Ohio University Press) (pb £26.95 – 978 0896802490). 2006, 332 pp.

When the Cold War ended, the Western world looked for an economic dividend. The Clinton re-election slogan captured the mood of the moment – 'It's the economy, stupid'. Even the social scientific study of war was affected. For a period the focus shifted to war economy, to the exclusion of many other factors causing and sustaining outbreaks of armed conflict. Al-Qaida's war of terror against the United States and its allies – a war intended to convey to Muslim audiences that the Caliphate might once again be restored in an era of electronic globalization (Sageman 2004) – reinstated an older focus. Ideology, politics and religion once again assumed a central position as causes of war. Despite the furore over terrorism – in itself no new phenomenon – the basics of social theory in regard to war remain unchanged. Wars (of any kind) need to be understood in their strategic, motivational, organizational and occupational aspects. How effective are the social sciences in tracking and explaining post-Cold War conflicts in Africa? Wars in

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coastal upper West Africa, the Great Lakes region, Darfur/Chad, northern Uganda/southern Sudan and the Horn of Africa have posed major explanatory challenges. The six books considered in this review article sample the state of the art. We have organized our discussion in terms of three major questions: what do we know about contemporary war in Africa (and how do we know it); what is contemporary war in Africa like; and what causes contemporary war in Africa.

KNOWING ABOUT CONTEMPORARY WAR IN AFRICA

Wars are generally too dangerous, complex and fast-moving to be grasped by established empirical methods of social science research. Some try. This has stimulated an interesting attempt by Hoffman and Lubkemann (2005), writing about the Mano River conflicts, to establish a war-oriented anthropology of 'events', building on earlier attempts to open an interface between war reporting and critically informed social science analysis of African war (Allen and Seaton 1999). Most investigators opt for the more feasible option of stepping back, taking a comparative, methodologically plural approach. War – among other things – is an attempt to engage the emotions. So asking the right questions at a distance is perhaps to be preferred over 'being there' and becoming overwhelmed by the horror or pity of events.

A particular methodological issue to engage attention is that much of the accessible material on war is testimony, largely generated in the aftermath of events. Huge amounts of material are produced by war crimes tribunals and truth and reconciliation commissions. Human rights enquiries, problem-solving conflict transformation and Track Two peace negotiations add their own quota, often derived from facilitated group discussions. Researchers also undertake their own interviews, of course, but often in a situation where access depends on a powerful protector. It is not only journalists that are 'embedded'. An 'agency-led' agenda of enquiry is sometimes all too evident.

Testimony has thus come under scrutiny (Mkandawire 2002; Fanthorpe 2006). Testimony-led accounts certainly need to be cross-checked. They are perhaps only truly compelling when opposing factions in a war concur on its causes (Peters 2006) or different genders, and status or age groups, make similar claims about the meaning of events (Richards 2005). Joseph Hanlon (in the book edited by Yanacopulos and Hanlon) makes his case for testimony on a cross-continental scale. Self-justificatory accounts would result in a plethora of stories; yet there is remarkable consistency, he points out, in the reasons informants give for becoming involved in insurgencies – poverty, marginalization, lack of opportunities. Chris Cramer – another contributor to the same volume – adds that the much-vaunted economists' alternative (disregard the chatter and analyse the behaviour, cf. Collier 2000) all too often runs foul of the problem of slack between proxy variables and behavioural processes. This is one reason hugely contradictory results derive from rival quantitative data sets on recent civil wars.

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The speed with which some authors, sceptical about testimony, then advance only thinly evidenced counter-arguments suggests the problem, often enough, is not testimony as such, but its inconvenience to established theoretical positions or sponsors' vested interests. Informants say things they are not supposed to say. Selective manipulation of, or naïve reliance on, testimony is to be deplored, but a proper critical approach to testimony provides scope to answer the new questions wars tend to pose. This is brought out especially clearly in the collection of essays edited by Broch-Due.

Several contributors emphasize the many-stranded nature of testimony itself (perhaps most explicitly in chapters on Rwanda by Pottier and on the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission by Ross). In an introductory essay which in itself turns into valuable testimony, Broch-Due draws on her own experiences of several cycles of fieldwork in northern Kenya, and her realization that the liveliness generated by a Norwegian aid project masked other more problematic sounds and symptoms of violence bubbling below. Her chapter is also marked by an important internal evolution. Its initial preoccupation is with violence, but then (almost imperceptibly) the chapter turns into an analysis of a hitherto unrecognized war. In pinpointing the violence of everyday life anthropologists identify places where social cohesion – the moral fabric – wears thin. But applying the same approach to war soon runs into the sand. That war is violent is news to no one; emphasizing the violence of war then rather too easily turns into an idealization of an unreal state of (preceding) peace. At this juncture it becomes apparent that peace was much more violent than realized, as Broch-Due is quick to point out.

This returns us to the issue of the quality of the evidence. Do we best study wars by comparing different cases, when it is obvious they have become wars,[1] or do we try and see the evidence of war in peace? A particularly fine essay in the Broch-Due collection addresses this issue head-on. Harri Englund offers a sympathetic critique of the well-regarded comparative work on African wars by the American anthropologist Carolyn Nordstrom (for example, Nordstrom 1997). Nordstrom is frank that she talks mainly to victims. Her work is sensitive, and cannot be accused of voyeurism. But there is a risk that victim-centred accounts (in Nordstrom's case, of the civil wars in Mozambique and Angola) distort the overall picture. We need to hear from others who have no intention of speaking because they have much to hide – soldiers, for example.

How can the anthropologist avoid the one-sidedness of victim-centred accounts? Englund points out that it depends whether you follow wars or whether war comes to you, so to speak, as a 'sitting' field anthropologist. Englund argues the case for being able to situate a war

[1] As Zartman, in the Arnson and Zartman volume, notes: '[quantitative statistical studies] do not explain civil conflict; they explain conflict with more than 1,000 deaths, which is a bit like explaining human growth by starting at the age of twelve years' (p. 262).

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in its context through absorbing it within a longer-term ethnographic framework based on situated knowledge of life histories, and of local social processes and institutions. His own work follows the example of Werbner (1991), but there are other impressive instances in recent anthropological literature where anthropologists have been challenged by wars to make their material answer questions they perhaps never intended to pose. Two outstanding studies of Sierra Leone – by Mariane Ferme and Rosalind Shaw – might be cited as examples of this welcome new genre (Ferme 2001; Shaw 2002). A better grasp of actions and practice follows. Perpetrators speak through their actions, and it is often easier to see – from these long-view accounts – what drove them.

What to do about the silences remains a challenge. The world has many war-mongers in need of exposure, especially well-protected agents of rich-country interests, such as the British and South African advisers responsible for stirring a hornet's nest in Sierra Leone in 1996. But how do we rate the silence of the deeply traumatized or highly threatened? And what is to be done about the silence of those who became abusers because they were abused (the situation of some child and youth combatants inducted into warring factions by force)? It would be reasonable to conclude that we need comparative, situational and behavioural accounts, and, if we are to grasp silences, structural accounts as well. This means that much of the hard work in explaining recent African wars remains to be done. Certainly, no source of data should be ruled out on doctrinaire grounds, and especially not because it fits awkwardly with policy makers' desires or with ideologies of how Africa ought to be.

WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN WAR LIKE?

The conflict in Sierra Leone (1991–2002) is arguably a representative contemporary African armed conflict, in as much as it has produced a wide and diverging set of explanations. To some it is a conflict motivated by material considerations, rather than social grievances or ideological concerns (Collier 2001). According to this interpretation, the main protagonists – the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) – were criminals rather than guerrillas (Smillie *et al.* 2000). Others, puzzled by the violence and atrocities, point to the influence of an essentially 'barbaric' culture (Kaplan 1994; 1996). A third group tends to blame the collapse of a neo-patrimonial state and the impact this had on the lives of large numbers of young people (Reno 1995; Richards 1996; Peters 2006).

David Keen has been associated with the first kind of approach: 'war is not simply a breakdown in a particular system, but a way of creating an alternative system of profit, power and even protection' (Keen 1998: 11). In his new book, *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone*, Keen augments his earlier materialist arguments with some aspects of psychological theory. In part, this is to address a major criticism of the work of Collier and colleagues that 'greed' and 'grievance' are far from

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easy to distinguish. As Keen remarks elsewhere, 'it is not unlikely that greed (and the willingness to use violence to acquire resources) is itself the result of grievances' (Keen 2003: 69).

Greed might explain to some extent the looting and illicit mining by the armed factions, but it does not explain the wanton destruction and atrocities, such as amputations and rape. To deal with this aspect of the war in Sierra Leone, Keen now adds a psychological dimension to his earlier work. The grievances just mentioned appear to have created dangerous feelings of shame and humiliation among the marginalized youth from which the factions were mainly recruited (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004), and these feelings (he believes) were important driving forces for much of the violence. He suggests that the semi-closed world of the RUF bush camps offered a place where combatants were not exposed to civilians, and thus did not experience the shame they felt in the wider society. In camp, previous roles were turned on their heads; the powerless became powerful and society's leaders (chiefs, traders, politicians) were humiliated by child commanders. In short, camp life generated an 'inverted morality'. But beyond RUF territory, shame inevitably pushed itself to the forefront once again. The rebels sometimes tried to win over the civilians, but as soon as rejection was sensed, the fighters inflicted extreme humiliation on their would-be charges.

The argument can also be applied to elements in the national army, responsible for its own share of atrocities. Many youngsters – not much different from RUF fighters in situation and background – joined the army as irregulars. These irregulars experienced a double humiliation when civilians supported the Civil Defence Forces. Even the elected President had little trust in the national army, and tacitly allowed support to flow to the (unconstitutional) CDF movement. Recruited among the same pool of disgruntled youth, experiencing the same kind of shame, and having a shared stake in the continuation of the conflict, the army and rebels engaged in covert and later overt collaboration. A clear example of such collusion was the AFRC/RUF junta's seizure of power in May 1997. But the resulting 'people's army' was not as unified as might be expected on Keen's account, and was overpowered by ECOMOG forces only eight months after capturing the capital, Freetown. One explanation for this collapse would be the overwhelming power of ECOMOG forces and CDF fighters. However, a different explanation is hinted at by the far from smooth cooperation between the AFRC and the RUF; despite all similarities, there were some major differences in ideology between the junta partners. Keen does not pay much attention to this second possibility, taking the line that since the RUF employed highly counter-productive violence against civilians it makes no sense to portray its cadres as part of a political movement. However, history provides clear examples where ideologically driven movements revert to extreme violence against populations they sought to redeem. Keen's explanation (shame and humiliation) skates past Sendero Luminoso or the Khmer Rouge in asserting that 'high violence = no ideology'.

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He accepts that it is a puzzle the RUF persisted throughout the later 1990s, even gaining in strength while being reviled by all parties. His explanation is that various actors found the RUF to be useful. According to one analyst he quotes, 'the RUF is not so much a movement as an environment' (p. 267), and (specifically) one in which a variety of groups could get away with various kinds of bad behaviour. Certainly we can agree that others used the RUF for their own dubious purposes, but it was also a movement, and this should be an equally important part of the answer to Keen's question about endurance. If one thing stands out, it is the need for a thorough study of the RUF as a movement. Most, if not all RUF ex-combatants (and a good number of civilians as well) interviewed by Keen tell a more or less consistent story of grievance in which fragments of ideology make an appearance. These should have been followed up more assiduously.

Shame and humiliation might explain some, perhaps much, of the violence, but it is unclear in Keen's account what the RUF offered to its followers as resources with which to manage and control shame and humiliation. He says little or nothing of what the movement taught its members, for instance. Here we come back to a methodological problem described above – how (in the study of war) to create space for those who fear to speak out (ex-combatants of defeated factions in particular). Keen is well aware of a tendency for post-war discourse to blame the defeated for everything. The book takes an important first and necessary step in addressing this bias by offering a comprehensive description of the conflict, thereby showing that the counter-insurgency forces were responsible for a large number of the atrocities attributed to the RUF, and that these atrocities provoked more violence from the RUF, in particular through the mishandling of rebel captives and suspects. Illustrative is the atrocious attack (6 January 1999) on the country's capital, Freetown – widely blamed on the RUF, but in reality mainly committed by renegade government forces. This is where the value of book truly lies, in challenging some of the self-serving accounts propagated by an international community anxious to claim a success for UN and British intervention. But this draws attention to a contradiction in Keen's underlying theoretical account – if the shame of marginalization accounts for RUF atrocities, how are we to explain the equally grievous atrocities committed by the much more highly respected civil defence forces? Atrocity requires a socially symmetrical explanation, and perhaps one rooted in the logic not of shame but of the 'piacular rite' (sacrifice commissioned in face of danger to the collectivity).

Sierra Leone was initially a small war, and it could have been settled much sooner. Why the war dragged on, and was allowed to get out of control, is partly to be explained by the general ineptitude afflicting international peacekeeping efforts in Africa in the mid-1990s. Here *An African Peace Process: Mandela* by Kristina Bentley and Roger Southall is invaluable in throwing into relief aspects of peace building in Africa during the immediate post-Cold War period. Despite the high risk of mass killing the UN was reluctant (as in Rwanda) to intervene in

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Burundi, probably, as the authors here suggest, because of the limited success of the UN and the USA in enforcing peace in Somalia. The later 1990s was thus the era of 'African solutions to African problems', a notion fostered by a Clinton administration reluctant to sacrifice troops and money on conflicts thought to be pointless barbarisms.

Between 1993 and 1996 an estimated 150,000 people were massacred in Burundi. Preliminary peace talks were held in Arusha in June 1996, but the following month the Tutsi-dominated army reassumed control, and the UN stated that it was not willing to commit troops. Softening embargos was the carrot to lure the government into negotiations over the following two years. South Africa responded to the need for an international peacekeeping force, but its involvement in Burundi should be seen as part of a 'far larger jigsaw of peace it [South Africa] is trying to construct in Central and Eastern Africa' (p. xii) to promote the (economic and political) agenda of its New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). The Arusha negotiations were first headed by the late Julius Nyerere, a strong supporter of all-inclusive talks, although in reality the main participants were UPRONA (the main 'Tutsi' party) and FRODEBU (the main 'Hutu' party). Nyerere died, and the role of mediator in the peace process was assumed by Nelson Mandela in December 1999.

Mandela faced difficulties both from the army, which required to be reformed, and from the international community, which demanded peace as a precondition for providing aid. Mandela used his own South African experience of strategic compromise with the National Party in the negotiation process in Burundi, and thanks to his reputation was able to make the negotiations and subsequent peace accord an international affair. As a consequence he was able to raise the costs to politicians of not committing themselves to peace. He also introduced the notion of 'sufficient consensus' – rather than seeking all-inclusive agreement – to make faster progress. Two rebel factions, the CNDD-FDD and the FNL, did not join the peace talks or sign the Arusha II Accord (August 2000). Their exclusion had its dangers. On the one hand, the non-signing factions found it increasingly difficult to get the support of neighbouring governments. Mandela expected this might push them to the negotiation table. But on the other hand, increasingly isolated, they were more difficult to control and might have reverted to the enclaved and unstable fatalism of the RUF in Sierra Leone. It was only in late 2002 that the two rebel factions eventually signed landmark agreements with the Burundi government, based upon the Arusha II Accord. In October 2003 the CNDD-FDD agreed to implement the ceasefire reached the year before. The FNL remained outside the deal and kept on fighting. Only in early 2004 did it indicate willingness to start negotiating.

The book is valuable not only for tracing the peace process in detail, but also in describing Mandela's key role, without romanticizing it. Clearly the Burundi peace process owes much to the 'Mandela factor'; but it is an open question whether peace processes in other

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countries – where negotiators lack the former South African President's charisma and moral weight – have much to learn from it.

WHAT CAUSES CONTEMPORARY WAR IN AFRICA?

Three books in the present collection are concerned, most clearly, with general, comparative issues concerning the causes of contemporary internal conflicts. None is about Africa exclusively, but all make important contributions to framing our understanding of the causes of African conflicts.

Toby Shelley's short, highly readable book barely mentions Africa in the index. But since Africa is oil-rich, and has a number of conflicts rooted in oil issues (the undeclared insurgency in the Niger Delta being among the most obvious) it is highly relevant to take on board his main arguments about oil security and global strategy. Wealthy countries are highly dependent on oil extracted in poor countries, and use their geopolitical muscle to shape local politics to their advantage. Or, as Shelley puts it, 'the official rhetoric of free and transparent markets ... is rapidly subverted by the quest for control' (p. 105). The major external players prop up neo-traditional regimes capable of granting access to oil, in contradiction to declared belief in fostering democracy across the globe (the Bush/Blair adventure in Iraq, resulting in country-dismembering insurgency, in this light seems a quixotic departure). Oil-rich neo-traditional regimes are able to serve rich-country interests by the control they maintain over local patrimonial distributions, but sometimes play a double game (Saudi support for the spread of Wahhabi Islamic fundamentalism), or prove vulnerable to insurgent groups. Oil pipelines are particularly vulnerable to the attentions of the determined insurgent in the back country.

Much of what Shelley says about oil could be extended to other strategic minerals in which Africa is particularly rich. As Yanacopulos and Hanlon make clear, no one could treat the long-term conflicts in the Congo as 'internal wars'. Almost everything in that tangled imbroglio at the heart of Africa is related to the competing interests of international powers and regional players. If there is a single pre-eminent cause of internal conflict in Africa over the past 40 years, then mineral politics probably fits the bill. Yanacopulos and Hanlon's collection attempts (amazingly successfully, given the intractability and complexity of the topic) to provide an overview of civil wars across the globe in the recent period. Synthesizing data from several sources, they suggest that numbers of internal armed conflicts across the globe rose steadily – from about 10 (*c.* 1950) to about 50 (*c.* 1992) – and have fallen back to about 30 in 2003. Beyond that, there are few agreed facts or interpretations, especially when African wars are considered. Their main generalization is that 'all civil wars have multiple causes' (p. 91). Their multi-authored text is aimed at students and humanitarian practitioners, with a specific objective of injecting some longer-term strategic thought into humanitarian interventions in war zones, based on

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the realization that media-driven assistance sometimes (often? always?) does more harm than good.

Given the rapidity with which the study of internal conflict has grown in the last decade, with powerful and disparate analytical contributions from political science, international relations, sociology, economics and anthropology, the Yanacopulos and Hanlon collection will be valuable to a very wide academic audience. Hanlon contributes the first five chapters, covering definitional issues, intervention, root causes ('tick all of the above'), identity and external factors. He is especially good in summing up the main differences of approach between 'primordialists' and 'constructivists' in regard to the role of ethnic identity, and a long box on Rwanda should be required reading for any Africanist still inclined to believe that 'ethnicity' and 'culture' are somehow distinct from 'class' and 'poverty'.

As indicated, the book is extremely sound on external factors as causes of internal wars, and Africanists will welcome the extensive attention given to cases such as Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and Rwanda. Judy El-Bushra's account of power, agency and identity is also particularly helpful for the light it throws on the different contributions of feminist theory to understanding the role of gender in war. It is especially valuable to have such a clear exposition of the argument that 'patriarchy' (some might say patrimonialism) disempowers both genders among the subaltern classes, and that grasping exactly how patriarchy disempowers and manipulates subaltern men may be one of the keys to protecting women and children, the greatest victims of internal war. Alan Thomas and Jonathan Goodhand provide clear, practically oriented guidance about the development agenda in time of war, and their three chapters will be especially helpful to humanitarian and development agencies working in war zones and in post-war reconstruction. The advice 'don't just do something, stand there' (p. 185) is a major challenge to agencies who rush to rebuild some of the basic causes of conflict. The British aid programme in Sierra Leone might take this lesson to heart, having (in effect) contributed to renovation of a neo-traditional patrimonial order in its eagerness to cover up earlier British-based external interventions over minerals and security (Richards 2004).

The economists brought a distinctive perspective to the study of internal wars from the mid-1990s. The World Bank grabbed the headlines through the work of Paul Collier and others purporting to show that greed not grievance were major drivers of civil war, in Africa especially (Collier 2000). A valuable chapter by Christopher Cramer rescues what is lastingly important about the economic approach (divesting it of neo-liberal posturing, and revealing the political economy heart), while pointing out that Collier and the World Bank almost entirely reversed their positions between around 1998 and a major synthetic report in 2003 (World Bank 2003). The headline writers appear not to have noticed, but even in the World Bank political and social grievances are back on the agenda. We might suspect that the War on Terror served as an important corrective factor!

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The Arnson and Zartman (eds) book – *Rethinking the Economics of War* – covers conflicts in Lebanon, Peru, Sierra Leone, the Congo, Colombia, Angola and Afghanistan. Cynthia Arnson comments that 'it is notable than none of [these] conflicts ... started as a greed-based rebellion. Contrary to Collier's earlier predictions, neither greed nor the existence of lootable, resource-based wealth was an important cause or trigger of conflict. Rather, greed was a product or later stage of wars started for other reasons' (p. 11). Even so, the Collier approach appears to offer levers to policy makers. Malone and Sherman are frank that: 'the ... question for policymakers is therefore how to make peace more profitable than war' (p. 239) The authors identify and discuss various tools such as boycotts, certification of natural resources, and attempts to pinpoint tax evasion and money laundering. But Le Billon, in a chapter on Angola, points to hidden dangers in assuming boycotts work. When UNITA lost access to diamonds, it became predatory over civilians and commercial trade. He concludes that economic sanctions 'cannot impose peace in the short term and may lead to a radicalization of abuses' (p. 139). Chernick concludes a case study of the Colombian conflict by remarking that 'the search for peace will be facilitated when the state and elements of the international community – particularly the United States – recognize the complexity and multiple causes of the conflict and do not hide behind a tempting but misleading analysis of greed' (p. 205).

As noted above, armed conflict is at times no more than an intensification of structural violence present in 'peaceful' society. Picard makes an interesting observation that militia entrepreneurs in Lebanon did not invent a 'war economy'; rather, 'they took advantage of the social institutions of patrimonial domination that traditionally connected the leaders' economic strategies to the logic of their collective identities in the Ottoman period, when power holders struggled to maintain their image of wealth and to ensure its reallocation to diverse social categories in their community' (p. 48). Kennes similarly refuses to consider wartime looting as alien to pre-war Congolese society. He notes that a need–creed–greed sequence is not sequential but cumulative; 'need creates discontent that may lead to conflict; but it always needs a particular configuration of forces and at least political/military entrepreneurs to organize and mobilize this discontent toward subjectively attainable goals' (p. 144). Kandeh likewise queries the idea that diamonds determined war in Sierra Leone. More at issue was what happened to profits from diamonds, and how young men were treated: 'Ultimately, economic agendas rooted in need have less to do with greed than with grievances' (p. 98). Lack of interest in peace by some fighters – Kandeh suggests – was determined less by profits than a fear of reprisals. Newberg, describing the long-term conflict in Afghanistan and the role of the opium poppy, challenges simplistic assumptions. Narcotics flourish whenever the state fails, but equally the drugs trade creates conditions making state failure more likely. Burning poppy fields might 'work when the economy functions', but 'fails in the absence of jobs, credits, investment, food, and security' (p. 230).

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In a final chapter, Zartman revisits the need–creed–greed sequence. He concludes that deprivation and failing states are two contributors to conflict, but it requires a political entrepreneur to build a conflict from pre-conflict conditions, so 'opportunities are only half the explanation (and arguably the smaller half) if no one is motivated to seize them' (p. 261). Certainly, some rebel movements depend heavily on their leaderships. Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path), discussed by Cynthia McClintock, is an example. Sendero was a cohesive movement: 'a virtual cult – whose deity was Guzman' (p. 53). The killing of Jonas Savimbi in Angola equally showed the extent to which UNITA depended upon the single-mindedness of its leader. But it is possible to overdo the argument about leadership. RUF leader Foday Sankoh spent years in detention, far from his cadres in Sierra Leone, and yet the movement held together. Sendero's appeal to its followers was more than Guzman's articulation of their grievances. The movement offered doctrine as well as leadership through its simplified and accessible version of Marxist theory (p. 59). Sendero militants, about to be released or already released after completion of lengthy sentences, apparently wish to reconstruct the organization, and are willing to take part in public works, to apologize for their past violence to peasants. This last example shows one of the major weaknesses of the economic approach to conflict; its inability to grasp collective representations.

This weakness becomes apparent in Murshed and Addison's discussion, in the Yanacopulos and Hanlon collection, of violence and social contract theory from the perspective of economic new institutionalism. For Murshed and Addison peaceful societies are based on social contracts, and in societies at war the social contract has failed. The view is shared by their editors, who assert in a final comment that 'after a bitter civil war, livelihoods and a new social contract must be constructed' (p. 320). Here we encounter the fundamental problem with contract theory, as first diagnosed by Emile Durkheim. Durkheim believed that contract was the basis of all modern civility, but – given the significance of contractual undertakings – demanded to know how social contracts were formed. Murshed and Addison are silent. To them, civil society is contractual society and civil war is a state in which contract has failed, per definition. Durkheim probed further. He dismissed the British contractarians, reserving his greatest scorn for Spencer, the prophet of do-it-yourself participation, on the grounds they had not the slightest idea how a contract for social solidarity might first be forged. What Durkheim realized – as apparent in placing his account of the 'revolutionary effervescence' forming modern French republicanism at the heart of his great book on Australian religion (Durkheim 1995 [1912]) – is that violence may serve to create collective representations as the basis for all further contractual trust. Social contract is a product of war! This is because war is a species of ritual action around which social commitments take shape. Until this possibility is addressed seriously (Rawls 2003) – and the victims of war (in the Freirian manner El-Bushra advocates) are empowered to build upon their war-induced solidarities – we shall continue to witness feeble

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attempts to revive 'working, if fragile, social contracts' (p. 145) as the basis for ineffective and unstable peace.

CONCLUSION

How stands the state of the art? Clearly, recent writings about conflict in Africa have begun to progress beyond the opportunistic (and doctrinaire) 'greed-not-grievance' debate of the late 1990s. But equally clearly gaps and challenges remain, not least in terms of methodology. There seems at present little prospect of effective convergence between qualitative 'close-up' approaches, based on talking mainly to victims, and quantitative analysis 'from afar'. The qualitative approach suffers from sampling problems, nowhere more obviously illustrated than in the lack of sustained analysis of the perspectives of 'stigmatized' combatant groups such as the RUF in Sierra Leone or the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda. Quantitative analysts are too often dependent on distinctly dubious data sets and implausible proxy variables, as Cramer (2006) has forcefully demonstrated. Furthermore, if analysts continue to consider war an unqualified 'bad' and peace a self-evident 'good', then, as Moran (2006) has convincingly argued in relation to Liberia, they will fail to take proper account of the conflict inherently associated with democracy. It would be better, perhaps, to abolish the clear distinction between war and peace, and see war as part and parcel of social change. It then ceases to be a subject apart, and resumes its place within the broader study of social dynamics, liberated from the professional grip of security experts.

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