



BOOK REVIEWS

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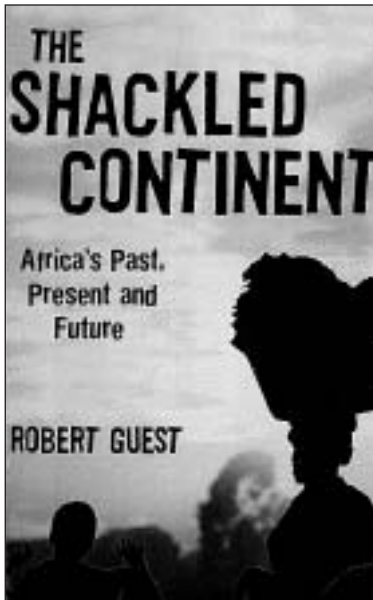
THE SHACKLED CONTINENT

Africa's Past, Present and Future

ROBERT GUEST

Macmillan, 2004

280 pages



SAFM featured Robert Guest on their After Eight Debate on 7 June, to which I listened with great amusement. Callers phoned in with the intent of criticizing Mr. Guest's book and found themselves in agreement, even if they would not admit to it. One man even went so far as to allege that *The Shackled Continent* was written with 'racist overtones'. Thankfully, his nonsense did not bear entertaining, by neither host nor Guest. I do hope the man actually reads the book at some point; it would be worth his while.

Yet before I even opened it, I looked at this book with the same, rather confrontational attitude and looked forward to taking a well-aimed swing at what was sure to be another doom-laden, heart-rending victimology. The title alone worried me: why does Africa always have to be described as Shackled, Dark,

Anarchic, Barbaric and Hopeless? But the book is well researched, and refuses to mince around issues, to follow the recent disturbing trend of pandering to flagrantly corrupt regimes or to entertain nostalgia for the catastrophic ideological experiments of Africa's post-liberation period.

Guest identifies corruption and trade barriers as two of the most important obstacles to African upliftment. He accurately points out the contradictions between anti-globalisation sentiments and the need to remove the trade restrictions that stifle African economic growth. He also describes the problem of African governments obstructing private business initiatives rather than tending to the business of administering and legislating as they are supposed to. These are familiar battle-lines, mismanagement from the inside versus exploitation from without, but Mr. Guest highlights the survivors more so than the slain and points out that small African success stories occur in windows of opportunity opened by good governance and fair markets, on the rare and fleeting occasions where the two exist simultaneously.

Chapter one, "The Vampire State", chapter six "Fair Aid, Free Trade", and chapter seven, "Of Potholes and Grasping Gendarmes", represent the unholy trinity of African poverty, describing the ageing president/patriarch with delusions of immortality; the West's co-existing misguided paternalism and insatiable appetite for natural resources; and the experiences of livelihood in climates where basic infrastructure is negligible and officials dive in to co-opt and micro-manage any new enterprise that gives off the slightest whiff of lucre. Private initiatives end up choked by surreal amounts of red tape and individuals scramble for a living against capricious, underpaid law-enforcers: 'Do you have a gun? No. I have a gun, so I know the rules', says one Cameroonian gendarme to a truck-driver at the umpteenth roadblock of the day.

Corruption is an important theme in this

book, but unlike most talk-shops and policy forums that deal with the subject, Guest shows what it means at the micro-level. He highlights the costs to the individual citizens who must face indifferent government officials and police and in the process, depleting what little resources they have just to “legally” exist, let alone generate enough income to collectively make a difference in the GNP.

Crumbling infrastructure, the twin of corruption, is another significant topic. “The biggest losers from lousy infrastructure are ordinary Cameroonians”, says Guest. Coca-Cola does not suffer alone from the lack of roads through rain forests, it is kept company by small traders of food, agricultural tools and medicines.

Western misperceptions and responses arising from knee-jerk paternalism, he argues, have done Africa more harm than good. Ill-informed and misleading advocacy campaigns against development in rainforests, genetically modified food and globalization, for example, are hurting Africans more than they are protecting them. The underlying suggestion is that perhaps what is needed is some serious, contextualized, cost-benefit analysis in place of emotive campaign discourses and interestingly, a closer look at the motives of first-world trade unions protesting against free trade.

Guest singles out South Africa for special treatment in chapter nine, “Beyond the Rainbow Nation” and rightly so, given its status as one of the few countries in Africa that has managed, since the end of apartheid, to adhere to fiscal policies that are outstanding in relation to those of certain neighbours whose ideas of boosting the economy involve nationalization and printing more money. But his praise for South Africa is tempered by descriptions of the ‘palpable anger’ that seems to drive crime and responses to it, President Thabo Mbeki’s mysterious tolerance of Mugabe’s reign of terror and the reality that the country needs an entrepreneurial class that does not depend on government patronage. Although seemingly less “shackled” than the rest of the continent, one cannot help but fear for a country so burdened with racial baggage—a collective psychic handicap that makes

potholed roads and corrupt policemen seem like child’s play.

I enjoyed this book for its empathy and lack of Eurocentric moralizing. Guest promises a ‘punchy’ read. I was dubious of this in the beginning, wondering what light-hearted approach could possibly be taken to the HIV epidemic. This is, however, an engaging read that does not sensationalize nor trivialize. The style is poignant, which is always more effective than ponderous if the objective is to get the reader to the end of the book without falling into despair, or worse, sleep. It managed to peer appreciatively into the bottomless reserves of patience and pragmatism that rules the lives of ordinary Africans. And unlike the man who called into the radio programme, Guest thankfully eschewed the political crutch/weapon of painting issues black and white.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND VIOLENT CONFLICT

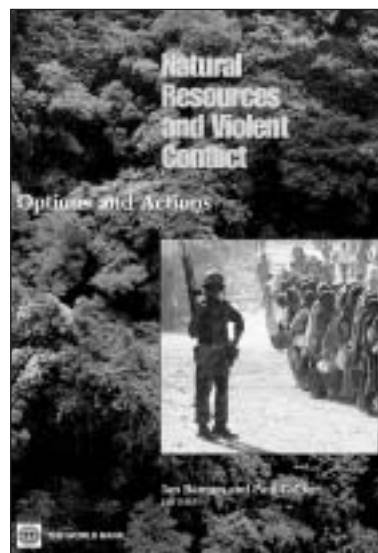
Options and Actions

IAN BANNON & PAUL COLLIER

(EDITORS)

The World Bank, 2003

409 pages



Ian Bannon and Paul Collier are established scholars in the field, and *Natural Resources and Violent Conflict: Options and Actions* is an extension of their previous contributions on the links between resource dependence and conflict. The various papers that are combined in this volume are a product of the World Bank's Governance and Natural Resources Project, which was launched in December 2002. The difference between this study and many previous works, most of which focused on understanding the connections between natural resources and conflict, is the focus of this book on recommendations for action. As Bannon explains in the preface (p x):

While there is much that individual developing countries can do to reduce the risk of conflict—by addressing genuine grievances in their societies, adopting economic and social policies that are more inclusive, and improving transparency and accountability—there is also a need to articulate a convincing and practical agenda for global action.

The volume consists of eight chapters. The first, 'Natural Resources and Conflict: What We Can Do', by the two editors, provides, as one would expect, an introduction to the book as a whole. It reviews the results of work done by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler in recent years on natural resources and conflict, and concludes with a call for global action. This, the authors maintain, should consist of successful development—"the best protection against civil war" (p 8)—and improved governance of natural resources. The latter presents the framework for the subsequent chapters, in which practical recommendations for global action are sought in five areas:

- increasing transparency and improved governance with regard to the revenues obtained from natural resources;
- shutting rebel organizations out of markets by means such as the Kimberley Certification Process Scheme, which makes it more difficult to sell rough diamonds internationally;
- criminalizing the offering of advances to rebel movements for illicitly extracted commodities in exchange for the lender's entitlement to natural resource extraction in the future;

- intensifying the scrutiny of payments from companies to governments, particularly bribes disguised as facilitation payments; and
- persuading reputable companies to establish ventures in risky environments.

The second chapter, 'The Natural Resource Curse: How Wealth Can Make You Poor', by Michael Ross, provides an overview of recent scholarship on the role that natural resources can play in civil wars. He argues that high levels of dependence on a country's natural resources can promote civil war through four types of effects. First, it can harm economic performance (through a reduction in growth and an increase in poverty). Second, it may make governance weaker, more corrupt and less accountable. The reasons are that the sheer volume of resource revenues can overload the capacity of governments to manage and track the revenue flows; interfere with territorial control; undermine the development of mechanisms that can mediate in cases of social conflict; and marginalize the poor even further. Third, it gives people who live in resource-rich regions an economic incentive to form secessionist movements (particularly if an ethnically distinct population bears too many of the costs of resource extraction and enjoys too small a proportion of the benefits). Last, natural resources help to finance rebel movements. The chapter concludes by suggesting a series of global policy measures that could prevent these patterns.

Chapter three, 'Who Gets the Money? Reporting Resource Revenues', is a joint effort by Philip Swanson, Mai Oldgard, and Leiv Lunde. As the title indicates, this contribution examines the reporting of resource revenues that host governments receive from commodities that are legally traded, with a particular focus on oil. The chapter deals with reporting by both host governments and companies, and discusses three groups of initiatives introduced by the International Monetary Fund; the Forest Law Enforcement and Governance ministerial process; and the Caspian Revenue Watch. The authors conclude with three sets of policy recommendations for global action. These cover technical assistance to host governments; conditionality

and co-ordinated home-country reporting rules for international oil companies; and the issuing of credible and estimates of host-country revenues that are open to the public.

The fourth chapter, 'Where Did It Come From? Commodity Tracking Systems', was written by Corene Crossin, Gavin Hayman, and Simon Taylor. It provides an overview of the main elements of a generic commodity control system, subject to five contextual considerations that should be taken into account when applying the system to any commodity-specific tracking regimes. These are: common definitions and reporting requirements; efficient reporting structures and effective information exchange; commodity labelling and audited chain-of-custody arrangements; effective compliance and enforcement measures; and capacity building

'Follow the Money: The Finance of Illicit Resource Extraction', by Jonathon M Winer and Trifin J Roule, comprises the fifth chapter. It first outlines a conceptual framework that enables the reader to understand the financial infrastructure that typically occurs in countries plagued by violent conflict, corruption and poor governance. The authors then provide a series of case studies, which include a series of proposed initiatives to address problems and capacity gaps in the existing regulatory and enforcement capabilities of each country studied. The initiatives are aimed at addressing illicit resource exploitation and the handling of money-flows resulting from trade in these commodities.

In the sixth chapter, international instruments of enforcement relating to the trade of conflict resources are examined. Written by Philippe Le Billon and titled 'Getting It Done: Instruments of Enforcement', this contribution provides an overview of the key international enforcement mechanisms regulating trade in resources used to support conflict. These measures include economic sanctions; judicial and certification instruments; the imposition of conditions on aid; economic supervision; the monitoring of corporate conduct; the advocacy of non-governmental organizations and the media; and various other trans-boundary instruments to oversee resource and environmental management. Le

Billon argues that current international enforcement efforts are both ineffective and insufficient, and concludes with an analysis of the challenges that stand in the way of developing a new, inclusive, global regulatory framework.

John Bray's contribution, 'Attracting Reputable Companies to Risky Environments: Petroleum and Mining Companies', the seventh chapter, deals with the risk factors that influence petroleum and mining companies when they consider investment in a zone of actual or potential conflict. His central argument is that investment by good, entrepreneurial companies can provide part of the solution to the problems of weak, post-conflict states, but that such companies cannot act effectively on their own. Bray concludes with a discussion of the need to engage both so-called Northern 'juniors' and Southern companies in the search for solutions to the problems of poor corporate governance.

The final chapter examines global measures that might be taken to help developing countries to overcome price shocks. The chapter, titled 'Dampening Price Shocks', is written by Patrick Guillaumont and Sylviane Guillaumont Jeanneney. The authors review the reasons why reducing the negative effects of price shocks is a reasonable objective for development co-operation policy, and why previous measures have proven inadequate. Finally, they examine the rationale for introducing international mechanisms to provide insurance or guarantees against price shocks.

In the preface, Bannon makes the compelling argument that is the departure-point for the book as a whole:

The outbreak of violent domestic conflict amounts to a spectacular failure of development – in essence, development in reverse. ... Natural resources are never the sole source of conflict, and they do not make conflict inevitable. But the presence of abundant primary commodities, especially in low-income countries, exacerbates the risks of conflict and, if conflict breaks out, tends to prolong it and makes it harder to resolve. (p ix).

This book is indeed, as the editors announce, "A Call for Global Action" (p 7). Although many of the steps needed to avoid civil wars must come from the governments of developing countries themselves, some measures require concerted global action. The various contributors argue the case for such intervention in their specific spheres of expertise.

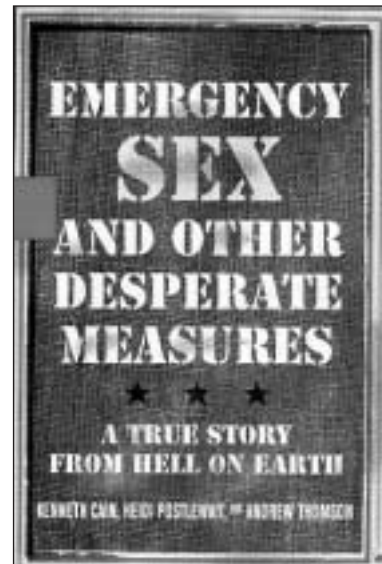
This is not a light read. The book is packed with examples and statistics, drawing on the comprehensive research that the contributors and others have undertaken in this area in recent years. Apart from the use of examples in the main text, a number of chapters (such as that by Swanson et al) also have very informative case studies attached as appendices. A mild criticism of the book as a whole is that the chapter length and the quality of analysis are sometimes uneven.

Global governance is a complex matter. Undoubtedly many of the recommendations offered by the book suffer from the assumption of, or a dependence upon, a global consensus and a desire to improve standards of global governance over the illicit use of resources to fund wars. The accompanying assumption that African states (many of which are afflicted by the scourge of resource dependence, and therefore most at risk of resource exploitation and violent conflict) have the ability to co-operate in what is a massively complex undertaking is equally dangerous. However, despite some unevenness and a degree of overlap between various of the chapters, this book is an invaluable resource for students and policy-makers engaged in working to combat what some have termed "the resource curse".

EMERGENCY SEX AND OTHER DESPERATE MEASURES

A True Story from Hell on Earth
KENNETH CAIN, HEIDI POSTELWAIT &
ANDREW THOMSON

Miramax Books, 2004
320 pages



This book discusses the real-life experiences of three international peacekeepers, two Americans and a New Zealander, through the decade of the 1990s, a time of changing United Nations (UN) peacekeeping mandates and operations. While rewarding experiences are recorded, many skeletons in the UN closet are also revealed.

According to the UN Wire news service,¹ the two authors who are currently employed by UN, Heidi Postlewait and Andrew Thomson, a physician, have been threatened by UN officials with job termination or other disciplinary action. UN rules bar employees from writing about their experiences without approval, which the authors did not have. The third author, Kenneth Cain, a former UN employee, now works full-time as a writer.

This story of the three peacekeepers traces their roles as UN personnel in the field through their experiences in the UN missions in Cambodia, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Rwanda

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and Liberia. Although the book provides political context for the crises in each country, its main goal is to tell the stories of the three authors from very personal perspectives. They explore feelings of idealism, cynicism, complicity, hypocrisy, love, anger, success and failure.

All three begin as idealistic young individuals with grandiose hopes of helping to “keep the peace”, “restore order” and “export democracy”. The book traces their journeys through idealism to cynicism, and their settling in the end for more realistic perspectives.

When describing their moments of cynicism, they admit that even as UN personnel, they often doubt whether the UN is either able or willing to undertake its mandated tasks. Each of the three recounts examples of the frustration accompanying work within the UN structure, describing how internal politics, bureaucratic delays and ambiguous procedures at times resulted in the deaths of peacekeepers or in mission failures. They describe their perceptions of the UN’s frequent lack of rationality in making decisions regarding field missions (including budget allocation); their having to work with under-qualified and at times incompetent personnel; the lack of training for personnel and local staff; and ultimately the larger question of the timing of interventions.

Gender dynamics among peacekeepers, and between peacekeepers and local civilians is a theme explored in some detail. Heidi explores her role as a female civilian in a UN peacekeeping mission. At times she experiences sexual harassment; on other occasion she uses her sexuality as leverage or to obtain information. There is also much discussion of the relationships that develop between members of the local population and the peacekeepers. The authors cite many cases of complicity in the prostitution of the locals by UN personnel. Ken, a UN human rights observer, discusses his frustration of being responsible for reporting human rights abuses in Liberia, where an ECOMOG contingent, rather than UN peacekeepers, had a military presence. He gives an example of a report he wrote to the UN regarding the sexual exploitation of local girls in Liberia aged nine or ten

by Nigerian and Ghanaian ECOMOG peacekeepers. This occurred in a context of conflict, where it is estimated that one in six female civilians in Liberia was raped during the war. Yet, the only power he had as a ‘human rights observer’ was to write up a report to be filed away. The impunity that attended such actions is noted: Ken asserts that not a single prosecution, investigation, UN report or press exposé holds the ECOMOG rapists accountable. For certain UN officials, the preservation of a good political relationship between UN and ECOMOG evidently took precedent over human rights protection of civilians.

The intersection of the many cultures that make up the UN family are presented, including the stereotypical preconceptions, communication difficulties and culture shock experienced by the authors at the start of each peacekeeping mission. In addition, they describe the working relationships between the parallel missions of the United States (US) and the UN in Haiti, Somalia, Bosnia and Liberia. The negotiation of territory, both physical and political, is often marked by tension and lack of co-operation. For example, the role of the US Central Intelligence Agency in Somalia is ever-present. Heidi makes various shocking discoveries, including the realisation that bugs have been planted in her room and that her boyfriend is an informer. Most poignantly, both Heidi and Ken are in Somalia when the infamous Black Hawk Down incident takes place. Their accounts of how the events unfold articulate the turning point from idealism to cynicism for them.

Beyond the discussion of the hard politics related to the UN machine, the most important contribution this book makes for security analysts is the testimony offered through the stories of the local people who have suffered extreme violence, massacre, widespread rape and torture. The stories of civilians and their experiences put a human face on the generalities “victims of war” and “collateral damage”. The human security aspect of conflict and “post-conflict” is a running motif throughout the book. The reader enters the awful conditions of the lock-up prisons in Cambodia, digs through a mass grave in Rwanda, and witnesses a woman in Somalia with mutilated genitals

painfully giving birth. Disturbing as these stories are, however, this provocative and refreshing book drives home the truth that behind the political analyses and situation assessments there are real individuals who have their own stories to tell.

1. UN Wire, New book reveals drug-filled sex parties on UN missions, 27 May 2004, <<http://www.unwire.org?News/32842624320.asp>> (10 May 2004).

TALK OF THE DEVIL

Encounters with Seven Dictators

RICCARDO ORIZIO

Vintage Press, 2004

200 pages



On the face of it, Orizio's book is about the obscure end that most cruel leaders can expect. It serves as a reminder that famous tyrants quickly lose their lustre, and that people who end up doing terrible things seldom begin that way. Orizio quotes the well-known actor, Sir Ian McKellen: "We are all too capable of doing almost anything", and reaches the rather vague and unhelpful conclusion that,

by understanding the tyrants, we might learn to know ourselves better.

The author managed to track down seven ex-dictators in his attempt to answer his main question: "What goes through the mind of someone who has had everything, lost everything and has no time to start again?" The seven he was able to find and interview are Idi Amin Dada (Uganda), Jean-Bedel Bokassa (Central African Republic), Mengistu Haile-Mariam (Ethiopia), General Wojciech Jaruzelzski, (Poland) Enver Hoxha (Albania) and Jean-Claude Duvalier (Haiti). Amin was in Jeddah, Bokassa in Bangui, Mengistu in Harare.

The author's initial intention seems to have been simply to see if he could find them, in the same way that a detective might. The book concerns the seven that he succeeded in tracing, but he certainly seems to have tried to find several others, including Valentine Strasser and Manuel Noriega. Orizio did meet Valentine Strasser (of Sierra Leone) on a street in London, but was refused permission to quote him. Not surprisingly, many of Orizio's subjects seem sensitive about how they are presented. Noriega (of Panama) is adamant that he is not yet a "forgotten individual". He is determined to avoid being lumped with all the others who have, supposedly, lost everything and have no time to start again.

Once the author has met them face to face, he begins to compare the accounts these former leaders give of their histories with the versions recorded by historians. As Orizio tells it, the tyrants all relive the past during their interviews. They are usually extremely polite but often petty, insisting on correcting minor details in ways that do nothing to exonerate their actions. Orizio's tyrants feel bitter about friends and enemies alike, and appear to be obsessed with how they will be judged by history. In fact, most of them seem angry that, despite the bloody consequences of their actions, they have not been recognised for the good that they did, or tried to do.

During the interviews Orizio recounts their history while letting the subjects ramble. Sometimes he simply fills in the parts that they conveniently omit. At other times he presents pocket histories, such as those of

Ethiopia and Uganda in the 1970s, which are helpful to readers not familiar with Amin or Mengistu. Each chapter sets the scene before beginning the question and answer session. Orizio does not set out to interrogate his subjects; instead, he raises the issues and gives them the opportunity to talk, honestly or otherwise.

The author never really gets close to Slobodan Milosevic, but he does pursue other avenues to understand him better. He talks to Dr Mira Markovic ("Mrs Milosevic"), who makes a credible job of explaining the political intrigue in Belgrade. Milosevic might yet prove to Orizio that he is not yet a fallen tyrant. He may never return to the highest office in Serbia, but he remains, by all

accounts, an influential figure in that country's national politics.

Orizio gives the impression of being appalled by the tyrants' behaviour but at the same time fascinated, as an anthropologist might be, by the choices they made. He is also interested in how they have fared since their fall from power. Indeed, he seems quite disappointed that they have ended so badly off. By portraying many of his subjects as sad, laughable figures, Orizio shifts the emphasis away from their bloody deeds, and seems prepared to sympathise with them. But the consequences of their tyranny are still fresh in the minds of many, and it is unlikely that many readers will share Orizio's fellow-feeling.