Preben Kaarsholm (ed), <u>Violence, Political Culture and Development in Africa</u>, James Currey, London, 2006, pp. 224. ISBN: 0 80255 394 2.

It is important from onset to highlight what type of political culture shapes development. The book is well set to investigate in greater detail issues of political culture of violence and development using case studies across Africa. The authors, using different approaches, i.e. history, anthropology and political science, managed to capture issues of political culture, violence and development in Africa.

Section one by Preben Kaarsholm is an excellent introduction to the volume in examining issues of violence, conflicts and development in Africa, particularly in exploring failing states as well as societies depicting collapse. The author began by exploring the state of the continent, offering interesting examples and alluding to reasons for resorting to violence. The author went on to trace the transition to democracy in postcolonial states. He investigated issues of political culture and violence, and how they are linked to development discourse. Of importance, the section offers a wider consultation of literature on African situations as it pertains to issues of political culture and development.

In section two William Reno analysed the place of insurgencies in state collapse. He noted the centrality of 'economic interest in shaping the organisation and guide the behavior of those who participate in conflicts,' p. 25 in Africa. Factors contributing to a rise in conflicts were examined in detail. By dwelling on the Nigerian case study the authors concretized his argument and raised issues. He concluded by examining the patterns of collapsed state violence. Finally noting, ' in the absence of the old Marxists and other reformist or revolutionary models, indigenous social solidarities, and extreme

ethnic chauvism appears to many people to provide a model for reconstructing order and organising collective action amidst chaos'.p.46

Koen Vlassenroot, dwelling on the eastern Congo (Democratic People's Republic of Congo) case studies, presented a sociological perspective on violence and war, central to the author's argument 'the purpose and reasons for conflict are located in those long-term processes that define the conditions of everyday' p.51. The author provided a geographical and historical background to turmoil in eastern Congo and how the region's proximity to Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi contribute to conflict situations. The author examined how issues of exclusion from accessing resources, particularly land, contributed to the conflict. He also went on to analyse the short-term triggers of violent activities. In essence, the author managed to offer an interesting insight into the conflict in the Congo, 'it can be concluded that the Congolese war should not be understood as an irrational, abnormal event or as a breakdown in a particular system, but as a complex of dynamics experiencing the inner logic of the existing local social and political order'p.58, and that 'while marginalisation and exclusion are the main causes for the existence of and enrolment into militias, the bitter result is that militias have helped to reinforce the view that violence is a legitimate strategy of defence or for creating change, as well as a strategy for identity making and of improving an individual's social position' p.65.

In section four, Nigel Eltringhan dealt with the Rwandan genocide. The author began by providing legal background to issues of genocide, and providing the definition of the key concepts. The author's research was largely consultative, consulting all relevant key actors in Rwandan society. Causes and historical dimension of the genocide were alluded to using Roger Smith's five-part typology.

Section five by Douglas H Johnson dwelt on Sudanese case study of Darfur. The author analysed the background to the Darfur conflict. Of importance being, 'Sudan as a nation is constellation of underdeveloped regions and the violence and civil strife that has spread throughout many parts of the country since the early 1980's can be seen as a sequence of interlocking civil'p.93. The author analysed the structure of the Sudanese society ad how it has led to the emergence of militias by making reference of the south issues at stake in

Sudan were clarified. The author informs us that the Darfur crisis did not emerge in 2003 but has historical roots that the author alluded to. In essence, the author concluded, 'The world should not have been surprised by events in Darfur, as they were a construction of events that had unfolded over 21 years elsewhere in Sudan. Having failed to take action in Darfur, they should not be later surprised if these same events ultimately undermine the longed-for southern peace'p.102.

Jocelyn Alexander in section six, dwelling on Matabeleland region of Zimbabwe, examined the legacies of violence. She gave a historical antecedent to violence in Matabeleland's Shangani region i.e. Colonisation, liberation war period and the post war disturbances. The 1990s period dwelt on issues that were at stake within the framework of drought, cleansing and accountability. The period in the new millennium was explored particularly with violence that came with land reform as 2000 and 2002 elections. For Jocelyn Alexander the central issue has remained 'a new chapter of violence has since been written and it has created a new round of buried and counter memories grounded in the past and invoked in the present. The dead of Zimbabwe's violent past remain a potent presence in the politics of the living.p.119.

In chapter seven Alessandro Triulzi takes a reader into commemoration of the past memory of violence in Ethiopia from the days of resistance to colonialism, the days of Haile Selassie to the conflict with Eritrea. The author analysed the commemoration of war events like the battle of Adwa against Italy and the second Adwa against Eritrea, the exposed the legacy of violence in the region that practically experienced the Ethio-Eritrean War. In essence, the author highlighted 'writing history in war will not help reconcile divided memories in the region or the building of the new bridges over a common if troubled past'p.136.

In chapter eight, Preben Kaarsholm took the case study of KwaZulu-Natal's experience with violence. The author offered a clarified definition of violence dwelling case studies from other developing countries. The author analysed the historical precedents to violence in Amooti area. The author drew attention to his experience with research in the

area and managing to identify the identities of people in the area. He rounded of by analysing the culture of violence in KwaZulu Natal.

In section nine Mats Utas, dwelling on Liberian civil war, analyzed issues of war, violence and the media. The historical evolution of civil war was dwelt on citing major actors in the conflict. He went on to analyze the place of the role of the media in the civil war. Special attention was given to video media which were largely used as 'ways of manufacturing war heroes and produce proof of rebel success'p.169. Using the video of Samuel Doe's torture as case study, the issues were illuminated. The author went on to analyze the issue of objectivity and justified cinema noting 'Thus the audience identification with the actor is no longer only mediated by the camera as pointed out by Benjamin but also forms part of lived experience'p.177.

The last section by Paul Richards dealt with Sierra Leone conflict, analysing the relationship between forced labour and the civil war. The author categorically stated that the source of the conflict 'has agrarian roots'p. 181 and noting the linkage between forced labour, violence and war. Using Durkheim approach the exposed the causes and the patterns to the Sierra Leonian conflict. The author clearly enunciated the four distinctive phases in the conflict and how the violence unfolded. The author recommended ' the long term defence against recurrence of this kind of war is to work towards a more open agrarian division of labour, reform of land, marriage and rural justice is required. War is more than violence and the anthropology of new war would benefit from a return to institutional basics'.

On the whole, the book offers insight to anyone who wants to understand how violence formed of political culture is linked to development in Africa. The major strength of the book lies in the wide range of case studies drawn from across Africa.

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