

Hodges, Tony. 2003. Angola: Anatomy of an Oil State Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana. xx + 219 pp + bibliography + index. Paper. Price: Unknown

Hodges opens up the introduction of his book this way:

Angola presents a terrible, shocking paradox. One of the best resource endowments in Africa has been associated not with development and relative prosperity but with years of conflict, economic decline and human misery on a massive scale. Few countries present such a stark contrast between economic potential and the state of their populace (p.1).

The fragmentation of the African ecosystems, and societies is caused by the discoveries of the natural resources on the continent. Yes, the paradox of the continent is: why does a continent so blessed with the abundance of natural resources have some of the world's poorest societies or communities? Much of this book is a field account of the author's research while he lived in Angola between 1996 and 1998. But this volume is a revised version which is necessary as a result of the death of Jonas Savimbi in February of 2002. The interests of the oil companies in the Angolan oil reservoir, the IMF, World Bank and others made it necessary to revise the book and to examine Angola in light of the changes it is undergoing.

For Angola, like many oil rich nations of Africa, it is confronted with dealing with the problem of matters of environmental degradation, human right concern, the consequences of development pivoted on oil revenues, economic and social development issues—especially equity issues and how to work with multinationals so that a win-win atmosphere can be created.

This book attempts to examine the problems confronted by a developing country attempting to predicate its development (economic, infrastructural, educational etc) on petroleum industry. The challenges are enormous.

The author negotiates the delicate path of providing a historical, economic, political, social and cultural explanation for what Angola is undergoing and hopes that there is a lesson for other developing countries of the world but, documents a larger story for Angolians to take to heart as they attempt to resolve their conflicts and embark on a sustainable development course. An excellent book for the laymen and for scholars of politics and development.

Valentine James
Southern University
Baton Rouge, Louisiana