

Sub-Saharan Africa

decades. An additional internal inconsistency is that, despite rejecting America's 'attempt to insert Africa into the War on Terror' (p. 15), Mamdani himself sporadically inserts the war on terror into his analysis of the Darfur conflict, with limited evidence or success. Concurrently, by declaring that because 'the crimes in Darfur are said to be committed by "Arabs"—who have already been successfully demonized by the War on Terror—it has been easy to demonize these crimes as "genocide"' (p. 70, also p. 281), Mamdani does not contextualize the extent to which the war on terror builds on pre-existing processes which have historically constituted both Arabs and Muslims as the Other, only once referring to Orientalism.

While a discourse analysis of representations of and responses to the conflict is clearly necessary on numerous fronts, and while Darfur may indeed be a 'site where the language of genocide has been turned into an instrument' (p. 8, also p. 44), Mamdani fails to trace the linguistic, legal or political genealogies of key concepts or legal terms such as genocide, leading to incorrect assertions being made throughout the text. Too many mistakes pervade the book, including fragmented and belated definitions (Janjaweed; tribe); misspellings (al-Qaddafi, rather than Qadhafi); mistransliterations (e.g. *karama* instead of *karamat*; *wathiqa al-tamlik* instead of *wathiqat al-tamlik*; *kadi* instead of *qadi*); incorrect usage of diacritics (i.e. *al-Mu'tas.im* rather than *al-Mu'tasim*; *sid-al-fas* rather than *sid al-f'as*); and mistranslations from Arabic (*umm* means 'mother', not 'year'—'am; *zulm*—which is incorrectly transcribed as *zulm*—means 'oppression' in general, not 'a repressive government' in particular).

More substantively, while Mamdani correctly notes that to date al-Bashir alone has been indicted for the crime of genocide in Darfur, he does not refer to the warrants issued for the arrest of Ahmed Haroun (the Sudanese Minister of Humanitarian Affairs) and 'Ali Kushayb' (a presumed commander of the Janjaweed), who were each indicted for 51 counts of crimes against humanity and war crimes in 2007. Furthermore, interested readers should note that following the publication of this book, the ICC issued a warrant for the arrest of the URF (United Resistance Movement) rebel Bahr Idriss Abu Garda in May 2009; since then, Abu Garda has not only been indicted on three counts of war crimes, but has subsequently been arrested and is currently awaiting the commencement of his trial in The Hague. Despite the pertinence of many of Mamdani's criticisms apropos the ICC, recent events undermine his claims that no rebels have been indicted by the ICC, empirically contesting his conclusion that 'the "war crimes" attributed to rebel groups ... and thus multiple responsibilities, [have been] expunged from the record' (p. 273).

Despite these and other limitations, *Saviors and survivors* highlights the urgent need to explore the balance, or imbalance, of power and motivations within legal, political and humanitarian institutions and civil society movements alike, while demonstrating the necessity of contextualizing carefully all analyses, including one's own, and of refusing to perpetuate hegemonic regimes of knowledge, which render invisible diverse processes of exploitation, inequality and violence.

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Africa: the politics of suffering and smiling. By Patrick Chabal. London: Zed Books. 2009. 209pp. Index. Pb.: £16.99. ISBN 978 1 84277 909 5.

Written by one of the most prolific scholars of African politics, this is Patrick Chabal's most ambitious and far-reaching attempt to make sense of post-colonial politics in Africa. In order to 'bring back people into politics' (p. xi) he develops an analytical framework 'for the study of some of the most relevant questions about power' (p. x) in post-colonial Africa. Chabal's basic contention is that Africanist political science has failed to grasp the rationality of African politics, or how and why Africans suffer and smile. According to the author, development, dependency, 'indigenous', neo-patrimonial and democratic theories all share an ethnocentric bias and a view of causality that is 'singularly dismissive of actual historical and cultural processes on the ground' (p. 78).

To circumvent these problems, Chabal proposes an alternative approach to local African politics that emphasizes historically and culturally constituted meanings and logics rather than preconceived causalities derived from western theories. Inspired by social anthropology, his book explicates political life in contemporary Africa by dint of an individual's cycle of life. The result is seven chapters

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entitled: the politics of being; of belonging; of believing; of partaking; of striving; of surviving; and of suffering. They serve Chabal as a heuristic matrix to explain how identity, belief systems, state–society relations, economy, human adaptation and violence fashion African politics. Each chapter is further divided into three concepts that are constitutive of the topic at hand. For example, in ‘The politics of partaking’ the author scrutinizes the dynamic interplay between subjugation, clientelism and citizenship in present-day African societies.

Didactical, inspiring and elegantly construed, the seven chapters connect the dots between individual agency, societal norms and institutional politics on the African continent. Impossible to summarize in a few sentences, the book offers the reader a wealth of insights into the popular logics of everyday politics in Africa. Chabal challenges recurrent clichés about African politics such as the corrupt nature of African leaders, the assumption that ethnicity leads to conflict or the supposedly negative dimensions of ‘traditional’ morality. Instead, he draws attention to how reciprocity and social obligations permeate politics and economy, and how liberal democracy and multiparty politics have failed Africans. Rather than considering patrimonial politics anomalous, he suggests ‘that the informal is part and parcel of the formal’ (p. 137) and must be analysed accordingly. In his conclusions Chabal raises a number of interesting questions of concern to students of comparative and African politics whom he challenges to be more specific about their personal and scientific ethos.

Africa: the politics of suffering and smiling is a daring and innovative essay that processes an impressively diverse body of literature. However, Chabal’s unorthodox approach and methodology are likely to cause controversy in the African studies community. First, his reasoning relies more on generalizations than meticulous comparisons. The author portrays African political life as essentially uniform across the continent. He rarely provides empirical or country examples and often ignores variations related to gender, income, urban/rural contexts or types of political regime. Second, although regularly challenging the false dichotomy between tradition and modernity, the book indirectly reifies this dichotomy by frequently using these concepts. Third, some readers will find Chabal’s dismissal of ‘standard political science’ coupled with praise of his own work unnecessarily self-congratulatory. This impression is reinforced by the fact that—with few exceptions—the book does not cite scholarly literature in the text, although a 20-page bibliography is provided at the end.

Despite these caveats *Africa: the politics of suffering and smiling* offers an original approach to African politics from below. Chabal writes eloquently and sheds light on complex social processes without theoretical jargon. His book should not be mistaken as a textbook on African politics; it is suitable primarily for postgraduate students and lecturers who are familiar with the broader academic and policy debates in which this book is situated.

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From genocide to continental war: the ‘Congolese’ conflict and the crisis of contemporary Africa. By Gérard Prunier. London: Hurst. 2009. 529pp. Index. Pb.: £16.50. ISBN 978 1 85065 665 4.

This volume examines the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) that exploded out of Rwanda following its genocide, covering the period from July 1994 to early 2008. Prunier’s position with France’s Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique has enabled him to do continuous interviewing in the region throughout the period covered, and he therefore is able to provide a uniquely detailed and comprehensive account of the war. Anyone who is writing on one of the Congo conflict’s many aspects will want to consult this book. Prunier’s sources are meticulously footnoted and include many interviews he personally conducted with key informants. Unfortunately some of the latter remain confidential for entirely understandable reasons. For the sake of those writing the history of the conflict in the future, one hopes that Prunier has preserved his notes and the identities of his confidential sources and will someday be able to release them to the scholarly community.

As the Congo war grew out of the Rwandan genocide, there are deep differences of opinion between those who cover it. Even more than is usual in historiography, no one can claim to be neutral and wholly objective on these conflicts. Prunier’s early work in the region included a book on the 1994 genocide, *The Rwanda crisis: history of a genocide* (Columbia University Press, 1995), which was seen