

The Economics of Peace and Security Journal

© www.epsjournal.org.uk, ISSN 1749-852X

Book Note

Bøås, Morten and Kevin C. Dunn, eds. 2007. *African Guerrillas: Raging against the Machine*. Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers. x + 275 pp. ISBN 978-1-58826-495-4 (hb), 978-1-58826-471-8 (pb). Price: £14.56.

Reviewed by Bjørn Møller [14 May 2007]

This work is explicitly conceived as a sequel, update, and partial corrective to Christopher Clapham's renowned 1998 anthology on African guerrillas (Oxford: James Currey and Bloomington: Indiana University Press). Clapham distinguished among four broad categories of insurgencies: liberation, separatist, reform, and warlord insurgencies of which the first three had reasonably clear political objectives – i.e., they were motivated by grievances – whereas the fourth had more to do with greed.

As summarized by Bøås and Dunn, the first two – liberation and separatist motives – both have nearly disappeared, the former for the obvious reason that the last remnants of colonialism have vanished. The declining importance of the latter is more surprising. Even though most borders of African states are completely artificial, the general norm of not challenging them seems to have become internalized to the extent that most insurgencies by ethnic or other minorities aim merely for a share of state power or, at most, for regional autonomy without aiming for secession – a development elaborated upon in the chapter by Pierre Englebert. But Englebert, and Øystein Rolandson in his chapter on Sudan, might have considered more carefully in the situation in Sudan where in 2005 the officially non-secessionist Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM) and the government signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement that envisages a referendum in 2011 that is precisely about the secession of southern Sudan (the option apparently favored by most of the SPLM leadership). In the not so distant future, we may thus see a new instance of secession. Likewise, Africa and the international community may have to revise attitudes toward secessionist Somaliland, *de facto* an independent state since 1991. Further, the constitution of Ethiopia in principle allows for secession, if any of its parts take a democratic decision to this effect. And whereas the authors do have a point to highlight the conspicuous absence of secessionist movements in the Congo and elsewhere, they do overstate their point about the disappearance of separatist motives among African guerrillas.

Even though they have not disappeared completely, genuine reform insurgencies have also become rare, the editors say. Most leaders of reform insurgencies have abandoned overt ideological motives, the sincerity of which might retrospectively be questioned as the pledging of allegiance to either Marxism or western democracy was to a large extent motivated by the quest for external support from either the Soviet or the Western bloc.

What remains after the alleged vanishing of liberation, separatist, and reformist insurgencies is what Clapham called warlord insurgencies, i.e., guerrilla wars in which economic motives play an important role and in which the aim is not so much to win as to make the best of an environment created by armed conflict. Resource issues thus feature prominently in most of the case studies contained in the book, e.g., of the wars in Angola, Senegal, Uganda (Lord's Resistance Army versus the government), Liberia (the second round of the civil war, between LURD and Charles Taylor, now as president), Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan (both the North-South and the Darfur conflict), and the immensely complicated war in the DR Congo.

Both the thematic chapters and the various country case studies pay due attention to what has been called “the political economy of civil war” without landing themselves simplistically in either the greed or the grievance camp.

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