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Globalisation, good governance and African recovery

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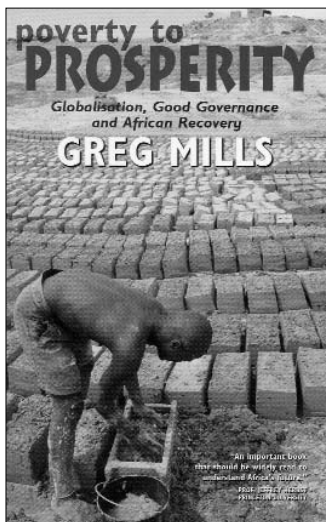
A Southern African perspective

ANTHONY TURTON & ROLAND HENWOOD (Eds)

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POVERTY TO PROSPERITY *Globalisation, good governance and African recovery*

GREG MILLS
Tafelberg, 2002



The title implies a journey and the reader of this volume can expect an interesting one. The sub-title, ‘Globalisation, good governance and African recovery’, is more than a set of over-used terms that regularly send conference audiences to sleep. These are the anchor points to which the author constantly returns and which keep this very broad study within understandable limits.

The introduction sets the tone for the rest of the book. It is full to the brim with quotes, cameos, statistics, summaries, anecdotes and key questions, touching on everything from fire engines to engines of growth. There is something for every reader here and certainly a lot more for those who are familiar with the terrain. The key questions (too many to mention here) that the book hopes to answer are almost all policy-related and the author states that the book is intended, principally, to “have policy ramifications”. It also aims to complement

studies on African state behaviour and international relations, and uses Latin American and Asian experiences as benchmarks, and occasionally for light relief.

A discussion on the theories of globalisation and much of the guff that accompanies them is an irresistible beginning to any book of this sort. Mills discusses the more sensible views as well as some of the slightly zany. Once again, the text is packed full of quoted opinions, many of them irreconcilable, helping readers to negotiate their way, mostly uphill, through the thicket of buzzwords, statistical trends and acronyms that must be endured to gain a clear view of globalisation. The evidence presented is dense enough to be credible and convincing, even if it risks becoming repetitive.

After the woolly issues in chapter one, the narrower focus of the next three chapters is a welcome change. The African condition (‘dearth and disease’) is introduced with the usual seriousness, but bravely avoids being gloomy. Three main challenges are identified: per capita economic contraction, weak or collapsed states, and widespread conflict and instability. Political/historical and economic factors are considered and found relevant, but the main culprits seem to be poverty and conflict. No answers are presented, only alluded to, but the study of state decline and collapse is shown to be most relevant to the search for solutions.

Neither Asia nor Latin-America offers much solace from the rather dire ‘average African state’. Both regions have much to be proud of, as does Africa, but both have learned that neither economic miracles nor strong state leadership are sufficient conditions for improved living conditions. The author presents both the statistics and the stories, often anecdotal, of the successes and failures in these two regions. All options are considered: regionalism, fiscal conservatism, escapism and a good deal

more. The obstacles—corruption, lack of will and unsound policies—are clear. The ‘pillars’, ‘steps’ and ‘templates’ are less clear but immensely interesting. And finally, the lessons for Africa are complex and clearly difficult to implement.

The question mark in the title of chapter five signals a return to uncertain ground. The big picture of global governance is hard to see at the best of times but the events of 11 September 2001 have made things either more clear or more murky, depending on your view. Mills neatly avoids taking sides by arguing that the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington have highlighted “the need for state modernity including democracy and respect for human rights, in order to remove the conditions that foment radicalism”. Returning to the ‘lessons-for-Africa’ chorus, Mills is realistic, “the continent’s failure and inability to manage, act on and reduce perceptions of risk” explains the very low flows of global capital to Africa, and offers the first clear answer: Africa needs more globalisation, not less. The policy implications are considerable.

The discussion on foreign aid and intervention that follows confirms the view that trade, not aid, is the prudent choice. Aid is perhaps unavoidable in a world where electorates often prefer picturesque policies to effective ones. The continued use by protestors at various trade conferences of compelling images and catchy slogans show just why it is unlikely that any real change in the debate will occur. As Mills reminds us, those who really need aid are unable to use it properly. While sounding generally positive about NEPAD, Mills points out its paradox: while all states must unite and agree on NEPAD’s programmes, some must necessarily be excluded if those goals are to be attained.

The conclusion, that there are no quick fixes, is hinted at throughout the book and comes as no surprise. All the issues are ‘interrelated’, ‘complex’ or ‘contested’; simple solutions need not apply. Most interesting is the example of Australia, which seldom receives credit for its remarkable success. Perhaps modesty plays a

part, but Mills makes it clear that the lessons learnt by Australia should be studied since they are genuinely applicable to many parts of Africa: skills development; sound policy; strong national identity; engagement with the regional environment; and positive relations with the US.

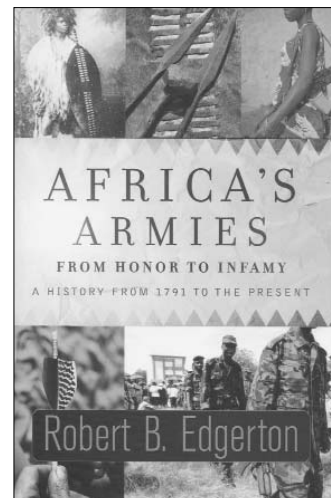
Despite the ‘no quick fixes’ conclusion, Mills cannot resist proposing his own “formula for developing nation success”. The ten requirements of the formula are pertinent and full of important advice. They are only prescriptive where the findings of Mills’ study are clear, and leave much wriggle-room for national idiosyncrasies. The book succeeds by offering answers to the prickly questions that analysts usually avoid and spicing the debate on Africa with much-needed international flavour.

AFRICA’S ARMIES

From honour to infamy, A history from 1791 to the present

ROBERT B EDGERTON

Westview, 2002



This review of African armies offers an interesting history as well as some comments on the future role of armed forces. While certainly not a comprehensive survey, it offers a wide enough view for an understanding of the trends and traditions that have shaped the military forces known today in mainly sub-Saharan Africa. The author’s focus on this

particular region is explained thus: “nowhere in the world have military dictatorships been more widespread or socially destructive than in sub-Saharan Africa.”

The pre-colonial period is described carefully and uses anecdotes and quoted accounts to make general points about groups such as the Pygmies, the Zulus and the Kikuyu. The account uses an anthropological style that emerges throughout the book alongside the historical methodology.

The defining feature of the next phase of African armies was their battle against European powers who, starting in the early 1600s, began to colonise parts of Africa. British battles with the Zulus in Southern Africa and the Kikuyu in East Africa are described. French attempts to seize gold fields and territory in West Africa are also included, as are the accounts of Italian soldiers in the Horn. Thousands lost their lives, on both sides, in battles for sovereignty and honour. Despite the bravery and military skill shown by many African armies, the invading forces generally succeeded in their brutal aims.

After invasion, the colonisers, having set up a fierce sort of government, faced armed rebellions by Africans. Starting with the Maji-Maji rebellion, this book covers ‘Portuguese Africa’, events in Madagascar, the Mau-Mau in Kenya and the crisis in the then-Southern Rhodesia. This contested part of African history is carefully written, and avoids romanticising the violence of the times. The part played by Africans in the two World Wars, though not significant in the greater conflict, was certainly significant to the Africans involved and more could have been included on this.

Political independence brought a new role for African armies. All too often, when political power was contested, civil war resulted. Nigeria, Angola, Mozambique, Senegal, Ethiopia and Eritrea are discussed briefly, and Sudan is examined in some detail. In other states, coups d’etat and counter-coups appeared to lead directly to civil war. African soldiers found themselves fighting to protect the power of whichever leader was in place at the time. Edgerton

notes that “only five of the fifty-four countries in sub-Saharan Africa have not had their governments seized by a military dictator”. Somalia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Togo and Tanzania are the cases chosen in this section.

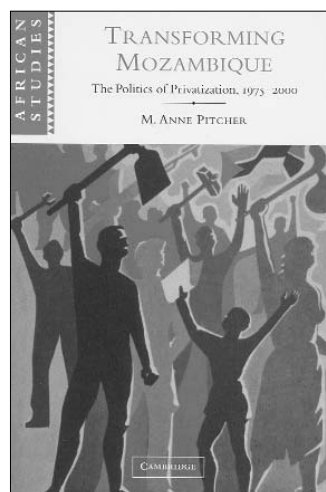
The genocide in Rwanda and Burundi are special cases and form one of the best parts of this book. The author starts with the account of events in Turkey around 1895. The massacre of Armenians at the time helps put the events in Burundi and Rwanda into perspective. Even so, the horror remains fresh and few emerge looking brave or valiant.

The final part of the book is forward looking. The current state of African armies is discussed as well as theories, some more sensible than others, of what can be done to improve them. Some successes are considered but the overall tone is not optimistic. The honour of the past will be difficult to rebuild but, as the author makes clear, it must be attempted.

TRANSFORMING MOZAMBIQUE

*The politics of privatisation,
1975–2000*

M ANNE PITCHER
Cambridge, 2002



The most obvious change in Mozambique, from war to peace, is not the only one to take note of. M Anne Pitcher’s book

Transforming Mozambique helpfully draws attention to the transition from socialism to democracy and capitalism that has occurred in the past 10 to 15 years. Pitcher's study is carefully researched and will provide any scholar of Mozambique with a rich source of argument and analysis.

Much has been written about states, usually those in Eastern Europe, making the change from socialism and central control to a system where the economy responds more to market forces than government diktat. This book's aim is to document Mozambique experience in this regard using a focus on the 'politics of privatisation' to explain the complex relationship between the state and social forces.

The most notable claim by Pritchard is that the transition has not been as revolutionary as is often claimed. The author maintains that "although privatisation has certainly altered the role of state institutions in Mozambique, the process and outcome of privatisation have not eliminated state power, only redirected it".

The conclusions drawn are based on extensive fieldwork since the 1980s. Interviews, household surveys and archival material have all been used to present a true picture of the many different sectors that have shaped the transition. Politicians, businesspeople and farmers have all been canvassed for their opinions and the reasons behind their decisions. The research makes an effort to include research into rural areas and especially those in the north, which are often relatively less easy to research than those communities in the south.

Pritchard addresses the argument that Frelimo might have succeeded had it not been for the external factors that restricted its reach. The climate, oil prices, South African aggression and the Cold War are often cited as reasons for the failure of socialism in Mozambique. The state's vision for the country is examined using its role as either a strict custodian or a more helpful midwife. From 1977 to 1983 the state emphasised the future of socialism and attempted the custodial role. Despite significant erosion of the power of the state

from 1983 to 1990, the existing regime managed to retain its seat in power despite serious shifts in economic policy that gave private enterprise a greater role in projects of national importance.

The 'marriage' between the roles of businesspeople and politicians in Mozambique facilitated the new emphasis on 'emerging markets and investment'. Naturally Renamo played a large role in the massive destruction that necessitated new economic strategies but peace on its own would not have resolved the problems of socialism as implemented by Frelimo.

Pritchard's explanation of privatisation as an "intensely political phenomenon" is excellent reading and has clear policy implications for all groups working to improve the process from offices in Maputo and diplomatic headquarters around the world. 'Unleashing' a market requires the additional help of the same state which conventional wisdom suggests should be less involved, not more.

As the economic 'miracle' in Mozambique continues to be debated, what remains clear is that the state will reinvent itself to suit global requirements. The vision of a better, though not socialist, Mozambique is still used by the state and its supporting elite to justify the choices it makes, especially if these are as profound as those of recent years.

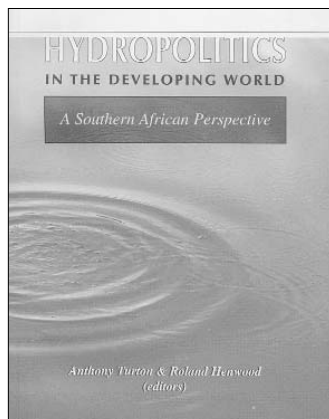
HYDROPOLITICS IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

A Southern African perspective

ANTHONY TURTON &
ROLAND HENWOOD (Eds)
University of Pretoria, 2002

Convincing people that water issues are important is fairly easy. Explaining exactly why, especially to those who make public policy, can be a tough job, especially since it involves all the usual paradoxes and difficult choices.

Hydropolitics—though seldom called that in public debate—is sure to become a more prominent area of study as its importance



becomes more apparent to communities and governments. This volume of essays will guide those unfamiliar with the field toward the real debate that needs to be more widely discussed. As the editors point out, there is a bias towards conflict issues in the general literature. This is to be expected, though the editors do their best to expand the field of study and encourage a wider research agenda.

After the usual conceptual beginning, the discussion turns to theories, of which there is no shortage. Hydrosocial contracts, river basin management and semi-arid regions all make an appearance. The writing is very detailed and is presumably aimed at those who already know the terrain or are prepared to wade through the complex arguments to get what they need.

Almost all essays in the collection help to dispel the myth that the earth faces an unavoidable water crisis where those who don't starve will drown. The truth is usually that water is mismanaged, and that if correct action is taken, no dire consequences need arise. Creating a sense of urgency for that action is more easily done when the facts are dispassionately set out.

As with so many other scarce resources, legal instruments abound. The UN Convention, international water law and the SADC protocol on shared watercourses are the most relevant agreements regulating Southern Africa. The essays seem to suggest

that while much of the documents are helpful, ratification of them by states is no sign that they will be respected. Prudent states will follow sustainable practices whether or not they are enshrined in law. The entrenched interests which often mismanage water resources, are difficult to reform because of the complexity of the issues involved. Sadly, complex legal agreements are not the answer many had hoped.

In the 'key issues' section of this volume, the scope broadens to include HIV/AIDS, foreign policy and social adaptive capacity. Schachtschneider's chapter on tourism's water demand in Namibia is a gem. The details of how the state, tourists and local communities have been forced to reconsider their past practices are told with clarity and understanding. The research is obviously based on good fieldwork which has produced a case study which is concise and easily understandable.

The law of unintended effects is always at work. If the deaths from HIV/AIDS are as high as currently predicted, at least two important issues arise. Long-term planning for water demand is based on population estimates that often do not take into account the effects of changes brought about by AIDS. Also, the ability of communities to pay for water will be seriously affected by a high mortality rate, such as that brought about by AIDS. The loss of skilled workers and a decline in productivity are other effects to consider.

Anthony Turton's attempt to broaden the research agenda is interesting. As the head of a research unit at a university, Turton is presumably all too familiar with the need to balance viable research with new research. Three clusters are proposed: economic, legal and social, the scale and range of which are bluntly emphasised. This first volume is a good addition to any library, and the promised second volume, which aims to add specific case studies, will add to that success.