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*World Politics*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (Jul., 2002), pp. 532-557

Published by: [Cambridge University Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25054202>

Accessed: 15/01/2015 06:31

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## Review Article

# DECIPHERING DISORDER IN AFRICA Is Identity the Key?

By CRAWFORD YOUNG

Stephen Ellis. *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*. New York: New York University Press, 1999, 350 pp.

Ted Robert Gurr. *Peoples versus States: Minorities at Risk in the New Century*. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2000, 399 pp.

Donald L. Horowitz. *The Deadly Ethnic Riot*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001, 588 pp.

Mahmood Mamdani. *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, 364 pp.

Luis Martinez. *The Algerian Civil War, 1990–1998*. Translated by Jonathan Derrick. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000, 265 pp.

### POST-COLD WAR STATE CRISIS IN AFRICA

THE end of the cold war marked the close of an era for Africa. The postcolonial state in the form it took following independence proved unsustainable and was everywhere embattled—hounded into various “structural adjustment” programs by the external donor community and international financial institutions and compelled to democratize by internal protest and outside pressure. Parastatalized economies and patrimonial autocracies faced bankruptcy and political delegitimation, and at the beginning of the 1990s, a continental tide of apparent democratic opening and economic reform briefly raised hopes for an African resurrection.

Democratization indeed registered some genuine successes, displacing more than a dozen erstwhile life presidents, opening space for civil society structures, and in the process generating a large though increas-

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ingly skeptical literature.<sup>1</sup> Economic reform, while unevenly applied and imperfectly tailored to the African circumstance, brought some improvement over the disastrous 1980s—when much of the continent experienced absolute declines in per capita income—but failed to produce robust growth.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, however, the African renaissance stubbornly refused to come. In retrospect, the depth of state crisis in Africa at the close of the cold war was underestimated, as was the magnitude of the political and economic changes required to achieve sustainability—or even survivability—in the more globalized world order. Only the former Soviet orbit faced a comparable gap between “really existing socialism” and the imperatives of a postcommunist world; in many respects, the troubled histories of most East European and post-Soviet successor states since 1989 have closely tracked African patterns.<sup>3</sup>

The unanticipated possibility of the complete disappearance of a governing infrastructure—an outcome revealed as conceivable in Somalia in 1991—demonstrated the embedded costs of state decline and the perils of state reconfiguration. From 1990 to 1997, the formal institutions of a Liberian state clung tenuously to the capital city of Monrovia, artificially sustained by the Nigeria-dominated West African intervention force, ECOMOG. In the last half of the 1990s Sierra Leone barely functioned as a state, and in the final Mobutu years (and the turbulence following his 1997 ouster), the skeleton of a state created only the illusions of rule in Congo-Kinshasa—as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman Cohen observed at the time: “To say that Zaire has a government today would be a gross exaggeration.”<sup>4</sup>

This era of state crisis was accompanied by the appearance of endemic disorder over two large geographic zones: one stretching from the Horn of Africa to the two Congo and Angola, and the other extending from Senegal to Liberia. Civil war was hardly new to postcolonial Africa; liberation wars in the former Portuguese territories and in

<sup>1</sup> Two especially influential works are Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Richard Joseph, ed., *State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> See the skeptical assessments by van de Walle, *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979–1999* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Carol Lancaster, *Aid to Africa: So Much to Do, So Little Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); and Thomas Callaghy and John Ravenhill, eds., *Hemmed In: Responses to Africa's Economic Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> A systematic comparison is undertaken in Mark R. Beissinger and Crawford Young, eds., *Beyond State Crisis? Postcolonial Africa and Post-Soviet Eurasia in Comparative Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Crawford Young, “Zaire: The Anatomy of a Failed State,” in David Birmingham and Phyllis M. Martin, eds., *A History of Central Africa: The Contemporary Years since 1960* (London: Longman, 1998), 97.

the white-dominated territories of southern Africa persisted throughout the cold war, and Angola and Mozambique experienced damaging postcolonial internal wars (partly fueled by South African destabilization policies). Sudanese civil strife simmered throughout the period—save for a decade remission from 1972 to 1983—and Chad experienced repeated episodes of violent instability. Several key instigating factors in these earlier patterns of armed conflict, however, were no longer operative by 1991. With the final triumph over apartheid and Ethiopian abandonment of its Eritrean claims, the epoch of liberation warfare appeared at an end.<sup>5</sup> The great powers lost their competitive motivation to meddle, and South African mischief ended, facilitating an end to the civil war in Mozambique.

Rather than ending, however, civil strife multiplied in the 1990s, forming the two vast, entangled arcs of conflict. More than a quarter of the African community of states were faced with armed insurgency during all or part of this period, and almost as many others were directly engaged in these internal wars, either through peacekeeping operations or via armed support to governments or rebels. In very different ways, the books under review tackle the analytical challenge that this widespread disorder poses. Three of the authors—Steven Ellis, Mahmood Mamdani, and Luis Martinez—examine critical cases of civil conflict, in Liberia, Rwanda, and Algeria, respectively. The other two scholars, Ted Gurr and Donald Horowitz, propose broad comparative frameworks—quantitative and qualitative, respectively—to achieve conceptual purchase over internal violence.

A core problematic taken up by all five volumes is the impact of communal identity—ethnic, racial, or religious. Does identity politics provide the key to deciphering African disorder? The works under review identify patterns of rationality in violence that at times appear to the external world as simply atavistic—along the lines of the “new barbarism” thesis of Robert Kaplan<sup>6</sup> or the “ancient tribal hatreds” expla-

<sup>5</sup> This omits the unresolved status of the former Spanish colony of Western Sahara, whose annexation by Morocco remains contested by the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y Río de Oro (Polisario) in Algeria. Actual combat, however, ceased long ago.

<sup>6</sup> This characterization is borrowed from Paul Richards, *Fighting for the Rainforest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone* (London: International African Institute, 1996). Richards suggests in his introduction that he wrote his book because of his conviction that Kaplan grossly misrepresented the Sierra Leone conflict and then unjustifiably projected his distorted understandings upon a vast canvas. The original Kaplan article did reach an influential audience; at a White House conference on Africa in 1994, President Clinton, Vice President Gore, and Secretary of State Warren Christopher all mentioned that the article had been brought to their attention as indispensable reading; it was also faxed to all American embassies. See Robert D. Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy,” *Atlantic Monthly*, February 1994, 44–76.

nation often presented in the media. The differences in the authors' conceptual premises, methods of inquiry, and conclusions illuminate the daunting complexity of the conflict phenomenon.

The quest for an adequate understanding of the ways in which state crisis and its attendant disorder intersect with communal determinants of political behavior is a crucial challenge for inquiry. Earlier generations of scholarship implicitly assumed a broad linearity to state evolution; "development" implied a progressive strengthening of institutions of rule, disregarding the local fluctuations around the trend line. By the 1980s, however, particularly in Africa, a perception of "state crisis" began to emerge and attract analytical attention.<sup>7</sup> The enthusiasm that accompanied the brief surge of democratization in the early 1990s obscured the portentous omens of complete state collapse in Liberia (1990), Somalia (1991), and other regions such as Georgia, Moldova, and Afghanistan. The first major examination of state collapse, led by William Zartman, retained the premise of stateness as a natural condition only momentarily interrupted.<sup>8</sup>

As the millennium approached, the euphoria unleashed by democratization faded, as other examples of state collapse—Sierra Leone by 1997 and Congo-Kinshasa in 1998—emerged and the two arcs of conflict took form. Many states that neither collapsed nor joined the expanding zones of violence nonetheless experienced a marked deflation in their capacities to exercise rule over their territory. A new "state crisis" literature began to appear, one that assumed that circumscribed governance was not a momentary aberration, but rather an endemic condition.<sup>9</sup>

Some scholars interpreted this newly discovered state weakness as an enduring trait extending back to the precolonial polity<sup>10</sup> or perceived a resurgence of older modes of political practice.<sup>11</sup> Others attributed the striking state deflation to the scope of the hegemonic pretensions of the postcolonial state, which incorporated and expanded the legacy of its colonial predecessor by pushing political monopoly and command

<sup>7</sup> Influential early examples were Naomi Chazan, *An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics: Managing Political Recession* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1982); and Richard Sandbrook and Jonathan Barker, *The Politics of Africa's Economic Stagnation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>8</sup> I. William Zartman, *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1995).

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (Oxford: James Currey, 1999); Richard Joseph, ed., *State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1999); and Beissinger and Young (fn. 3).

<sup>10</sup> Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

economy far beyond the bounds of sustainability.<sup>12</sup> Though these earlier works offer many productive insights, the full implications of prolonged state crisis, especially if accompanied by endemic civil disorder, necessitate further inquiry. Unfortunately, the dangers and difficulty of serious research in conflict zones make fulfillment of this need unlikely; since 1996, political circumstances on the ground in vast stretches of the huge expanse of Congo-Kinshasa have been known only to local populations. It is a particular merit of the Martinez and Ellis studies that careful field inquiry was pursued in risky environments.

Although the basic importance of cultural diversity in the political equation is acknowledged in the state crisis and civil disorder literature, they lack a sustained engagement with the conceptual discourse and debates in the comparative analysis of ethnicity, race, and religion. The identity politics literature, in turn, does not systematically incorporate state incapacity into its analytical vision, focusing instead upon the social pathologies shaping extreme forms of communal mobilization<sup>13</sup> or searching for policy formulas capable of managing cultural diversity.<sup>14</sup> These two bodies of literature fail to identify the analytical connective tissue that joins the phenomenon of sustained state crisis with patterns of mobilized identity politics. The books under review help fill this gap.

The three country-focused studies all take as their point of departure that a process of state weakening is a critical enabling factor preceding internal conflict. In the 1970s, states began to accumulate debt burdens that crippled their capacities by the end of the 1980s. As a result, meeting the legitimation imperative either directly by supply of basic valued services (schools, clinics, roads, safe water) or indirectly through provisioning the channels of patrimonial distribution—once a manageable task—became all but impossible. The real value of public bureaucracy wages sharply declined and strongly demotivated state cadres. A young generation—especially its males—for whom the mystique of anticolonial liberation was now a remote mythology, became available and willing to confront incumbent regimes.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Zaki Ergas, ed., *The African State in Transition* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987); and Crawford Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).

<sup>13</sup> Recent examples include Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001); and Daniel Chirot and Martin E. P. Seligman, eds., *Ethnopolitical Warfare: Causes, Consequences, and Possible Solutions* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, Harvey Glickman, ed., *Ethnic Conflict and Democratization in Africa* (Atlanta: African Studies Association Press, 1995); Donald Rothchild, *Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa: Pressures and Incentives for Cooperation* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1997); and Crawford Young, ed., *The Accommodation of Cultural Diversity: Case-Studies* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999).

## NEW PATTERNS OF CIVIL VIOLENCE

Two critical changes in the international sphere occurred concomitant with the decay of the institutional fabric of governance. First, the international community lost its willingness to commit significant resources of force to preserve states or their rulers, who as cold war clients might well have warranted protection. Ellis persuasively argues that the two thousand United States Marines offshore of Liberia in the summer of 1990 would have intervened in cold war times to preserve a Liberian regime that provided substantial strategic and security services, rather than limiting their role to evacuation of foreigners. Such a force input would certainly have been decisive. After 1989, the disposition for determined extra-African intervention evaporated, illustrated by the Somalia fiasco of 1993, the Rwanda disgrace of 1994,<sup>15</sup> and the French unwillingness to intervene even in Ivory Coast—a country that was the innermost precinct of the francophone *pré carré*—in 1999.

Conversely, within the African universe, the spillover effects of conflict—the “bad neighborhood” syndrome—and a newfound disposition to intervene in nearby states replaced older Organization of African Unity (OAU) doctrines of nonintervention.<sup>16</sup> Tanzania’s invasion of Uganda in 1979 to spearhead dissident forces there was widely criticized in African diplomatic circles at the time, despite the provocation of a prior Ugandan military incursion into Tanzania and the murderous nature of the Idi Amin regime. By the time seven African armies were involved in the Congo-Kinshasa civil war in 1998, however, earlier OAU norms had all but vanished. This new dynamic has nurtured the flow of conflict across borders, multiplied the interests involved in its pursuit, and vastly complicated the search for resolution.

In addition, a number of crucial developments pertaining to tactics, weaponry, manpower, and funding have increased the probability of internal warfare and altered its nature. The 1979 events in Uganda were a prelude to a significant new pattern—the destruction of a regime by insurgents from the rural periphery or a neighboring state. Such events occurred in Chad (1990), Liberia (1990), Ethiopia (1991), Somalia (1991), Rwanda (1994), and both Congo (1997). Unlike a military coup, in which army conspirators take over the state apparatus intact, the seizure of power by periphery insurgents involves dismantling existing security forces. Former soldiers vanish into the countryside, often

<sup>15</sup> On the international dimensions, see the valuable new book by Michael Barnett, *Eyewitness to Genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> See Rothchild, “The Effects of State Crisis on African International Relations and Comparisons with Post-Soviet Eurasia,” in Beissinger and Young (fn. 3).

with weaponry that then can be either concealed or sold on arms black markets. Alternatively, abandoned armories are emptied by civilian warriors, who acquire a dramatically new capacity for local marauding.<sup>17</sup> The common result is the spread of violent militias much better armed than those of the past.

The huge expansion of black markets in weaponry was essential to the expansion of armed conflict. The Ethiopian and Somali armies that dissolved in 1991 were among Africa's largest, well equipped by cold war patrons. Embattled regimes scour the world for additional weaponry, some of which ultimately falls into the hands of insurgents. Some of the most bankrupt states of the former Soviet zones (especially Bulgaria, Ukraine, and Russia), desperate for cash, were willing suppliers from their vast and now largely superfluous stocks; such sales may have originated with the security forces themselves. Furthermore, Western arms merchants, too, were not oblivious to market opportunities.

The disintegration of existing armies provided dissident militias with reservoirs of suddenly unemployed warriors—often possessing no other marketable skill than soldiering. Equally important, former officers became available. Some of them had been schooled in the finest military institutions of France, Britain, and the United States and brought sophisticated warfare knowledge to insurgent groups. Veterans of the guerrilla war against Soviet occupation in Afghanistan were another important source of military skills; the international corps of jihad fighters included a number of Africans, especially Algerians. Although mentioned only in passing by Martinez, “Afghans” played an important role in the Algerian armed insurrection. A Malian officer writes in a military publication that a Tuareg revolt in that nation's northern region in the early 1990s was beyond the capacity of its army to suppress because at the core of the rebel leadership were guerrillas schooled in Afghanistan; negotiation was the only alternative. In the early 1960s, by contrast, a comparable Tuareg uprising—lacking sophisticated leadership, however—was suppressed with great brutality.<sup>18</sup> Ellis (pp. 110–12 and *passim*) documents the important role of Libyan training

<sup>17</sup> On the impact of the huge escalation in armaments in the Karamoja region of northeast Uganda, subsequent to the emptying of the well-stocked Moroto armory by Karimojong warriors in 1979, see Sandra Gray, “A Memory of Loss: Ecological Politics, Local History, and the Evolution of Karimojong Violence,” *Human Organization* 59, no. 4 (2000); and Mustafa Mirzeler and Crawford Young, “Pastoral Politics in the Northeast Periphery of Uganda: AK-47 as Change Agent,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 38 (September 2000). On a parallel dynamic in southern Sudan, see Sharon Elaine Hutchinson and Jok Madut Jok, “Gendered Violence and the Militarization of Ethnicity,” in Richard Werbner, ed., *Postcolonial Subjectivities in Africa* (London: Zed Books, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Kalifa Keita, *Conflict and Conflict Resolution in the Sabel: The Tuareg Insurgency in Mali* (Carlisle, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1998).



camps in providing military instruction to the initial combatants of the dissident militias during the 1980s in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Novel methods of war finance were another development of the 1990s. Older insurgent movements, such as the União Nacional da Independência Total de Angola (UNITA), survived mostly on external assistance from South Africa and the United States before 1990. Thereafter, their war efforts were financed by occupying diamond-rich zones that provided, at their peak value in the mid-1990s, an estimated four billion dollars in revenues between 1993 and 2000. In Liberia, Charles Taylor carved out a lucrative economic realm by seizing the Firestone rubber plantations, creating timber concessions, and marketing Sierra Leone diamonds, thus assuring ample funds for his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) in the early 1990s (pp. 164–70). The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Sierra Leone, in partnership with Taylor, funded its insurgency with diamonds. The armed factions in Congo-Kinshasa also financed their operations with the plunder of diamonds, gold, timber, coffee, and columbite-tantalite (coltan); the main foreign armies backing insurgent militia (Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi), as well as those backing the Kinshasa regime (especially Zimbabwe), were also partners in pillage.<sup>19</sup>

This form of war finance has important consequences for the nature of civil conflict. Motivations to seek local support disappear in favor of the single goal of protecting the resource base. Guerrilla warfare as violent entrepreneurship provides weak incentives for provisioning the civil populations in its zones of operation; the logic of warlord politics comes to the fore.<sup>20</sup> Particularly striking, in sharp contrast to the liberation wars of an earlier generation, is the minimal level of local support that existed for such rebel movements as the RUF, the sundry Liberian factions 1990–97, the two wings of the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie (RCD) in Congo-Kinshasa, or the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in Uganda. However, the combined weight of available finance, sufficient military skills, cross-border sanctuary and support, and an enfeebled state adversary make it possible for such groups to persist over extended periods without popular support.

<sup>19</sup> This gave rise to the influential thesis of World Bank official Paul Collier that greed, not grievance, drives African conflicts; see Collier, "Doing Well Out of War: An Economic Perspective," in Mats Berdal and David Malone, eds., *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agenda in Civil Wars* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

The deliberate and systematic use of child soldiers, particularly prevalent in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Uganda, and both Congo, was yet another novel development. This tactic was first employed systematically in Mozambique in the mid-1980s by Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO), which had difficulty recruiting adult fighters.<sup>21</sup> Agenda-less insurgents of the 1990s were frequently driven to this expedient; in some cases, adolescent males in marginal circumstances willingly joined rebel militias, but in other instances they were forcibly abducted from rural communities—especially in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Uganda. Brutalized, terrorized, and often drugged, the child soldier could prove to be a ruthless killer.

These critical changes in the broader context of violent politics provide an indispensable frame for exploring the manifestations of identity conflict settings that are a theme of the volumes under review. One may note that these new patterns in and of themselves have nothing to do with religion, ethnicity, and race. A host of factors related to opportunity structure, resource possibilities for rebel action, generalized discontents, deteriorated well-being and life chances, and weakened states—among other elements—explain why armed conflict is more prevalent in post-cold war Africa. Cultural pluralism alone is not the prime determinant; countries that have escaped disorder are no less diverse than those in which armed conflict has erupted. In a culturally plural society, however, once armed conflict is interwoven with politics, identity is virtually certain to become part of the larger patterns of confrontation, even though the ways in which communal determinants operate are very diverse.

### CIVIL WAR IN ALGERIA

Martinez is a pseudonym for a scholar of Algerian ancestry residing in France. His richly detailed book is based upon extensive interviews with participants in the Algerian civil war, especially members of the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA). This congeries of local militias, the major actors in armed challenge to the Algerians after the initial phases of warfare, is based in the periphery of Algiers and the nearby Mitidja plain, in some mountainous zones of the Blida Atlas, Ouarsanais, Aures, and in the high plateaus of the Constantine region. His inquiry is influenced by rational choice theory and historical institutionalism, reflected in his core conclusion that “war is, to the protagonists, a virtu-

<sup>21</sup> For more detail, see Margaret Hall and Tom Young, *Confronting Leviathan: Mozambique since Independence* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1997).

ous way of accumulating wealth and prestige and that, in that sense, the consolidation of violence is the result of the opportunities for social advancement which it creates" (p. 245).

Islamism is presented as a discourse with multiple registers, invoked by several different armed formations, of which the two most important were the GIA and the Armée Islamique de Salut (AIS), the armed wing of the political movement Front Islamique de Salut (FIS). For an inner intellectual core, the goal of an integral Islamic state and the commitment to jihad to overthrow a faithless and corrupt regime were powerful ideological motivators. But for much of the rank and file and especially the GIA combatants, Islamism jostled with more worldly interests in social advance.

The deepening discontents of a young urban generation, for whom the national liberation and socialist revolution heritage claimed by the ruling Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) meant little more than sterile slogans, lay at the roots of an explosion of urban rioting in October 1988 that was violently repressed. A badly shaken regime subsequently opened politics to electoral competition and new parties; among these, the FIS emerged as the most potent rival to the FLN. In local elections in 1989, the FIS won a stunning sweep of communal offices, and in parliamentary competition in 1991, it held a commanding lead in the first round and seemed headed for triumph until the army intervened in January 1992 to avert an Islamist victory. Civil war broke out shortly thereafter, taking by official estimate one hundred thousand lives, and continuing at low intensity to this day.

In the Martinez analysis Islam figures more as an idiom of protest than as an irrepressible surge of religiosity. The three million FIS votes were not necessarily endorsements of Islamism, nor were the thousands who enlisted as guerrilla fighters beginning in 1992 all motivated by jihadism. For the important private trading sector in the Algiers periphery, where the FIS was strong, frustration was high over the innumerable impediments to their mercantile activity—a legacy of the vigorous efforts to impose socialist orientation in the Boumedienne years (1965–78). The large cohort of urban youth educated in the Arabic stream, facing limited access to the public bureaucracy, perceived Islamism as ensuring an Arabization that would open the doors to their social ascent. The numerous unemployed young men were readily available for protest.

The initial uprising came at a moment of extreme conjunctural weakness for the regime. The 1980s had been a decade of stagnation and escalating debt; by 1992 the debt reached \$26 billion, requiring \$8

billion of the \$12 billion state revenue to service (pp. 92–93). The fiscal crisis severely constrained the capacity of the regime to respond militarily to the challenge of an Islamist uprising; many, especially among FIS followers, believed that the collapse of the government was imminent. Its salvation, Martinez argues, came from a surprising source—the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The structural adjustment program the IMF provided the government in 1993 brought debt relief and, by 1995, the resources necessary to redouble army counterinsurgency capacities, to greatly enlarge its ranks, and to construct a repressive network that first contained then gradually circumscribed the Islamist guerrillas, mostly limiting them to a few mountain and high plateau zones. In 1999, the AIS abandoned armed combat and accepted an amnesty for its six thousand fighters; the GIA and a more extreme breakaway splinter—the Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat (GSPC)—maintain sporadic activity. In February 2002, GIA leader Antar Zouabri was killed by the army, further weakening the rebel combatants still at large, believed to number between fifteen hundred and three thousand.<sup>22</sup>

According to Martinez, no generalized “Islamist imaginary” conceiving a “City of Virtue” ruled by a literal application of Islamic precepts drives the insurgents. Rather, the mosaic of conflict must be understood as being defined by the elemental *assibiya* solidarities of kinship, clan, and local community. Arms and fighters are inserted into this equation both by the army, which creates auxiliary units and village self-defense forces, and the GIA, whose bands integrate themselves into other local communal groups. The GIA unit leaders—the “emirs”—rather than being religiously driven jihadists, are the natural heirs to a lineage of political bandits stretching back to the corsairs of Ottoman times, the caids serving the colonial state, and the colonels of the Algerian revolution who became postwar local bosses.

Neither Zouabri nor preceding GIA leaders had much education, theological or other. At first, there was some targeting of victims—those seen as cultural apostates, such as intellectuals or journalists, or the local police or army conscripts and their families serving the regime. Initially, as Martinez shows, the GIA bands had some real support in some periurban communes; local traders at first willingly financed their operations. But as GIA assassinations became more

<sup>22</sup> Cherif Ouazani, “GIA: échec et mat,” *Jeune Afrique* 2145, February 18–24, 2002, 33–35. Zouabri, the sixth supreme commander of the GIA, had declared himself “national emir” in 1996, becoming by far the longest surviving nominal head of this loose-knit grouping. A former drug dealer of slender education and minimal theological knowledge, Zouabri had declared that any Algerian who failed to take up arms to install an Islamic republic was an apostate.

indiscriminate, and as security force repression became more effective, support diminished and finance came through extortion and criminal activity (such as the drug trade and stolen cars).

Martinez's many interviews with GIA cadres, particularly those of the Algiers periurban periphery, provide much tantalizing evidence in support of his thesis. Yet there is something a little unsettling about this instrumentalized reading of religion and conflict—it lacks the affective dimension so central to the Horowitz analysis. The extraordinary levels of violence on the part of the GIA in particular—massacres of entire rural communities—are difficult to understand as merely calculated action, however primitive the theological orientation of the GIA might be.

Martinez's study also lacks a detailed exegesis of FIS ideology. Though the FIS's electoral support can be easily attributed to the discredit that had enveloped the FLN regime, as well as to its Islamic message, FIS leaders were religious activists. The AIS militia, as Martinez points out, attracted more religiously informed recruits than the GIA, and generally refrained from attacking civilian targets. The FIS elite was in touch with currents of radical Islamic thought more broadly, but he does not examine its theological orientation and internal debates.

Furthermore, Martinez does not include any treatment of the ethnic axis of dissidence—the Kabyl question. Kabylia was much less attracted to Islamism than to the arabophone parts of Algeria, perhaps in part because of Islamism's association with radical Arabization. The cultural demands of Kabyl movements for greater recognition of Berber language and heritage, however, have been an important element in Algerian identity politics for more than two decades.

The elements absent in the analysis are suggestive of the limits of a rational choice approach to identity issues. Martinez himself never uses this phrase, nor does he cite its canonical texts, but this characterization of his approach does appear in John Entelis's introduction and of course is implicit throughout in the content of the analysis. The interests are well captured, but not the passions. Participants in Algeria's civil war had a diversity of motives—the transcendent obligations of religious belief were the decisive factor for a minority. For others, however, an abiding fear of the unknowable threats posed by an Islamist order gave reason to back the regime as a lesser evil. The ferocity of the violence and the emotions it unleashed engendered reactions not reducible to the calculus of advantage.

Regardless of its shortcomings, the Martinez book is still an admirable contribution, conceptually sensitive and empirically grounded. It is also a courageous book; the research on which it is based is both

difficult and dangerous. The volume is indispensable for an understanding of the tormented politics of the 1990s in Algeria.

When one compares the Algerian case with other instances of disorder in Africa in the 1990s, the relative strength of the state stands out (to a lesser degree, this was also true of Rwanda). Although the regime was badly weakened when the civil war broke out, there was no military or administrative discontinuity; only for a brief moment in 1992 was its survival in question. Unlike many of its sub-Saharan counterparts, Algeria was able to turn “structural adjustment” to its advantage and successfully repudiate its earlier commitment to socialist orientation. Algeria’s substantial oil resources provided a revenue base sufficient to reshape and enlarge its security forces to cope with GIA, AIS, and other Islamist militias. Ironically, the depredations of al-Qaeda may be the final blow to the Islamist revolt, as Algeria can now count upon extradition of fugitive leaders of the uprising, as well as an end to Western criticism of the human rights violations it committed in its repressive campaign. These developments will undoubtedly further isolate the few remaining insurgent bands.

Ellis’s monograph on the devastating Liberian disorder is equally compelling. The author, the longtime editor of the invaluable resource *Africa Confidential*, relies upon a variety of sources—extensive interviews conducted in Liberia, remaining Liberian archives, Liberian press coverage, information derived from several visits to Liberia on Amnesty International teams, as well as an abundant secondary literature. Part of the study is in reportorial mode, providing an incisive anatomy of the Liberian civil wars from the time of the Charles Taylor–led National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) invasion from Ivory Coast in December 1989 through Taylor’s election as president in 1997, which at the time seemed to provide a coda for armed conflict in a country traumatized and prostrate from the years of violence. (By 2002, however, the war had reignited with fragments of former militias, and the destructive uncertainties of the 1990s appeared to return.) Ellis then turns to unravel the complex causal mechanisms, which might explain the forms of violence, the nature of fragmentation of rebel forces, and the bizarre aspects of insurgent combat dress and ritual practices.

The history of the Liberian state set the context for the 1990s disorder. In its 1847 origins, the Liberian offspring of the American Colonization Society was no more than a few coastal settlements precariously held by descendants of freed slaves returned from North America or by others intercepted by the British Navy and deposited

there. French and British colonial occupation of neighboring areas in the late nineteenth century necessitated gaining a hold on the interior to protect Liberian claims. An army was created for this purpose, and a mode of hinterland administration inspired by European models of indirect rule followed. After 1940, rents collected from the Firestone plantation and later from iron mines permitted a remolding of Liberia inspired by emergent African models—there was a single party, cemented by patrimonial practices, and a nation-building state ideology seeking to incorporate the hinterland populations into a “national” society dominated by the settlers. Expanding fiscal resources permitted the elaboration of what once appeared as a developmental state, with some infrastructure investment and an extensive patrimonial network emanating from the presidency. By the end of the 1970s, however, this pattern of state building had outstripped its fiscal possibilities, and the system reached an impasse, leading to a 1980 military coup led by an army sergeant of hinterland origins, Samuel Doe.

Although Doe took Liberia beyond its historical role as an Americo-Liberian small minority atop an indigenous mass, his rule continued the downward spiral that had begun in the late 1970s. A new element of violence was introduced with the macabre execution of thirteen leading members of the former William Tolbert regime on the Monrovia beach. Among the victims was a son of the assassinated president Tolbert, whose wife was a goddaughter of the late Ivory Coast ruler, Felix Houphouët-Boigny. This transgression was never forgiven, and Ivory Coast eventually took its revenge through support for the Taylor NPFL invasion. Another novel refrain in Liberian politics, dating back to the 1970s, was the emergence of a radical intelligentsia with revolutionary imagination; some of them found encouragement and eventually military training in Libya. Despite deepening corruption, a grossly rigged election in 1985, and a negative human rights report card, Doe's regime was able to rely upon American backing—proportionately more than any other African state—until the fall of Berlin Wall, in return for key cold war communications and intelligence facilities (p. 63). Increasingly, this aid supplanted internal revenue as the regime's lifeline, making it yet another factor in the Doe's swift collapse when the NPFL invasion coincided with the new strategic expendability of Liberia.

Ellis provides a subtle and persuasive reading of the identity dimension of the Liberian civil war. Ethnic crosscurrents were evident in the multiplication of militias that followed the NPFL invasion and continued throughout the conflict. Doe, increasingly insecure, had deployed

an ethnic security map in military recruitment, and his army was viewed as being dominated by Krahn from his home region.<sup>23</sup> The NPFL invaders, by contrast, were initially perceived as predominantly Gio; Taylor was of Americo-Liberian descent in paternal lineage, but of Gio ancestry through his mother. Ellis, however, identifies the limits of an ethnic reading, pointing out that “members of the sixteen or more identifiable dialects which constitute the Krahn people could hardly understand each others’ dialects, which says much about the inaccuracy of the use of the word Krahn as an ethnic category. In the Doe home area near the Ivory Coast frontier, the ethnonym Krahn is rarely heard; it is, however, employed in Monrovia, and widely used by Liberians and others in characterizing conflict” (pp. 32–33).

Ethnic categories were thus in a process of construction, and the introduction of violence undoubtedly served as an accelerator. The Doe army, in its initial reaction to the entry of the Taylor force, launched indiscriminate retaliatory action against the Gio and neighboring Mano (ethnic labels of comparable ambiguity), thereby ensuring a flow of new recruits to the NPFL. In turn, as the Taylor force headed for Monrovia, those it identified as “Krahn” discovered in their path became targets.

The concept of the “outsider,” one who lacks the authenticity of indigenous rooting in his or her country, has become increasingly important in the discourse of ethnicity in the decade of disorder, representing a central issue in Congo-Kinshasa, Uganda, and to some extent Rwanda. In Liberia, two key groups have origins that have compelled others to contest the legitimacy of their status. The Americo-Liberian descendants of repatriated former slaves long claimed superior standing as bearers of Christian enlightenment and Western civilization to Africa; such pretensions became dangerous after the Doe coup, as his claim to legitimacy rested heavily upon the boast that he rescued indigenous Liberians from Americo-Liberian oppression. The other group under challenge is the Mandingo—Muslims of celebrated mercantile skill who are widely dispersed in West Africa. As Ellis notes, “Many Liberians persist in regarding Mandingo as outsiders, people who do not belong in Liberia even when they have lived there for generations” (p. 39). As Doe’s support base shrank, he increasingly appointed Mandingo to office, and in 1986 officially recognized them as an authentic Liberian ethnic group, “to the outrage of the many Liberians who generally regarded them as foreigners” (p. 61). This antipathy rendered the Mandingo vulnerable to NPFL massacres; in turn, a leading

<sup>23</sup>This useful notion comes from Cynthia Enloe, *Ethnic Soldiers: State Sovereignty in Divided Societies* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980).



Mandingo—Alhaji Kromah—emerged as leader of one of the multiple insurgent fragments, the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO-K).

Ethnicity was thus one element in the language of conflict. In the shifting kaleidoscope of factional alignments and warfare, ethnicity played a part in defining social choices and categorizing targets of violence. The portrait of the civil war sketched by Ellis, however, is compelling in demonstrating that combat was *not* primarily motivated by ethnic agendas; power was the key object, and resource control its currency.

Religion is also central to the Ellis interpretation of the Liberian conflict, although not as theology or identity. Religious orientation of indigenous origin is instead examined as a source of understanding of the rituals and symbols through which violence was performed. African religion, often coexisting with Christianity or Islam, is a crucial element in political culture, through which the melodrama of civil war is refracted. Michael Schatzberg makes a powerful case for the Ellis approach:

Most middle Africans understand that “politics” and “religion” are parts of the same terrain, that power flows between the visible material world and the invisible spiritual world, and that the political kingdom contains a politically significant spiritual terrain.<sup>24</sup>

The supernatural entanglement with violent politics provides a means of decoding some puzzling aspects of the Liberian civil war such as the invocation of ritual protections of young warriors to ensure their invulnerability to bullets (a practice found in many African rebellions); the consumption of vital organs of victims for the power it might confer; and the bizarre apparel of some young warriors (for example, wedding gowns and women’s wigs). The striking syncretism of militia practices was exemplified by the combination of outlandish dress with military titles inspired by Hollywood action films: Rambo, Sylvester Stallone, James Bond. Martinez reports a similar fascination of GIA recruits with actors of theatrical violence such as Arnold Schwarzenegger and Bruce Lee (p. 99). Very similar phenomena were also observed in the LRA in Uganda; like some Liberian warriors, their leader, Joseph Kony, was a cross-dresser.<sup>25</sup>

Ellis’s monograph is an invaluable guide to the Liberian civil war. His combination of carefully documented political history with an in-

<sup>24</sup>Michael G. Schatzberg, *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa: Father, Family, Food* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 74.

<sup>25</sup>Heike Behrend, “Is Alice Lakwena a Witch? The Holy Spirit Movement and Its Fight against Evil in the North,” in Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle, eds., *Changing Uganda: The Dilemmas of Structural Adjustment and Revolutionary Change* (London: James Currey, 1991).

terpretive frame for that nation's political culture provides an authoritative reading of the conflict. The identity aspect of the complex, factionalized struggle is effectively contextualized, and the necessity of a constructivist reading of the ethnic factor is made clear.

### EXPLAINING THE RWANDA GENOCIDE

Mahmood Mamdani is a highly respected African scholar of Ugandan origin, recently transplanted to Columbia University. His inquest into the Rwandan genocide is a venture, as he stresses, into new terrain; though he was brought up not far from the Rwandan border, he had only passed through the country once, at the age of four. His engagement with Rwanda began only after the genocide; the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the excellent pan-African research center based in Dakar, undertook a collaborative African inquiry into the sources of the catastrophe. Subsequently, in 1997, he went on a CODESRIA mission of inquiry into the violence in eastern Congo-Kinshasa, accompanied by Jacques Depelchin, a radical Congolese intellectual subsequently associated for a time with the rebel *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (RCD).

Other reviewers have castigated Mamdani for his intemperate attack on "area studies," based upon a fatuous caricature of this enterprise. In fact, however, he relies heavily upon the seminal works written by numerous scholars trained in this tradition, such as Rene Lemarchand, Catharine Newbury, David Newbury, Alison des Forges, and others; without their work, his book could not have been written. The allegedly atheoretical nature of area studies serves as foil for Mamdani's claim to supply a master theorization of the Rwandan genocide that offers both a means of understanding and a prescription for exorcising the demons of mass ethnic killing and retribution. Given the depth of the passions, fears, and antipathies unleashed by the genocide, this is no small ambition.

Mamdani naturally brings to his project the analytical frame established for his prize-winning 1996 book, *Citizen and Subject*.<sup>26</sup> The core of his thesis is that colonial rule in Africa had as its legacy a bifurcated state; most Africans were "containerized" within the indirect rule apparatus of "native administration" that operated as a mode of "decentralized despotism" and was based upon a tribal metaphor of rural society. The postcolonial state deracialized the subject, but its despotic heritage remained. The *Citizen and Subject* model, heavily based upon East

<sup>26</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

African and South African evidence, as well as the British colonial experience, both obscures and illuminates when imported into the very different context of Rwanda.

The key question of the book—how genocide became “thinkable” for the large numbers of Hutu who participated—is answered through an extensive and often astute reading of the colonial and postcolonial history; the events of the genocide itself receive only a few pages. In perhaps the most valuable part of the book, Mamdani situates his analysis in a regional context, demonstrating the interpenetration of identity conflicts in Uganda and Congo-Kinshasa with the Rwandan events.

There is much to commend the Mamdani argument that the ethnic categories in Rwanda should be understood as “*political* identities that changed with the changing nature of the Rwandan state” (p. 73). The kingdom, believed to have originated at the end of the seventeenth century, became increasingly militarized and centralized, violently extending its rule over long-established cultivating and pastoral populations in the region. The most compelling explanation of the origins of the ethnic categories is provided by Jan Vansina; the ethnonym “Tutsi,” which by the early nineteenth century was in use by a court elite, became by extension a label applying to all warriors serving the king as militarism developed, and was subsequently attached to cattle owners more generally. “Hutu” was originally a term of disdain, applied to court servants; during the decades preceding colonial rule, it became generally applied to subject agricultural populations, who continued to have important regional and local identities.<sup>27</sup> Although the insistence on the purely political nature of Hutu and Tutsi identities may elide some cultural dimensions of ethnic evolution, Mamdani is on firm ground in privileging a constructivist reading and the central role of the precolonial and colonial states.

During the colonial regime, ethnic difference was codified and systematized, particularly during the Belgian period, when chieftaincy became a Tutsi monopoly. The colonial state, he argues, adds a lethal second categorization of difference by overlaying a racial theory to the Tutsi-Hutu distinction through the application of the now-discredited “Hamitic” myth. The Tutsi, by this doctrine, were a racially distinct set of immigrant conquerors originating in Ethiopia, and were physically, intellectually, and culturally superior to the Hutu mass. Racialization,

<sup>27</sup> See the authoritative new study by Jan Vansina, *Le Rwanda ancien: Le royaume nyiginya* (Paris: Karthala, 2001). Vansina provides a compelling refutation of the thesis that “Tutsi” originate as an immigrant group of conquerors that subdued and subjugated the existing populace in relatively recent historical time. See also David Newbury, “Precolonial Burundi and Rwanda: Local Loyalties, Regional Royalties,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 34, no. 2 (2001).

Mamdani adds, was central to the genocide; mere ethnicity did not supply the metaphors of difference making mass killing “thinkable.”

The catalog of “deadly ethnic riots” provided by Horowitz casts doubt on the thesis that racialization is a prerequisite for genocidal outbursts. Nonetheless, many Tutsi elites in colonial times found the theory of their racial superiority appealing. After independence, and especially as appeals to hatred multiplied in the early 1990s, Hutu extremists latched onto the doctrine of racialization, inverting the message to justify a murderous assault upon those considered to be a race of oppressors who had entered as alien conquerors.

There is certainly merit in distinguishing between ethnicity and race as forms of identity. They draw upon different discourses and historical narratives and conceive of “the other” in divergent ways. Race as historically constituted is tightly joined to notions of a hierarchy of status and worth, and is intimately linked to racism, which has no analog in ethnicity. However, the concept of racialization as used by Mamdani has problematic aspects, particularly his effort to join Rwandan Tutsi and Ugandan Asians in a single category, that of “settlers” of an intermediate racial category subject to the white colonial rulers but superior to the indigenous mass. Furthermore, there is some question as to how deeply the “Hamitic myth” notions of Tutsi as a racial caste had penetrated the rural Hutu mass. Mamdani does argue that in the relatively prosperous years of the “second republic” under Juvenal Habyarimana from 1973 until the late 1980s, Tutsi within the country became ethnized as a minority accorded some economic space and subordinate participation, rather than as a race of former oppressors. The 1990 invasion from Uganda of the Tutsi Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), however, launched a civil war in which escalating mutual fears and animosities established a polarizing dynamic, reviving the racial theses. One should doubt, however, whether the 1994 holocaust was essentially a “racial” cleansing, “a genocide by those who saw themselves as sons—and daughters—of the soil, and their mission as one of clearing the soil of a threatening *alien* presence” (p. 14); the atrocities were more likely the result of a raw and violent struggle for political control—with claims expressed in the language of ethnic conflict.

The Mamdani analysis acknowledges but understates the importance of regional variations and individual response. From the precolonial era onward, relations between Hutu and Tutsi varied substantially by region; the hierarchy was most marked in the central core of the historical monarchy. The 1973 coup ousting Gregoire Kayibanda transferred power from Hutu elites of the south to those of the northwest,

and regional factors operated importantly in defining alignments in the brief multiparty period of the early 1990s. The radicalization of the identity characteristic of the Tutsi diaspora—strangers everywhere—contrasted with a more accommodative perspective of those remaining within Rwanda. Furthermore, even in polarized contexts, identity categories refer to collectivities, but ethnicity is ultimately experienced, performed, and enacted by individuals who have a range of choice. These factors are important to recall when seeking an understanding of the complexity of a drama apparently so starkly simple as a genocide; not only were there Hutu moderates targeted by the “Hutu power” perpetrators, but there were also many others who found ways *not* to participate in spite of the overwhelming situational pressures to do so.

More than most of the now numerous works on the genocide, Mamdani’s monograph persuasively stresses the African regional dimension; the presence of important communities of Rwandan origin in Uganda and Congo-Kinshasa produced an interactive dynamic of conflict that continues to this day. Also crucial, but mentioned only in passing by Mamdani, was the parallel Tutsi-Hutu crucible in neighboring Burundi—scene to a massacre of genocidal proportions of Hutu in 1972, smaller but serious ethnic killings in 1988, and then a wave of ethnic violence beginning in October 1993 when newly elected president Melchior Ndadaye of the Hutu-dominated opposition movement *Front pour la Démocratie au Burundi* (FRODEBU) was assassinated by a Tutsi clique in the army. The initial violence developed into an ongoing civil war, whose victims may number one hundred thousand. In its immediate aftermath, some three hundred thousand Hutu fled Burundi, mostly to Rwanda; these traumatic events fed Rwandan Hutu fears of an armed Tutsi triumph in Rwanda.<sup>28</sup>

The Uganda chapter, where Mamdani is on home ground, shows how the status insecurities of a diasporic Tutsi community explain the origins of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). Most of the Tutsi exile community in Uganda expected to remain permanently, but their status was periodically challenged, indeed violently so in 1982–83 by party youth wing thugs encouraged by President Obote. Even though a quarter of the guerrilla fighters of Yoweri Museveni were Rwandan Tutsi, they found their legitimacy as Ugandans again challenged in the late 1980s, and accordingly, many of them formed the core of the RPF. Curiously, the larger number of Hutu migrants to Uganda, many of whom arrived as early as the 1920s, were not subject to aggressive challenge, a

<sup>28</sup> On the importance of the Burundi factor, see Gerard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 198–206.

puzzle not addressed by Mamdani; in the 1950s, 40 percent of the Buganda population were immigrants, mostly Rwandan Hutu.<sup>29</sup>

The chapter devoted to spillover effects on Congo-Kinshasa, essentially based on his brief field inquiry, ably demonstrates how mass ethnic killings reverberate regionally and enter discourses of identity conflict in surrounding countries. The civil wars in the African Great Lakes regions have now become inextricably interwoven, underlining the value of the regional perspective Mamdani adopts. However, the Congo chapter is much weaker than its Ugandan counterpart; it is based entirely on his brief visit, fails to make reference to any of the crucial French-language sources on the eastern Congo mosaic of conflict, and pays only cursory attention to English-language sources.<sup>30</sup>

The continued insurgent operations by Hutu rebels from Congo-Kinshasa bases, many of them once active in the genocide, keeps the psychosis of the genocide alive for the RPF regime. A disposition to attribute collective guilt to all Hutu as *génocidaires* evidently informs the drift toward ethnicized autocracy visible in the ruling group, granted indulgence by an international community still permeated with a shame over its complicity in the genocide through culpable inaction. In the language of analysis it is painfully difficult to avoid a Manichean representation of the tragedy, collectivizing entire ethnic categories as perpetrators or victims. Mamdani wrestles with this dilemma, without complete success.

The Mamdani monograph has received a critical reception among Rwanda specialists. It lacks the depth of contextual knowledge of the Rwanda crisis of authors such as Filip Reyntjens and Alison des Forges.<sup>31</sup> Although its theoretical achievements fall well short of its claims, Mamdani brings a valuable regional perspective to the conceptualization of ethnic conflict in the Great Lakes region. Irrespective of the merits of the book, the stature of its author will assure it a place among the influential works seeking the origins of the Rwandan genocide.

<sup>29</sup> A. I. Richards, ed., *Economic Development and Tribal Change* (Cambridge: W. Hefner and Son, 1954).

<sup>30</sup> Particularly important are Filip Reyntjens, *La guerre des Grands Lacs: Alliances mouvantes et conflit extraterritoriaux en Afrique Centrale* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999); and Jean-Claude Willame, *Banyarwanda et Banyamulenge: Violences ethniques et gestion de l'identitaire au Kivu* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997).

<sup>31</sup> See Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en crise: Rwanda, Burundi, 1988-1994* (Paris: Karthala, 1994); idem (fn. 30); and Alison des Forges, "Leave None to Tell the Story": *Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999).

## CIVIL DISORDER THROUGH A COMPARATIVE LENS

The Horowitz and Gurr volumes address ethnic conflict on a global scale. The massive Horowitz volume gives masterful exposition to one particular form of conflict—the deadly ethnic riot. Gurr caps a lifetime of cross-national data collection with a sophisticated, quantitative comparative exegesis of confrontations pitting “peoples” against states.

Horowitz brings commanding credentials to his ambitious project. His 1985 classic, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, remains one of the most influential works in the field of comparative ethnic studies. His subsequent work, *A Democratic South Africa?*, even though it failed to persuade South African constitutional engineers, introduced some novel and arresting arguments into the debate about how deeply divided polities might be structured in ways that embedded incentives for cooperation among elites of cultural segments. Though Horowitz’s sometimes-trenchant positions attract criticism in some quarters, the scope of his erudition and the range of his knowledge evoke universal admiration.

While most scholars of cultural pluralism bring to their toil a regionally specialized knowledge—or even a focus on a particular country—Horowitz towers over most others due to the diversity of settings in which his research is grounded upon field inquiry. He has collected data in Guyana, Nigeria, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Fiji, South Africa, and former Soviet Central Asia, and is widely solicited as a consultant to governments seeking counsel on how to accommodate diversity. The analytical intuitions grounded in this unusually broad experience have created a substructure of basic understandings that underlie his systematic collection of data. His relentless focus here upon the darker side of ethnicity is a timely counterpoint to some of the facile cheer of the “celebrate diversity” notions and the reluctance of some multiculturalists to acknowledge the potential for lethal conflict inherent in some forms of identity politics.

The deadly ethnic riot—which Horowitz carefully distinguishes from feuds, lynchings, civil wars, or genocides—has an identifiable set of attributes. To discover these, he examines in detail one hundred fifty-odd such episodes over an extended time frame (though mainly since 1965). Beyond those selected for exhaustive study, the study covers a much larger array of ethnic riot events, drawing upon the secondary literature. For the cases examined in depth, he relies upon documentary and interview materials, as well as case studies of these episodes. Although his mode of analysis is qualitative, his research design is sys-

tematic and methodologically self-conscious, and he effectively refutes critics who accuse him of analysis on the dependent variable.

The study argues that deadly ethnic riots, although never inevitable, are likely to occur when there is an existing state of hostility between two groups in immediate proximity, normally but not always in an urban setting. This animosity is not an “ancient tribal hatred,” but a more immediate and circumstantial sentiment, grounded in relatively recent conflictual patterns. The mutual dislike is not determined by cultural distance; the degree of objective difference is unrelated to these violent outbreaks. There is some triggering event that activates the hostility of one group, creating a moment of collective rage and allowing the perpetrators of the mayhem to be buoyed by a keen sense of the justification of their action. The attack is perceived after the event as a salutary lesson, and one may also deduce a subliminal purpose in reducing heterogeneity—to induce the objects of the collective rage to flee. A perception of low costs dissolves inhibitions; for example, when the security forces are weak or are even complicit in the attacks. Target groups are believed to have threatening characteristics—aggressive social or economic behavior or a project of domination—and rioters rarely show remorse; their targeting of victims is usually precise. Horowitz relies heavily on social psychological theories of aggression and its release in decoding the ethnic riot.

The low correlation between state weakness and the deadly ethnic riot is striking; most occur in settings in which the hegemony of the ruling institutions is well established. The contemporary African disorder is not often punctuated by the lethal urban riot. Brazzaville, which experienced serious running clashes in 1993 and again in 1997 between ethnic militias related to the three leading power contenders—Denis Sassou-Nguesso, Pascal Lissouba, and Bernard Kolelas—seems to be an exception.<sup>32</sup> Ethnic riots can occur as episodes in larger patterns of civil conflict, as has been the case in Burundi since 1993 and in Congo-Kinshasa since 1998—exemplified by the Lendu-Hema riots in Bunia. While ethnoreligious riots have been frequent occurrences in Nigerian cities during the 1990s, civil conflicts of recent years have been mostly fought in rural areas.

An exception to the methodological sophistication is the overuse as data of a number of fairly old African cases. A number of the African cases repeatedly invoked by Horowitz occurred long ago. For example, Horowitz mentions the 1959 Kananga (formerly Luluabourg) ethnic riot

<sup>32</sup> Remy Bazenguissa-Ganga, *Les voies du politique au Congo: Essai de sociologie historique* (Paris: Karthala, 1997).



nineteen times, yet it never had a successor event. The 1966 anti-Igbo riots in northern Nigerian cities are frequently cited, but the lethal rioting provoked by the heterodox Maitatsine Islamic cult around 1980 are not, nor are the Muslim-Christian riots in Kaduna and Kano during the 1990s.

Nonetheless, the splendid Horowitz study supplies rich interpretive resources for understanding a key manifestation of identity conflict. The broad geographic scope of his analysis and the richness of his theoretical engagement ensure this book a place among the classics in the study of cultural pluralism. Horowitz finds no reason to forecast any reduction in the frequency of the deadly ethnic riot, a sobering conclusion in curious contrast to Gurr's surprising quantitative finding that identity conflict began to decline in the 1990s.

Gurr has devoted much of his outstanding academic career to gathering cross-national data relating to internal violence. Since 1986, he has directed the Minorities at Risk project at Colorado, then Maryland. With a team of collaborators, he has painstakingly assembled a treasure trove of measurable data on ethnic groups around the world. The care with which codings are applied to often qualitative and event data is entirely praiseworthy; nowhere is this important task more carefully and responsibly performed. These rich resources have provided Gurr the ammunition for wide-ranging analysis of ethnic conflict situations. His earlier work on the same theme, *Minorities at Risk*, attracted wide attention as a well-grounded warning of the prospect of the continued spread of ethnic conflict.<sup>33</sup>

Reviewing updated data seven years later, Gurr comes to a very different conclusion: "By the mid-1990s armed conflict within states had abated; there was a pronounced decline in the onset of new ethnic wars and a shift in many ongoing wars from fighting to negotiation" (xiii). He attributes this improved prognosis in part to a process of political learning, by which many culturally diverse states have come to terms with their diversity, abandoned muscular "national integration" policies, and instead searched for accommodative formulas. Unfortunately, much of Africa is exempted from this hopeful scenario. Yet Gurr still finds a potential silver lining, in the debatable observation that the African conflicts are not new outbreaks, but rather continuations of past episodes of protracted communal violence.

There are other difficulties with his African analysis. The basic concept of "minorities at risk" is drawn from a type of state constituted

<sup>33</sup>Ted Robert Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1993).

with a dominant ethnocultural grouping—the “titular nationality,” such as is found in much of Eurasia. In Western Hemisphere states, one can readily situate African diasporic populations or indigenous peoples as minorities that can serve as units of analysis. Identifying a “minority at risk” in much of Africa, however, is far more problematic; the state as “nation” has a territorial personality and contains a multiplicity of identity groups. In such settings, a number of the coding concepts become dubious, including minority discrimination in the economic or political realm and cultural or political restrictions. Categorizations of “ethnic minorities” become difficult; regional identities (for example Cabindans in Angola on p. 255) by analytical metamorphosis become ethnic communities.

There is much merit to Gurr’s emphasis upon the importance of political learning in the management of cultural diversity. Gurr is able to support his thesis with a number of African examples, including an exploration of newly used forms of electoral representation such as proportional representation in South Africa and a modified form of the German system in Senegal. In addition, Gurr shows reason, as reflected in constitutional doctrines, to take a much more realistic view of ethnicity than was usually the case in 1960; no longer a pathology to exorcise, ethnicity is a sociological reality to acknowledge and value.

Is identity politics, therefore, the key to deciphering disorder in Africa? In some cases, it is clearly central, as in Rwanda, Burundi, and Sudan, where there is an underlying “war of visions”<sup>34</sup> pitting sharply different imaginings of the virtuous polity against one another. But at the same time, civil wars have paradoxically strengthened national attachments in many cases; one of the few trump cards held by those seeking to resolve long-running internal warfare in countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, or Congo-Kinshasa is that all contending parties insist upon their attachment to the territorial unit.<sup>35</sup> Even in the many cases where ethnicity or religion is not per se the precipitant of disorder, violence inevitably incorporates discourses of difference. Ethnicity armed escalates mutual fears, anxieties, and insecurities; communally targeted violence inscribes memories of ineffable loss of kin and fellow ethnics, and inspires dreams of vengeance. Thus the dangers of protracted disorder should not be underestimated.

<sup>34</sup> See the imaginative thesis of Francis M. Deng, *War of Visions: Conflict of Identity in the Sudan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1995).

<sup>35</sup> This argument is developed in more detail in Crawford Young, “Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict in Africa,” in Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchinson, eds., *Understanding Nationalism* (London: Polity Press, 2001).

But other forces are at work. Over time, a profound craving for peace, even at a high price, can take hold; such a desperate desire for renewed security may explain the electoral margins of Taylor in Liberia in 1997 and Sassou-Nguesso in Congo-Brazzaville in 2002. A capacity for forgetting coexists uneasily with an insistence on remembering, as may be seen in countless instances around the world. The two archipelagoes of violence in Africa have not dissolved, but sudden turns of events may open unanticipated opportunities—the demise of intransigent leaders of insurgent movements, for example, as with the disappearance from the equation of Savimbi and Zouabri in early 2002. Fragile accords theoretically ending the civil conflicts in Sudan and Congo-Kinshasa were signed in mid-2002, though large uncertainties remain about full implementation.

### CONCLUSION

How far do the five works under review take us toward conceptual purchase over the reciprocal dynamics of state crisis, civil disorder, and identity politics? Of course, none of the authors framed his inquiry in these terms, yet each provides some interpretive resources that contribute to this end. Even in circumstances of state decomposition, such as in Liberia or Congo-Kinshasa, the territorial frame defines most of the parameters of conflict. The much more fluid and formless nature of conflict in such settings, however, provides a sharply different arena for identity mobilization than does the more structured stage of a Rwanda, a weakened but by no means prostrate state. Where the conflict pits insurgents primarily against a state security apparatus, as in Algeria, the identity options open to civil society are very different from those in a web of conflict in which a state militia is only one of a number of armed factions in presence, as is the case in Sudan or Congo-Kinshasa.

State crisis is not a passing moment in the life of the African polity, but is instead a long-term condition. This simple fact alters the basic frames of social action within which the ongoing dynamics of identity transaction and construction occur. Beyond the appreciable contributions of these volumes, there lies a very large domain of still uncharted analytical territory.