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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Why Africa is Poor – and what Africans can do about it. By Greg Mills. Penguin Books (Johannesburg, South Africa). 2010. 433 pp.

This book follows in the footsteps of Robert Rotberg's "Strengthening Africa's Leadership (2004)" and Robert Guest's "The Shackled Continent: Africa's Past, Present and Future (2005)". Mills repeats a statement from Paul Collier, the author of "The Bottom Billion" and "The Plundered Planet", which concludes that poverty is optional. Dr. Greg Mills, the author of "Why Africa is Poor – and what Africans can do about it", is head of the Brenthurst Foundation in South Africa which is dedicated to improving governments and economies in Africa. He has worked in many countries including Rwanda, where he was strategy adviser to Paul Kagame. His wide experience of international affairs has given him insights from Africans into their battles against poverty and bad governance. His academic writings include the award winning book "The Wierd Model: South Africa, Foreign Policy and Globalization (2002)".

In this book Dr. Mills seeks to explain why Africa has failed to realize its economic potential compared with successful countries in Asia and South America. For most people this is not easy to understand: how could the cradle of mankind, the genesis of human beings be so backward? The reasons are not mistreatment by former colonial powers, or donors, or global markets, or financial institutions, existence of poor infrastructure, lack of hard work or lack of natural resources. By examining the African, Asian and South American continents Mills concludes that Africa is poor because the African leaders have made that choice.

The book gives striking examples of rapid economic growth, huge poverty alleviation and improvement in services in Asian countries, especially in China. By opening up and deregulating markets thus attracting private capital and foreign investments, and making import and export easier, the employment rate, productivity and GNP increased dramatically for many years. Growing GNP enabled increased revenue from taxation which was used for investment in critical sectors, including the social sectors. However, in Africa such development has been delayed for decades. Africa is poor because its leaders have made selfish and bad choices due to weak leadership and lack of understanding of the economic realities governing economic growth.

The author's advice to African governments seeking long term and job intensive growth is to establish political and macroeconomic stability, politically by developing and maintaining transparency in government, the rule of law and government efficiency, and economically by developing skills in the population, suitable infrastructure, and a meritocracy free from nepotism and corruption. The author argues that countries need to establish public and private partnerships, thus encouraging private investment in targeted sectors of the economy. They need to attract multinational companies, facilitate bank credits but limit their

leverage, and implement tax reforms. African governments also have to be aware of global competition, being costs and price sensitive, and keeping the currency competitive. A major goal is to focus on results in all sectors, including efficiency and customer satisfaction, for without a demand for products and services there will be no economic growth at all. Governments should also avoid protectionism and remove import and export quotas and tariffs and facilitate trade procedures. Other components that deserve attention are food security and diversity, education and empowering labour.

These recommendations are not new; the reason why they are so relevant to Africa is that many of its leaders have not been able to meet all these challenges. Some of the countries on the African continent have been run by leaders who seemed to have little interest in developing their own countries. The author identifies common leadership problems, such as lack of education and relevant skills. Some leaders focused on creating their own wealth instead of wealth for their people. The author gives several examples of disastrous leadership; such as President Omar Bongo in Gabon, Felix Houphouet-Boigny in Cote d'Ivoire, Jean-Bedel Bokassa in Central African Republic, Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire, Gnassingbe Eyadema in Togo, Meles Zenawi in Ethiopia, Teodor Nguema Mbasogo in Equatorial Guinea, Isaias Afewerki in Eritrea, Jose Eduardo dos Santos in Angola, Paul Biya in Cameroon, Denis Sassou-Nguesso in Republic of Congo and Paul Kagame in Rwanda. Bad leadership has been possible because the people and the international community have allowed it, for reasons relating to self-interest, conscience and altruism. The African leaders have with the help of donors successfully managed to externalize their problems, making them the responsibility of others.

To get Africa back on track, the African leaders have to abandon policies based on short term expediency to stay in power. They have to focus on sustained economic growth benefiting all citizens by developing and implementing sound reforms through harmonious relationships with clear responsibilities between governments, donors, employers and unions; sharing a growth formula in a vision of shared prosperity for all.

This book is highly recommended reading; it provides an outstanding contribution to our understanding of Africa and argues for a turning point heading into a new prosperous era.

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Living the End of Empire: Politics and Society in Late Colonial Zambia. Edited by *Jan-Bart Gewald, Marja Hinfelaar and Giacomo Macola.* Leiden: Brill .2011. 333 pp. ISBN 978-90-04-20986-2.

The history of late colonial and early post colonial Zambia has been a subject of much interest for historians for several decades resulting in a rich historiography of the period. "Living the End of Empire", published as a collection of essays, was appropriately dedicated to Professor Andrew Dunlop Roberts. Roberts is indeed a leading historian of Zambia.

"Living the End of Empire" in many respects follows the footpaths of an earlier publication by Brill, "One Zambia, Many Histories". This book has a collection of thirteen essays authored by both what I would call veteran scholars of Zambian history, and emerging young and upcoming historians. This mix of authors has inevitably given the book an important place in the historiography of Zambian history. The book also reflects the divergent interests of the chapters' authors. The editors of the book therefore had to find some way of grouping the chapters in some form of themes so as to create some sense of coherence in the flow of the book.

The book is divided into four sections under the following general sub-headings: Background, The Polyphony of African nationalism, The Unsettled World of Settlers, and Participating Observers. The first two chapters lay the foundation of the book from which the following parts of the book get direction. This is clearly set in the introductory chapter by the editors in which they highlight "some of the historical trajectories that the teleological politically committed social scientist has tended to ignore or belittle." (pp.3-4).

Andrew D. Roberts' chapter appropriately provides the context for the chapters that follow in the book. It examined several themes and topics in post-war colonial Zambia which have attracted scholarly attention and those that have yet to be explored. He notes the role of the mining industry in arousing African political activism, but regrets that there is yet to be written a history that documents the African voice as did Terence Ranger for Southern Rhodesia. (p.19). He has therefore pointed to several areas for further study of Zambia's late colonial history.

While it is a challenge to comment on each chapter of the book independently, it is worth pointing out that each chapter has contributed to the theme of the book, thereby making it a solid contribution to the historiography of post colonial Zambia. Major issues are discussed with new interpretation and insight which makes this volume a must read for both experts on Zambian history and those that are entering the field and are seeking points of entry. This is certainly demonstrated in Roberts' chapter.

The book is in some sense a representation of "a profoundly heterogeneous 'school' - one that, for all its common methodology and emphasis on the shared experience of fieldwork, could also accommodate the pioneering archival-based work of Lewis Gann" and others. (p.5) the book, therefore, brings new understanding and analyses various themes of Zambia's late colonial history. Like "One Zambia, Many Histories" before it, "Living the End of Empire" re-enforces the new approaches to understanding and interpreting Zambia's colonial and post-

colonial history. *Living the End of Empire* provides a firm historical ground for new interpretation of the late colonial period of Zambia's history. This is in view of the fact that several of the chapters in this book deal with issues that have not attracted much scholarly attention in the past.

The publication of this book is certainly another plus for the Network for Historical Research in Zambia (NHRZ) which was founded on the premise that there was a growing need to coordinate empirical research and publication on Zambia by scholars of Zambian history and related disciplines.

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Left Behind: Rural Zambia in the Third Republic. *By Jeremy Gould. The Lembani Trust, Lusaka. 2010. 200 pp.*

Left Behind is arranged in seven chapters. It discusses socio-economic and political developments in Zambia during the Third Republic, when the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) came to power after defeating the United National Independence Party (UNIP) of Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, in the 1991 elections.

The book is easy to read and will be useful to academics and the general public who are interested in following developments during the MMD administration.

In chapter one, the author discusses deregulation and rural stagnation, and states that the MMD government initiated and implemented "one of the most radical programs of structural adjustment hitherto seen in Africa, or indeed anywhere ..." (p.1). Within a short time the government dismantled Zambia's mammoth parastatal economy through the privatization of hundreds of public companies.

While conceding that privatization of the Zambian economy by the MMD was probably inevitable and necessary given the collapse of the state led economy of the UNIP era, Professor Gould is of the view that market driven policies (without state regulation) have created an economic and political ethos of 'every man for himself', and the neglect of the rural clients who depended on UNIP's patronage. The author contends further that while deregulation has transformed urban society leading to the formation of a middle class that is necessary for economic modernization, the ideology of market – driven development has "little to say about the crucial role of the state in enhancing agricultural productivity and fostering rural livelihoods" (p.6). He argues that markets alone will not solve the problems of rural Zambians who depend on some form of public support in order for them to enjoy the basic rights of economic citizenship.

The second chapter is entitled *Beyond the Governance Crisis* (2003). The author states that with the removal of UNIP from power, there was a "sudden regulatory vacuum at the base of society ..." (p.11). The pervasive patrimonial structures of the UNIP machinery crumbled, creating a governance crisis which the

MMD could not fill, since they did not have grass roots hegemony. However, the author points out that the birth of a vibrant civil society has been a positive development with respect to governance and accountability in the political arena; and he hopes that this trend will lead to the enactment of a people driven constitution.

In Chapter three 'Waiting for change: Structural Adjustment and Luapula's strategic options (1991)', the author attempts to show how rural players in Luapula Province (the focus of his field studies), can benefit from the introduction of a market economy and how the donor community (in this case, Finland) can adapt their interventions to promote growth and transformation of the rural economy. Prof. Gould suggests that interventions should be directed at women farmers who are the majority of the cultivators and who "have long been known for their success in trade and other forms of private entrepreneurship" (p.25). Furthermore, there should be research on improving traditional crop varieties (like cassava and groundnuts and maize), farming systems and technologies and storage so as to expand current production. The provision of passable roads can also consolidate local transport and trading sectors, and contribute to the modernization of local agricultural systems.

The author further states that in Luapula, private sector business activities are limited, except for the fish trade and traditional breweries. These ventures however suffer from lack of formal credit, lack of raw materials (millet, maize), and lack of collateral. Prof. Gould seems to argue that "the task before rural Zambia is not so much of 'freeing' the market, but of consolidating and strengthening it" (p.35).

Chapter four deals with market liberalization and small-holder livelihoods in Luapula before 1988 and after the 1996 economic reforms (1997). The author makes a comparative analysis on the rural situation in Chief Milambo's area before liberalization and after 1992 when subsidies on inputs and marketing were removed. He found that before the economic reforms, most small-holders sold most of their maize harvest and retained only negligible amounts for consumption – "since it made economic sense to sell one's maize to the cooperative and buy back milled maize at a subsidized price" (p.59). Also by 1995 the total output of maize declined to about half of what it was before liberalization. Average yield had declined from 2,700 kg/ha in 1988 to 2,170 kg/ha. in 1995. There was a shift in cash crop production from emphasis on maize to groundnuts. The proportion of the sampled population producing groundnuts for the market had risen from 41% in 1988 to 60% in 1996.

Thus, with respect to land use, it would appear that economic reforms that removed subsidies on inputs had an impact that contributed to agricultural diversification. By 1997, the aggregate area under maize in Milambo was about 43% of what it was in 1987, and by the same token, land under groundnuts (which did not require chemical fertilizers) increased by 65%. It would also seem that Milambo farmers had reallocated former maize land to groundnuts, millet, and cassava. It is worth noting that studies by the Zambia Vulnerability Assessment Committees (ZVAC) also alluded to this process of diversification in other provinces.

Prof. Gould shows that another interesting trend has emerged in his study area. This is the rise of what he calls 'corporate households', in which spouses cooperate to allocate land and labour as well as over the control of proceeds. While

it was uncommon in the 1980s for women to market the household maize, it was found that after liberalization, there were households in which spouses collaborated for the common good. Thus, Gould states that “it seems plausible to claim that market liberalization has had an empowering effect on Milambo women. By virtue of the groundnut boom, women have greater access to cash and other resources, and greater control over how household resources are utilized” (p.81).

Another interesting finding with respect to increased gender equality, is the author’s observation that women benefited more from the groundnut boom in those areas where there was a good road which made it possible for them to access markets without depending on their spouses to take the produce by bicycle, compared to those areas which were not accessible due to lack of basic infrastructure. Thus, Gould remarks that “the shortest path to greater gender equality would seem to travel along a well-graded road” (p.82)!

Chapter five covers the debate on chiefs, politics and state formation in the Third Republic (2006). Professor Gould reviews the debate on the role of chiefs in Southern Africa in the context of liberal democracy. He shows that in South Africa, there appears to be intrinsic tension between customary authority which is held by chiefs, and representative democracy that is a result of elected local government players. The author states that according to western liberal political theory, “the institution of chief, a hereditary position grounded in custom and ascribed properties with strong spiritual overtones, is anathema to the basic principle of political legitimacy in an electoral system” (p.105). In this discourse, the radical modernist position “argues that residues of customary rule constitute obstacles to liberal government and must be exorcised from African politics” (p.105).

The author presents an opposing view that accommodates the role of chiefs in contemporary Africa. This school of thought does not conceive of chiefs and elected local government officials as ‘two bulls in one kraal’, but as ‘direct democracy’, in which chiefs relate to the national state and other local civic structures in the context of rules and procedures defined by the central government in the modern era. Professor Gould contends that in the case of Zambia, there has been no major contradiction between the role of traditional leaders and those of the central government. He points out that since independence in 1964, the successive UNIP and MMD governments (and probably now the Patriotic Front), have been able “to integrate chiefs into the state apparatus in such a way that would preclude any overt challenges to party/state authority at the grassroots” (p.107).

The author fears that attempts to build bridges between civil society and traditional leadership aimed at championing the interests of the rural grassroots, may be lost if the national royalty becomes susceptible to the allures of state patronage and the attractions of the clandestine privatization of natural resources.

In my view, the major challenge in Zambia is how to ensure that the modern state and the chiefs work out a strategy to empower the citizens, including rural small-holders, and especially women, with secure land rights, in a land policy that can resolve the dualism between state land and customary land. The resolution of

this challenge is crucial because at the moment the land rights of women and other entitlements to property that are provided for by legislation, are overridden by the proviso that such rights/entitlements should not be in conflict with customary law! As a result, chiefs are likely to get a bad name in the eyes of western educated – radical activists who see their custodial role of tradition as an obstacle to empowerment and modernization. The resolution of the dualism between statutory tenure and customary tenure will also facilitate investment in the agricultural sector, as well as in the rural economy as a whole. This will promote agrarian transformation, ensure increased production and strengthen household food security.

In chapter 6 Professor Gould discusses the 2006 Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government elections and poses the question: Did these elections signal the ethnicization of Zambian politics? He seems to think so in view of the apparent regional control of parliamentary seats by the major political parties. However, the author quickly acknowledges that Kaunda's complex political legacy discourages tribalism in politics. Indeed, all political players including the present ruling Patriotic Front (PF) of President Michael Sata (who won the 2011 elections and defeated the MMD government), should continue with the shared vision of the 'Rainbow nation' under the unifying slogan of 'One Zambia, One Nation'. All the political players and citizens should continue to strive to build a peaceful, united and prosperous middle income Zambia, by attracting investment and modern technology that can add value to the abundant raw materials so that the majority of the people can have jobs and rising incomes; access clean water, sanitation, health and educational facilities; housing, and hope to enjoy the products of industrialism.

In his last chapter which is the epilogue (November 2009), Professor Gould ends his book on what could be characterized as a pessimistic note. He observes that no rural agrarian transformation has taken place in Zambia despite government interventions – due to the exclusion of the rural population from entitlements of education, health, etc. and lack of equal sharing of the national wealth. He further contends that the elites and other privileged social classes are benefiting at the expense of the rural and urban poor.

While this hypothesis is plausible to some extent, I am of the view that lack of agrarian transformation in rural Zambia is historical and can best be understood by applying Goran Hyden's (1986) thesis on the anomaly of the African peasantry. Hyden contends that debate on rural stagnation in Africa should take note of the following three conditions: the absence of an intermediate technology; the relative autonomy of the peasants from the state, and the limited penetration of capitalism in rural Africa.

It may be argued as Hyden does that in Africa, production by the subsistence cultivation peasantries continues to be guided by the law of subsistence rather than by the law of value. This is probably so because land is still plentiful (especially in rural Zambia) and is a common property resource accessed by anyone. These rural cultivators are not compelled to improve their technology (despite the role of government and other extension staff) so as to produce a surplus because they are not captured by other social classes or the state (as peasants in Asia or pre-capitalist Europe were). Thus, these rural players do not have to pay even a token tax to any one

or to the state. So, why produce more? Why transform? So, they continue to eke out a subsistence livelihood using rudimentary technology of axe and hoe! They are free to do what they have been doing in the past – as long as they survive, life goes on!

The transformation that Africa/Zambia needs should involve the promotion of rural and urban industrialization to add value to the abundant raw materials and transform the mind sets of the people. There is need to create nonfarm employment in rural industries and more mines in order to transform the peasantries into urban workers. It should not be assumed that all rural dwellers are farmers or want to farm. Those who don't want to farm should have an exit option, by becoming proletarians or entrepreneurs. This requires attracting investment; land reform, infrastructure development; mass education and technological transfer in emerging markets as the 'Asian Tigers' have managed to achieve in the past 50 or so years.

In this process of industrial transformation, we need the participation of the rural and urban educated elites as well as entrepreneurs. These social groups are necessary to play the role of intermediaries between the grassroots and the other social forces in a rapidly globalizing and complex world. We need to know as scriptures teach us that there is a place for all the social forces 'for the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few', in what may be characterized as an all inclusive neo-liberal national democratic revolution.

Finally, it is worth noting that since the New Deal Government of the late Dr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, targeted interventions were re-introduced through the Fertilizer Support Programme to small-holder farmers and the Food Security Pack to vulnerable but viable groups. These interventions have contributed to consecutive bumper maize harvests even during President Rupiah Banda's tenure, when the rains were favourable.

In these interventions, the government has been channeling billions of Kwacha through the Food Reserve Agency (FRA) to pay small-holders who produce about 60% of all the marketed maize in Zambia. This suggests that millions of kwacha are going into the pockets of these small-scale farmers. These rural players are earning incomes to improve their livelihoods. In recent years, Zambia is even exporting rather than importing the staple cereal to neighbouring countries. In my view, Zambia is moving, although the journey is of course a long one!

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Gender Budgeting as a Tool for Poverty Reduction. By The African Capacity Building Foundation. African Capacity Building Foundation, Harare, Zimbabwe. 2009. 86pp

Gender has recently become a critical component of national budgeting. International conventions have been enacted to guide member countries in gender

issues. It is understood that gender equality does not only improve the status of women but also contributes to national development. The book under review looks at gender budgeting as a tool for poverty reduction. Its overall goal was to document gender budgeting best practices through an analysis of case studies at the country level.

Two key concepts are presented and defined, gender budgeting and poverty reduction. It is important to build, from a theoretical or empirical perspective, an unambiguous relationship that will show how the former impacts on the latter. Thus the key question “Is there any theoretical framework for believing that an engendered budget will have a causal impact on poverty?”

The authors base their arguments for a relationship between gender budgeting and poverty reduction on one key assumption. It is assumed “that gendered public policies and budgets within central and local government plans and programmes yield more efficient and equitable development outcomes”. Since women and children comprise the majority of the poor and disadvantaged across the spectrum of sectors, a gendered budget would be more efficient in drawing these out of poverty.

The book is arranged in the following manner. It has five sections or chapters of which the first three are dedicated to specific country models on gender budgeting as a tool for poverty reduction. Section 1 presents the South African model while section 2 presents the Ugandan model. Section 3 is on the Rwandan model.

The book makes a careful selection of one sector per country for an in-depth sector specific case study. The selected sectors are Department of Transport (South Africa), Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (Uganda) and the Education Sector (in Rwanda). The aim was to examine how the selected sectors have dealt with gender equity in terms of policies and programmes and how effectively they have provided leadership in the gender-budgeting process. These in-depth studies also identify issues and requirements that militate against women’s participation in the development process of specific countries.

The specific sector studies illustrate the different environments under which different sectors in different countries operate. They highlight strategies and initiatives taken by these sectors in addressing the gender gap that other countries can emulate.

Section 4 is dedicated to a discussion of the attempt to achieve international standards on gender. In particular, the book looks at how United Nations member states have conformed to the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). With the heading “Making Gender Visible in the Budget”, the book goes beyond issues of ratification to considering the practical issues of the visibility of gender in national budgets. Section 5 looks at standards for gender budgeting as well as making recommendations and suggesting the way forward.

The authors have provided the link between gender budgeting and poverty and also a wealth of information that should provoke other countries into engendering their budgets.

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