



LUND UNIVERSITY

Review of Levy,S. (ed.) 'Starter Packs: a strategy to fight hunger in developing countries'

Prowse, Martin

Published in:
Journal of Modern African Studies

DOI:
[10.1017/S0022278X06262220](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X06262220)

2006

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Prowse, M. (2006). Review of Levy,S. (ed.) 'Starter Packs: a strategy to fight hunger in developing countries'. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 44(4), 655-655. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X06262220>

Total number of authors:
1

General rights

Unless other specific re-use rights are stated the following general rights apply:
Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Read more about Creative commons licenses: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00



Review of Levy,S. (ed.) 'Starter Packs: a strategy to fight hunger in developing countries'

Prowse, Martin Philip

Published in:
Journal of Modern African Studies

Publication date:
2006

Citation for published version (APA):
Prowse, M. (2006). Review of Levy,S. (ed.) 'Starter Packs: a strategy to fight hunger in developing countries'. Journal of Modern African Studies, 44(4), 655.

The Journal of Modern African Studies

<http://journals.cambridge.org/MOA>

Additional services for *The Journal of Modern African Studies*:

Email alerts: [Click here](#)

Subscriptions: [Click here](#)

Commercial reprints: [Click here](#)

Terms of use : [Click here](#)



Starter Packs: a strategy to fight hunger in developing countries? Lessons from the Malawi experience 1998–2003 edited by S. LEVY
Wallingford: Cabi Publishing, 2005. Pp. 295.
£55.00.

MARTIN PROWSE

The Journal of Modern African Studies / Volume 44 / Issue 04 / December 2006, pp 655 - 656
DOI: 10.1017/S0022278X06262220, Published online: 01 November 2006

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0022278X06262220

How to cite this article:

MARTIN PROWSE (2006). The Journal of Modern African Studies, 44, pp 655-656
doi:10.1017/S0022278X06262220

Request Permissions : [Click here](#)

Reviews

Fanon's Warning: a civil society reader on the New Partnership for Africa's Development edited by PATRICK BOND

Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005. Pp. 295. US\$24.95 (pbk.).

doi:10.1017/S0022278X06212229

The onset of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) seemed to signal the formation of political will within Africa's leadership to adhere to principles of good governance and market economics. Yet, a persistent worry was that 'on the ground', few understood NEPAD and civil society had not been consulted. This edited volume by Patrick Bond addresses this omission through its comprehensive and important collection of civil society's concerns about NEPAD.

Most significantly, *Fanon's Warning* brings the voice of civil society to the fore. It provides a stinging critique of NEPAD; South Africa, a leader of NEPAD; and the policies employed to advance Africa's development. According to the civil society organisations cited, NEPAD is neither new nor an indication of changing political will. While NEPAD extols the virtues of honouring human rights, in practice civil society groups charge that the opposite is true. Echoing other civil society groups, Ian Taylor of the University of Botswana notes that Africa's commitment to good governance and democratic principles is betrayed by the lack of response to Mugabe's austere policies in Zimbabwe (p. 81).

The main part of the book is a nearly paragraph by paragraph criticism of NEPAD by scholars associated with the Alternative Intellectual and Development Centre. NEPAD is denounced as incomplete and illogical (pp. 101–3) and wrongly focused on globalisation (pp. 115, 137). A primary criticism warns that NEPAD's focus on market policies will cloud efforts to improve respect for human rights in Africa, as decisions will be made based on privilege and market access, rather than on basic rights (p. 145). Although Egypt, Algeria, Senegal, and Nigeria also led the NEPAD proposal, the annotated critique frequently points to South Africa, because of its leadership position in Africa, as a test for NEPAD's viability. Bond and others repeatedly accuse President Thabo Mbeki of 'talking left, acting right' (p. 22) – meaning that he seeks to please international financial institutions, while claiming to champion plans that advance basic human rights and development through NEPAD. But, in their view, NEPAD has nothing new or beneficial to offer Africa (p. 126).

Bond offers an *Afterword* to bring the assessment of NEPAD up to date from the book's first printing in 2002. He concedes that governments have increased their consultation with civil society, but contends that NEPAD has still not proved beneficial to Africa, as exemplified by the continuing economic decline and persistent political crises. Yet Bond's harsh criticism is not entirely justified. While Zimbabwe remains a glaring failure in Africa's international relations, African

governments have increased their interventions to resolve other internal conflicts, a dramatic change from the past. Furthermore, in implementing NEPAD's African Peer Review Mechanism, civil society organisations are integral partners in assessing their country's governance and economic policies. Omitting such critical developments paints a one-sided picture of civil society's view of NEPAD. Moreover, Bond states that he does not suggest an alternative to NEPAD, because such a proposal should come from civil society (p. 94), and this decision weakens his argument. Without a doubt, Africa needs a new approach to development, but merely criticising NEPAD without offering an alternative only accomplishes half the task.

DORINA A. BEKOE

United States Institute of Peace

French Beans and Food Scares: commerce and culture in an anxious

age by SUSANNE FREIDBERG

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Pp. 269. £15.99 (pbk.).

doi:10.1017/S0022278X06222225

Susanne Freidberg's illuminating book details the commodity networks of French bean production and commercialisation from Burkina Faso and Zambia, to France and Britain, respectively. Using a multi-sited analysis of these networks, it provides a thorough history of them, and provides an account for changes within them from the colonial era to the present day. In recent years, food markets in Europe have experienced a number of scares, such as BSE and foot-and-mouth disease. These provide an interesting and topical backdrop to the book. It does not, however, focus exclusively upon these scares. Instead, Freidberg absorbs the reader through her analysis of how cultural views of food in the two European countries, and their views on best practice in French bean production in Francophone and Anglophone Africa, impact very differently on the two bean commodity networks. Hence, the book primarily shows that while Burkina Faso and Zambia are both former colonies which now produce beans for markets in France and Britain respectively, the actors, business relationships and quality controls instilled within the production and commercialisation of this crop greatly differ between the two commodity networks. Freidberg argues that these differences exist as a result of the shared histories and cultures within each network, both of which are situated within a broader framework of structural power that is still exerted by France and Britain.

Building on research in Burkina Faso which she began in 1993, Freidberg's arguments are clearly supported by detailed qualitative research of the two networks from the producers and exporters in Burkina Faso and Zambia, through to the importers, wholesalers and retailers in France and Britain. Consequently, research data shows how French and British dominance within French bean production in Burkina Faso and Zambia continues. For example, it is documented that French importers of green beans to this day prefer to source crops from smallholder farmers in Burkina Faso, while British importers endorse bean production within large-scale, often white-owned farms in Zambia. In the case of the latter, the author also shows how non-governmental organisations (NGOs), such as the Soil Association and the Ethical Trading Initiative, have helped to

influence the country's biggest food retailers about the procedures which should be in place throughout the different stages of crop cultivation and commercialisation. However, Freidberg argues that while NGO involvement in food commodity networks is welcome in markets dominated by just a handful of supermarket chains, setting such standards also helps to reinforce the power of crop importers regarding best practice in food quality control within producer countries.

Overall, Freidberg's book helps us to understand and evaluate how standards within cross-continental food markets during the colonial era through to recent years have increasingly removed the influence of crop producers with 'practical knowledge' (p. 222). Although the book would benefit from a list of acronyms, it is a much welcome insight into food commodity networks which generate and are generated by historical and current patterns of culture, economics and power.

NICOLA SCOTT
Manchester University

Democratic Reform in Africa: the quality of progress edited by

E. GYIMAH-BOADI

Boulder, CO and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004. Pp. 349. US\$23.50 (pbk.).

doi:10.1017/S0022278X06232221

Gyimah-Boadi has no illusions about the current situation. Democratisation is 'highly incomplete', and its institutions are fragile and weak (pp. 14, 22–3). Reform programmes have only achieved less than optimum results, even by 'African standards', and remain stalled at best (p. 3). Even in such relatively successful cases as Botswana, Mauritius, Senegal and South Africa, the prospects of democratic consolidation – more than one transfer of power through the ballot box – are assessed as 'no better than fair' (p. 10), though in actuality Mauritius has uniquely experienced multiple transfers. Standards of democratic performance are everywhere low, as existing presidents manoeuvre to perpetuate their rule, appoint incompetents and sycophants to office, neglect minority interests, and administer elections unfairly. Under prevailing limitations, Gyimah-Boadi is clear, two or three elections do not make a democracy, and he distinguishes between the existing issues of constitutionalism and those of future, possible democratisation (pp. 6, 12).

He presents useful socio-economic data, including Human Development Indexes (Tables 1.1, 1.2), which Larry Diamond backs up with further important data. But neither offer Gini coefficient figures, nor data on income inequalities, even though these are highly revealing of underlying social realities which governments try to obscure. The institutional barriers to democratisation are described as patrimonial rule, and economic weakness and clientelism are seen as hallmarks of African statehood (p. 13). All these judgements are refreshingly realistic. But a more concrete analysis of the barriers, in, say, ubiquitous presidential powers, and in ruling-party predominance – characteristic features of southern Africa – is not attempted.

Democratic potentialities are not fully analysed either. Gyimah-Boadi says that civil societies have emerged as key forces in moving away from unalloyed state

hegemony (p. 7), but the specifics of their size, organisation, aims and autonomy are not addressed. He sees democracy as never complete (p. 13), and notes that African democratic experiments have yet to extend from their liberal-representative forms to participatory elements (p. 11). But the great participatory upsurge in South Africa through the 1980s, focussed on the United Democratic Front and COSATU, a process of historic importance, is unnoticed. In recent years, new social formations, large, well organised and determined, have again become a prominent feature of participatory aspirations in Africa's strongest economy.

Diamond sees weak democracy, corruption, and economic weaknesses as inter-linked, and believes that economic failure will continue as poor governance prevails (p. 267). He quotes an estimate from 2002 of the cost of corruption in Africa as US\$148 billion annually (p. 269). His judgements of the new/old African Union, and especially of its Peer Review Process, are pertinent: 'there is little ... to suggest that African leaders – most of whom themselves are drenched in the very problems of corrupt, neopatrimonial, patronage politics that NEPAD is supposed to combat – are prepared to allow blunt and probing evaluations of their own and their fellow governments' performance' (p. 276). Fifteen out of fifty three countries had agreed to peer review in 2003, and only four have undergone Review by early 2006. None of the expected Country Reports have been made public.

Diamond considers democratisation at national, continental and global levels, and stresses the need for foreign assistance to move from *conditionality* to *selectivity* (his emphasis), where aid will be dispensed selectively to 'reward and deepen, and thus preserve and consolidate, reforms that have already begun to be implemented by [a] country, according to its own design' (p. 280). Selectivity is fundamentally different from earlier conditionalities, he says. 'It rewards countries for what they are already doing: it would *precisely* compel African rulers to be accountable and responsive to their own people as a pre-requisite ... involvement of the African people themselves is crucial to the success of this approach' (p. 285).

Gyimah-Boadi's book is a mixture of strengths and weaknesses by inclusion and exclusion. The extreme presidentialist systems of Angola and Zimbabwe are not examined, and Mauritius, Africa's most functional liberal democracy, is also absent. Botswana is included, but Patrick Molutsi, an analyst of civil society, chooses to ignore the severe limitations evident in this authoritarian 'African miracle' – presidential autocracy, ruling party predominance, weak parliament, judiciary and civil society, diamond dependency, and deep inequalities. Like Mauritius, Botswana is an Upper Middle Income country where, unlike in the former, some fifty per cent of the people subsist on less than two US dollars a day. Steven Friedman is the author of the path-breaking work, *Building Tomorrow Today*, but he restricts his study of South Africa largely to the period of the 1999 election, and to voting and voting behaviour. Overall, however, it is the critical strengths which stand out, and make this an especially important and useful book.

KENNETH GOOD
University of Melbourne

Between a Rock and a Hard Place: African NGOs, donors and the state edited by J. IGOE and T. KELSALL

Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2005. Pp. 309. US\$40.00.

doi:10.1017/S0022278X06242228

This is a collection of nine ethnographic case studies, looking at a range of African NGOs in seven countries, including Zimbabwe, Mali and Guinea-Bissau. The aim of the book is to insert some 'thick description' into the contemporary discussion on African NGOs. African NGOs came to centre-stage in the 1990s amidst the flurry of interest in African civil society, perceived and intervened in through a rigidly de Tocquevillean lens. The authors maintain that the debate has moved from an initial enthusiasm, indeed romanticisation, to disappointment, leading to a pathologisation of African NGOs. They argue that the discourse has suffered from a lack of detailed research on the ground into the context in which specific NGOs operate and how these interact with local as well as global politics, weaving new cultural meanings and restructuring the institutional landscape. The literature has been informed by Northern policy imperatives rather than reality.

Fine examples of detailed case studies of African NGOs do exist, such as Susan Dicklitch's 1998 study of five Ugandan NGOs and more recently, Sarah Michael's 2004 comparative analysis of local NGOs in Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Senegal, provocatively entitled *Undermining Development*. However, this volume addresses important issues, such as autonomy, and adds to our understanding of them. Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle's chapter provides a carefully observed and, I would argue, accurate study of autonomy by examining the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC). The KHRC has succeeded in defining its own radical version of human rights that is deeply embedded in the Kenyan context, and has avoided falling prey to the hegemonic projects of both 'donors' and the state. However, I would argue that the KHRC is the exception that proves the rule, as indicated by the material in the other chapters. Despite entwinement in the international aid regime, KHRC has maintained its autonomy, unlike other African NGOs, because of its uniquely radical political roots that have shaped its core identity. This raises the interesting question of whether KHRC is more a social movement than an NGO.

The main shortcoming of this collection is that all the contributors appear to be outsiders to the context that they are studying. In a volume of this range, I would have liked to see some African writers. This issue is carefully discussed in the jointly authored conclusion, and the general premise appears to be a dividing line between the actors and activists who are insiders, and the observers and analysts who are outsiders. A progressive partnership between the two camps is espoused, but why not reflect a productive joint enterprise between African and Northern observers within this book? From East Africa, Mutahi Ngunyi, Wachira Maina, Sylvia Tamale, Joe Oloka-Onyango and Jean John Barya have all written extensively on the 'institutional and discursive interstices that exist in the global development apparatus, upon which many social movements in Africa and elsewhere unfortunately depend for their success' (p. 300).

JULIE HEARN
Lancaster University

HIV/AIDS in South Africa edited by S. S. ABDOOL KARIM and Q. ABDOOL KARIM

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp. 592. £35.00.

doi:10.1017/S0022278X06252224

This book makes an extraordinary contribution to the growing body of literature on HIV/AIDS in South Africa. The editors bring together an extensive group of researchers who write about the full range of issues associated with the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The book is organised into seven sections (36 chapters), and explores HIV/AIDS in relation to its history, molecular structure and development, risk factors and prevention strategies, key focal (or vulnerable) groups; its widespread impact (social, political and ethical); and treatment and management.

The breadth of issues covered in this collection is both a strength and a limitation. The wide range of topics dealt with demonstrates the extent to which HIV/AIDS permeates all elements of South African society. Indeed, this book highlights the importance of engaging with the epidemic in a multi-disciplinary way. Section 5 on 'The Impact of AIDS' does this particularly well. It begins with a narrative account of living with HIV/AIDS, but also includes illuminating chapters on the health care burden of the epidemic which highlight its consequences for other diseases and health care services in general (Colvin), as well as the challenging and contentious ethical questions which vaccine (and other) trials pose for researchers (Singh). These chapters articulate well with other 'impacts' – political (Heywood), economic (Whiteside) and community (Frohlich). This collection succeeds in bringing a number of scholars and disciplines together. It places epidemiologists, biomedical and social scientists in conversation with each another, in ways which have been difficult to do over the course of the epidemic in South Africa. Yet, this is critical to both understanding and combating the epidemic. Although many arguments and issues are tackled in this collection in individual chapters, the editors argue that it remains possible to 'turn the tide of the epidemic' (p. 572) in South Africa. They suggest that wide-scale provision of antiretroviral therapy in conjunction with multiple prevention strategies has created the opportunity to change the course of the epidemic in the region.

The expansive scope of the book of necessity means that many issues are covered, some too briefly. This is particularly the case in respect of matters of sexuality, which is not adequately engaged through 'gender'. Extensive anthropological and sociological work on sexuality, sexual practices, and the complex role of culture in the transmission and prevention of HIV/AIDS could usefully be included. Detailed guidance in the book on further reading would go some way to remedying this.

This collection has been well organised and carefully conceptualised. It is encyclopaedic in nature, and constitutes an extremely valuable resource for those working and researching in the field of HIV/AIDS.

LIZ WALKER
University of Hull

Starter Packs: a strategy to fight hunger in developing countries? Lessons from the Malawi experience 1998–2003 edited by S. LEVY

Wallingford: Cabi Publishing, 2005. Pp. 295. £55.00.

doi:10.1017/S0022278X06262220

The re-emergence of non-conflict-precipitated famine in southern and eastern Africa has re-ignited old questions about the most effective means of ensuring national-level food security. This detailed and wide-ranging book offers important insights into the urgent and seemingly intractable issue of food security in Malawi. This is through a candid account of the successes and failures of the Starter Pack scheme implemented from the 1998/99 to the 2003/04 agricultural season.

The book's 19 chapters cover an extensive range of issues, stretching from agronomy and logistics to inter-donor rivalries and conflicts. The chapters have been written predominantly by those involved in the creation, management, monitoring, and evaluation of Starter Pack, as well as a chapter each by Conroy, Harrigan, Whiteside, and Dorwood/Kydd, none of whom were closely connected with the programme. Despite the diversity of subjects broached by the book, and tension between some of the chapters, the editor, Sarah Levy, makes a persuasive argument that a universal Starter Pack should continue to be used as a short-term measure to contribute to national-level food security in Malawi.

To counteract a decline in maize production in the 1996/97 and 1997/98 agricultural seasons, Starter Pack provided smallholders with a free pack of improved maize seed, fertiliser and legume seed to grow 0.1 ha of maize. Initially, it was distributed universally to over 2.8 million households, and financed by government and numerous donors including the World Bank. The Starter Pack scheme contributed to bumper maize harvests in 1999 and 2000. In subsequent years, Starter Pack was scaled down, evolved into a 'targeted' social safety net, and became increasingly financed by DfID. In 2004/05 Starter Pack was replaced by President Mutharika with a broad fertiliser subsidy.

Levy argues strongly for the efficacy and efficiency of a universal Starter Pack programme. Whilst originally conceived to foster smallholder commercial maize farming through technology transfer, Starter Pack never increased smallholders' supply of maize into markets. Instead, Levy argues that Starter Pack's main contribution to national-level food security has been through reducing and delaying demand side pressure on maize prices during the critical 'hungry period', thus ensuring that poorer households are not priced out of the market. Maize prices are critical in determining rural households' access to food, as hardly any rural households in Malawi produce enough food for subsistence. A key point in Levy's argument is that scale matters: when Starter Pack was not universal its impact declined a disproportionate amount. Levy also argues that Starter Pack is the most efficient means through which to deliver national food security, compared with a general fertiliser subsidy, maize imports or food aid.

Away from the main argument of the editor, this book offers numerous insights about the evolution of Starter Pack. For example, how the creation of Starter Pack dovetailed with the UDF government's re-election efforts in 1999 (ch. 2), the pivotal roles of Aleke Banda and Harry Potter (DfID) in determining the size of

the programme each year (ch. 2), and the controversy over the relative merits of hybrid and open pollinating varieties of maize (chs. 1, 12). Further issues raised by the book have a wider relevance than the case in question. For example, how a secondary purpose of the monitoring and evaluation of Starter Pack was to increase research capacity in Malawi (ch. 5), and how attempts at 'community targeting' of Starter Pack failed comprehensively (ch. 14).

For this reader, the most interesting sections of the book are the responses it provides to critics of the scheme. Starter Pack was accused of crowding out the private sector, fostering smallholder dependency on hand-outs, and being overly bureaucratic. The book (especially chs. 9, 10, 14, 17) offers clear evidence to refute these accusations, and suggests that such criticisms were not based on the empirical evidence available, but on ideological objections.

Despite the breadth of topics discussed in the book, there are three subjects that should have merited more consistent attention. Firstly, the book does not address the issue of deagrarianisation sufficiently, especially in relation to the southern region. Secondly, the book tends to marginalise the possible role of the estate sub-sector in contributing to national food security. Thirdly, and most importantly, the book engages very superficially with a highly significant shift in the Malawian rural economy in the past ten years – the switch of burley tobacco production from estates to smallholders. Considering the macro-economic impact of declines in foreign exchange earnings from tobacco exports, and the World Bank/USAID expectation that smallholder burley tobacco production would increase hybrid maize production, this is a considerable omission.

This frank account of the successes and shortcomings of Starter Pack will be keenly read by those with an interest in Malawian affairs. Whether it will be read by critics of the scheme, or whether the lessons learnt from Starter Pack will be put into practice in Malawi or elsewhere in the region, remains to be seen.

MARTIN PROWSE
Manchester University

Cattle Bring Us to Our Enemies: Turkana ecology, politics, and raiding in a disequilibrium system by J. T. McCABE

Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004. Pp. 301. US\$29.00 (pbk.).
doi:10.1017/S0022278X06272227

This book is a late product of the remarkable South Turkana Ecosystem Project (STEP), a long-term US-funded research programme that attempted to develop scientific understanding of the ecology of pastoral activities among one section of the Turkana in northern Kenya, the Ngisonyoka. The approach was primarily biological rather than cultural, the work attempting to combine sociocultural anthropology, ecology, human population biology, and demography. The result was a long series of papers that helped transform thinking about the way pastoralists manage their herds under variable rainfall conditions, and on the ecology of disequilibrium ecosystems. This work underpinned the development of so-called 'new range ecology' in the early 1990s. A valuable feature of this book is that it reviews STEP's work, and incorporates a complete bibliography, including

classic papers such as those on energy pathways (Coughenour *et al.* 1985, *Science* 230: 619–25), or on livestock feeding ecology (Coppock *et al.* 1986, *Journal of Applied Ecology* 23: 573–83 & 585–95).

Terrence McCabe's own fieldwork in Turkana began in 1980, and this book is based on his original doctoral study and subsequent fieldwork up to 1996. He provides a useful historical, environmental and social introduction to Turkana, and the long time-frame of the analysis (McCabe's fieldwork period incorporated several intense droughts, and periods of intense raiding against Ngisonyoka herds) provides telling insights into the challenge of livelihood sustainability in this region. At one level, therefore, this book provides an excellent demonstration of the importance of ecosystem dynamics to the understanding of human–environment relations, through detailed work on the decision-making about movements of stock and people by four pastoral families. The four families are described, and data on their individual movements and on group decision-making are carefully presented and painstakingly analysed. The empirical chapters are illustrated with excellent black and white photographs, and detailed (but rather confusing) maps.

Beyond this valuable account of micro-decision-making by Turkana livestock keeping households, McCabe also has broader aims. Unsurprisingly, given his academic DNA, he has a great deal to say about the way anthropologists should relate to the idea of the ecosystem. His review of non-equilibrium dynamics of ecosystems and changing thinking about pastoral ecology are clear and convincing. However, McCabe takes his thinking well beyond the boundaries of Biological Anthropology, and the book also has interesting things to say about political ecology. The analysis of stock movements by his four families reveals clearly that fear of livestock raiding is as potent a factor in stock movement as rainfall and the availability of grass, as the title quotation (from a Turkana woman explaining the risks attendant on owning grass-dependent cattle in an ecosystem with a fiercely seasonal rainfall regime) highlights. McCabe's focus is on what happens at the confluence of ecology, history and politics: as he notes 'an examination of how the ecosystem is structured and functions, and how the human population articulates with the ecosystem, is necessary but not sufficient to understand the complexity of human–environmental relationships' (p. 7).

This is a book rich in data, but also rich in insights into people as individuals. McCabe's first-hand accounts of cattle raids make compelling reading. The book's synthesis of material on Turkana pastoralism and on pastoral ecology will be invaluable for students. Its honest and constructive discussion of how to balance social and the ecological in research is worthy of wider debate, by both graduate students and their elders.

WILLIAM ADAMS
Cambridge University

The African Union: Pan-Africanism, peacebuilding and development

by TIMOTHY MURITHI

Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005. Pp. 182. £50.00.

doi:10.1017/S0022278X06282223

In Timothy Murithi's words, 'the founders of the AU have embarked on an ambitious project of re-definition of what it means to be an African' (p. 165).

Although the Union's architects have drawn from older discourses of Pan-Africanism, Murithi suggests that they have set out a genuinely novel set of mechanisms to promote peace and development on the continent. The problem his analysis persistently raises is whether those same state leaders are genuinely committed to implementing their grandiose statements of intent.

Murithi offers a wide-ranging survey of the African Union's initial efforts to promote peace and development, and to engage with various actors within civil society. After a short introduction, chapter 2 provides an overview of the Pan-African idea and how it set the scene for the new Union. Chapter 3 recounts the main obstacles to peace and development in Africa, while chapter 4 discusses the institutions that have been created to deal with them. Chapter 5 surveys the ways in which actors within civil society have been engaged or marginalised by the Union. Chapter 6 offers a road-map for what Murithi calls an 'auto-development' path for the continent. The short conclusion reflects on the main themes that emerge throughout the book.

The first theme is the tension between viewing African states as part of the problem of insecurity and underdevelopment in Africa, and seeing the new Union and certain members of it as the main hope for the continent's salvation. Here Murithi poses the key question of whether Africa's leaders can or want to move beyond their fixation with the sovereign state as the ideal form of political community. He also offers several suggestions about how the Union should engage with non-state actors. Second, Murithi criticises neo-liberal policies such as those embodied in the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and instead calls for his own version of auto-development that focuses on the needs of local Africans and fighting corruption, debt and low levels of productivity. He also suggests that African states should issue Pan-African passports, and that they and their international partners should hire more local people rather than expensive foreign consultants. A third theme that emerges is Murithi's disdain for many of the continent's elites and leaders. When exploring the reasons for widespread poverty in Africa, for instance, Murithi concludes that the 'first line of defence against this [external] exploitation should have been African leaders and the elites. They regrettably turned out to be the primary agents for Africa's impoverishment. Foreign European, North American and Asian actors would not have been able to exploit Africa if the leaders and elites had not permitted themselves to become complicit in what is, in effect, the greatest orchestrated theft and economic sleight-of-hand perpetuated in the history of humanity' (pp. 140–1). The problem remains, however, that the African Union will not live up to its stated objectives unless those same elites change their behaviour. Murithi regularly appeals to their better natures, and hopes that civic associations both within and outside Africa will be able to hold them accountable to the objectives set out in the Union's new frameworks. To date, however, the signs are not encouraging, with Murithi listing a plethora of conferences and forums that have produced reams of paper and platitudes, but little in the way of practical solutions to the challenges preventing peace and development on the continent.

Overall, although seasoned observers will find little new information in Murithi's book, it does provide a reasonably clear overview of the terrain on which the African Union will develop. Finally, however, I have to ask whether Ashgate Publishing Limited employs copy-editors, because if it does, they have

failed to do their jobs properly in relation to this book, which is littered with literally hundreds of typographical and grammatical errors. Readers paying £50.00 for this volume should be able to expect a polished product, and in that sense at least they will be disappointed.

PAUL D. WILLIAMS
University of Birmingham

Battling terrorism in the Horn of Africa edited by ROBERT I. ROTBERG
Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2005. Pp. 210. US\$49.95;
US\$19.95 (pbk.).
doi:10.1017/S0022278X0629222X

There have been literally hundreds of books on terrorism published since the September 11 attacks. A tiny minority of them advance our understanding of terrorism and contain genuine insights, in large part because they are well grounded in the terrorism studies literature, develop new theoretical insights, employ rigorous methodologies, and gather new data. However, such works are few and far between. The vast majority of recent books on terrorism actually offer very little of academic value, mainly because most are written by scholars unfamiliar with the terrorism studies field, who are simply looking to exploit the current popularity of the subject. Unfortunately, *Battling Terrorism in the Horn of Africa* falls firmly into this latter category. Written by area studies scholars and former US diplomats, the book begins with an introductory chapter, which is then followed by chapters offering an overview of the main terrorist threats, the local and international counter-terrorism efforts, and policy recommendations for each of the countries of the region: Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, Yemen, and Kenya.

Of all the book's numerous faults, three in particular stand out. First, the overall findings of the book are exceedingly banal, even trivial: despite an alarmist introduction (which seems to contradict most of the country studies that follow), virtually every other chapter begins with the admission that no significant terrorist threat currently exists, but that potential (mainly 'Islamist' or 'Jihadist') terrorists could arise in the future. There then follows a desperate attempt by the authors to conjure up reasons for concern about the potential terrorist threat in the region. In other words, the book's own evidence suggests that, in fact, there is very little 'battling' of terrorism to do at the present time in the Horn.

Second, and far more seriously, the book lacks any grounding at all in the theoretically and empirically based terrorism literature. There is virtually no attempt to define terrorism or distinguish it from other forms of political violence, nor are there any attempts to link the analysis to the extensive literature that exists on the complex types and causes of terrorist violence. Disturbingly, the book assumes a direct causal link between fundamentalist expressions of Islam and terrorist violence – a link thoroughly debunked by serious scholarship on both Islamic culture and terrorism studies. Indicative of its lack of grounding in the established terrorism literature is the ubiquitous use of a hyperbolic and propagandistic language that permeates the entire text: the region is described as a 'reservoir of terror' (p. 2) and a 'bastion of terror' (p. 8); Yemen is purportedly in danger of becoming a major 'incubator and exporter of transnational

revolutionary Islam' (p. 18); the countries of the region need to be immunised (p. 18) and inoculated (p. 22) against terror; the serious danger is that the region's 'volatile mix could produce America's worst nightmare' (p. 83); on the terrorist 'balance sheet', Sudan is no longer the Islamist firebrand it was a decade ago (p. 121); and so on. The point is that no serious terrorism scholar (or regional specialist, for that matter) would ever use such emotive, misleading and value-laden language.

More importantly, such language, as well as many of the book's fundamental assumptions about the societies of the region, reveals a deep-seated paternalism that frequently morphs into an explicitly civilising discourse; it is openly stated throughout the text that Western-style neoliberalism (wrapped up in US military assistance, good governance promotion, and IMF structural adjustment) is the desperately needed antidote to local 'tribal' conflicts, backward-looking traditionalism, primitivism, brutish poverty and terrorism-producing religious fundamentalism.

Finally, the book's tabloid-style language also indicates a much more profound and insidious problem, namely, an uncritical acceptance of official US counter-terrorism discourse and practice, and a willingness to lend it intellectual legitimacy. From this perspective, *Battling Terrorism in the Horn of Africa* functions primarily as an attempted academic endorsement of the general thrust of US security policy in the region, and the authors wittingly or unwittingly serve the larger ideological project of sustaining US hegemony. The harsh reality is that it is precisely US counter-terrorism in the region, with its support for dictatorial and undemocratic regimes, its military bases and large-scale exercises, its interference in local politics, and its direct military intervention (all documented without a hint of self-consciousness by the authors), that is likely to produce violent anti-US resistance. The authors refuse to countenance such a possibility, instead arguing for ever greater levels of US intervention. In the end, the volume contains very little that will interest or excite either terrorism researchers or area studies specialists. It will, however, provide reassurance to the architects of the global war on terror.

RICHARD JACKSON
Manchester University