

Zones of Conflict in Africa, edited by George Klay Kieh, Jr. and Ida Rousseau Mukenge. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002. 174 pp.

The editors seemed to have struggled to produce this modest volume, which grew out of a conference at Morehouse College several years ago. They wrote five of the nine chapters; Kieh himself produced four, three of which were not conference-related. Co-editor Mukenge wrote a five-page introduction summarizing the papers but adding little value. Organizationally, Kieh's first three chapters lay out theories, contexts, and patterns and trends regarding civil conflicts in Africa, followed by five case studies (Great Lakes, Liberia, Nigeria, Somalia, and Zambia). The edited volume is essentially a primer, an overview for the uninitiated rather than a critical analysis for specialists.

Zones of Conflict is modest in intent, scope, and results. Kieh's initial chapters seek to establish a framework for analyzing conflict and its resolution, specifically *civil conflict*, defined as "disagreement between domestic actors – government and private groups – over issues" of all kinds (p. 3). Hence interstate conflicts and those between substate actors are excluded, and violence is viewed as a means rather than a distinct type of conflict. Kieh's treatment of theories, contexts, and patterns is brief and basic, without reference to sophisticated models or empirical research.

The five case studies provide a sampling of geographically dispersed and typologically varied conflict settings. Despite Kieh's effort to structure the analysis of conflict, the several authors' approaches and assessments are different. For Musifiky Mwanasali, the interrelated Great Lakes conflicts derive from the failures of political leadership, and their resolution will reside in community-based initiatives rather than diplomatic and military maneuvering. In Liberia, according to Augustine Konneh, economic and political inequalities rather than ethnic or tribal divisions explain the scourge of coups and civil war since 1980; hence national reconstruction requires both political and economic strategies. Military misrule in Nigeria has been a disaster not only for the country but also for the military itself, and Pita Ogaba Agbese is skeptical that the current government can break the pattern (a chapter twice the length of the others). Kieh's analysis of the causes of the Somali civil war and the impact of conflict resolution efforts concludes with eight prescriptions for ending this protracted crisis. Finally, Julius Ihonvbere sees Zambia as a "typical example of the problems, even failure, of the liberal democratic enterprise in a distorted, underdeveloped, dependent, vulnerable, and crisis-ridden political economy", and stipulates seven specific remedies of his own.

These five case studies represent both political conflicts (Nigeria and Zambia) and armed conflicts (Great Lakes, Liberia, and Somalia). However, it is not clear whether they illustrate the five conflict patterns identified by Kieh (secessionist, struggle over state power, democratization, ethnic, and mixed), nor do all the authors employ these terms. Indeed, each case study takes a singular approach with little or no reference to Kieh's framework. Each chapter can stand on its own merits, but the book would have been more coherent and integrated if the contributors had conformed their approaches. Such consistency would also have put the utility of Kieh's overall framework to the test. Even allowing for such disparate treatments and recognizing Kieh's

already substantial input to the book, he or his co-editor could have enhanced its value with a concluding chapter to pull things back together.

Lastly, it should be noted that the case studies concentrate mainly on the underlying roots, proximate causes, and evolution of their respective crises. By contrast, recommendations for effective resolution are disappointingly brief. The authors who did prescribe specific courses of action chose simply to assert them, without elaborating or evaluating their prospects for success against the underlying conditions they are intended to alter. All things considered, this volume will be most useful to upper level undergraduate or graduate students in courses on conflict management or African politics rather than to specialists in these fields.

Joseph P. Smaldone
Georgetown University