

that relies on first-hand accounts, interviews with those who participated in the struggle, archival material that has now become declassified, as well as a range of literature and memoirs of the liberation movement activists. Importantly, it is the first historical account of its kind that dissects the relationship between Russia and South Africa spanning different historical phases, from the pre-colonial to the post-*apartheid*.

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**Engel, Ulf (ed), *New Mediation Practices in African Conflicts*. Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag 2012, 266 pp.**

This volume is the result of the editor's fellowship at the Wallenberg Research Centre of the Stellenbosch Institute of Advanced Studies, which ended with an international workshop on the subject, held in September 2011. The contributions engage from different angles and perspectives with a wider range of case studies and thematic issues observing trends and ongoing shifts in African security architecture and subsequent approaches to and practices of intervention by mediation. As the editor observes: "These efforts are related to a larger process of norm change, including a new preference for non-indifference as opposed to non-interference in each other's affairs and an emphasis on human security as opposed to traditional regime security" (p 2).

Sceptics might argue that this is not coherently the case, as the example of Zimbabwe suggests. But even in that case a (Southern African Development Community) SADC mediator did at least to some extent flag a regional involvement. This could have been mainly guided by concern about further spill-over of the domestic situation — it had already generated a massive influx of (mostly illegal) immigrants (who strictly speaking could also be considered as refugees) — into neighbouring countries. But mediation efforts were these nonetheless, in which SADC was continuously involved over many years, where in earlier times much more open partisan policies might have been the order of the day. The editor therefore can credibly claim that the contributions to the volume address "new mediation practices ... emerging in an institutional context in which new actors are in the process of arising and

establishing themselves" (p 3). As indeed a series of local and regional conflicts on the continent has shown (some of the cases also discussed in articles in recent issues of this journal), collective responsibility executed by African institutions and regional groupings in search of solutions for African affairs has increased.

The new role of the African Union (AU) with respect to several contexts and crises is discussed in four of the chapters: Ulf Engel presents an overview on the AU's positions in unconstitutional changes of government between 2008 and 2011; Kwaku Asante-Darko explores the AU's role in Niger; Andreas Baumert and Ralph Ellermann the mediation in Guinea and Madagascar; and Gerrie Swart the AU's response to the Libyan crisis. The role of regional communities is discussed by Babatunde T Afolabi with regard to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in West Africa and by Helmut Orbon concerning SADC's conflict mediation in Southern Africa. This regional focus is complemented by reflections of Christopher Saunders on the history of international mediation in Southern Africa. Antonia Witt finally summarises the European Union's (EU) role as mediator after coups d'etat in the continent. Finally, two general chapters engage with the normative dimensions of international mediation (João Gomes Porto) and conceptual shifts in multi-track mediation (Peter R Sampson). The deliberations end with some tentative conclusions on new mediation practices by the editor.

The multi-faceted volume shows at times that even less than two years after its publication several new cases would offer additional insights. But this observation does not render the efforts meaningless or futile. The perspectives manage to inspire further investigation into the extent to which something new has been emerging and is consolidated with a lasting impact on the continent. Of interest is not the least how increased African responsibility might modify international approaches to conflict mediation in some of the 'hot spots', with regard to the previous established dominant role of 'old' actors (such as the United Nations [UN], the United States of American [USA], the EU and some of its member states, in particular France), but also concerning the emergence of potential 'new' actors (such as the United States Africa Command [AFRICOM], Germany, and possibly the BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa]). How much there is new in the multi-layered international efforts will remain a matter for discussion if not controversy. But closely following the shifts both in terms

of paradigms and practices is certainly a necessary undertaking, to which this volume contributes in a constructive and inspiring way.

"We need history!" states Saunders categorically with regard to a bemoaned absence of any systematic effort compiling the past experiences for the Southern African region (p 53), which lacks a credible non-partisan comprehensive history of mediation efforts. He claims that a "knowledge of past mediation will show how poorly managed present-day mediation efforts often are" (*ibid*). This can most likely also be said for the other parts of the continent. While this volume cannot fill the gap and does not intend to do so, it adds to the awareness that something is going on, which deserves more careful and ongoing attention and scholarly analysis. As the editor concludes with "cautious optimism" (p 261), much has happened under the AU in entering new terrain. But he also concedes that the challenges remain huge. Among the many aspects identified is the role of regional hegemons such as Nigeria and South Africa. But the AU must also become even more proactive in systematically developing "the political will, capacity and instruments to deal with structural conflict prevention — i.e. addressing in a long-term perspective the root causes of conflict, rather than just short-term symptoms" (p 260). And, one is tempted to add, to enhance further coherence and a common sense of purpose, which is not given away at once by governments for short-term gains of their individual states at the expense of a continental force to address wrongs for the sake of rights.

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