Edited By
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In recent times, there has been proliferation of works on human security in the global south. However, majority of them often fail to factor the state into the analytical equation. This book appears to have filled the lacuna as it focuses on state-human security nexus in Africa. The book is a collection of carefully researched papers edited by Jamila J. Abubakar, Kenneth Omeje and Habu Galadima.

A reading of the book provides convincing evidence that the collection of scholars and practitioners, who contributed to this book ranks among the most critical and analytical minds who can easily deal with issues in focus. In all, there are thirteen chapters and each deal with specific issue area

In chapter one of the book titled “Conflict of Securities: Reflections on State and Human Security in Africa”, the editors, Jamila J. Abubakar et al, set the conceptual agenda on which the divergent discourses were to be anchored. Aside from this, they identify the conflicting agenda in Africa’s security. From various evidence, they aver that there persist a fundamental conflict between the security of the state and the security of the people (p. 1). This, they trace to the advent of colonial rule in Africa. According to them, colonialism changed the security environment of the continent by institutionalizing state security rather than people’s security.

In chapter two of the book titled “Whose Security? The Global Security Debate and the African Paradox”, Keneth Omeje attempts to put the concept of security in proper theoretical perspectives. However, before he set out on this journey, he is quick to state that despite the belief in some quarters that the conceptual issues in security are settled, the concept is still contested. This contestation, he reasons, has been responsible for the divergent schools of security: realism, liberalism, securitization, criticalism, environmentalism etc. - but none of them captures the reality of the African continent. He concludes that given the reality of the continent, African scholars should double their efforts to identify some of the dominant theories in the global security debate with a view to developing more suitable, context-specific, medium-range alternatives.

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The duo of Audu Gambo and Chris Kwaja, in the third chapter titled “State and National Security: Issues of Sovereignty, Territoriality, and Governable Spaces” attempt to explore the linkage between the state and national security in the context of Africa. Thus, having conceptualized the state and national security from different standpoints, they submit that the stateness of an entity is determined by the extent to which it can ensure national security. However, in Africa, argue the duo, the failure of the state elites to guarantee security for their citizens has led to the proliferation of non-state security outfits. This development, according to them, has serious implications for the sovereign status of states.

In chapter four titled “Democratic Statecraft Versus Political Legitimacy: The Case of Botswana”, Rekha Kumar and Patrice Cailleba attempt to demonstrate how a unique model of democracy has been institutionalized in Botswana. Drawing from Carl Schmitt’s decisionism thesis, they contend that democracy in Botswana rather being electoral is really plebiscitary. The submission of the duo was that if democracy in Botswana must conform to the ideal in the West, the anachronistic democratic institutions must be reformed.

Dauda Abubakar in chapter five titled “Identity Politics, Violent Conflicts and the Challenges of Human Security in Africa”, seeks to identify the factors that have driven identity conflicts in Africa. Although, he admits that instrumentalist and constructivist theories might be germane to explaining the rising wave of conflicts and human insecurity in Africa. However, he contends that the neopatrimonial theory offers the best framework for explaining the politicization of identity issues on the continent. Drawing from the experiences of Cote d’ Ivorie and Democratic Republic Congo, he avers that the neopatrimonialization of the state by the ruling elites in these countries makes excluvistic politics inevitable. He concludes the chapter when he submits that the path to genuine human security, development and stability in Africa lies in people-driven social democratic project (p. 82).

In chapter six titled ‘Historical Perspectives on Security in Africa: The Refugee Problem’ Macharia Munene chronicles the continent’s security dilemma from the refugee angle. However, before he goes on historical excursion, he is quick to remark that contrary to popular perception that refugee problems in Africa, are recent, the problems actually started with the formation of colonial states in Africa. Although, he identifies many factors as being responsible for the creation of refugees: viz bad leadership, natural disaster, economic mismanagement etc. but he leans more on the external factor especially the role of “the master state”, in fuelling internal dissents and conflicts in Africa.

In chapter seven titled “State, Petro-violence and the Dynamics of Conflict Management in the Niger Delta Region”, Mala Mustapha attempts to re-theorize oil-conflict nexus from the more established paradigms (rentier state and oil curse). Using the Nigeria’s Niger Delta as a research backdrop, he argues that the rentier space model developed by Watts (2004) offers the best insight into the complex terrain of the Niger-Delta crisis. In the context of Nigeria, it explains how the dominant class, has sought through various means to manipulate oil politics.

Douglas Yates in the proceeding chapter attempts to establish the correlation between oil and corruption. Thus by drawing insight from various empirical studies and from reports of notable corruption watchdogs, he submits that oil states in Africa are ideal laboratories for the paradox of the plenty. In concluding the chapter, he avers that despite the seeming commitments by state leaders in oil producing states, accountability has not been institutionalized.
Onyukwu E. Onyukwu and Uzochkwu Amakom in the ninth chapter titled “Economic Growth and Human Security in the Nigeria’s Fourth Republic”, attempt to evaluate the impact of economic policy reform on the human security sector in the Nigeria’s fourth republic. Drawing from various statistical data, they aver that between 1999 and 2007, the federal government, in Nigeria, attempted to reform the macroeconomic sector but the reform programmes have not translated into “an inclusive growth”. This scenario according to them suggests that the social conditions of Nigerians have not really improved.

In chapter ten titled “Food Security and Agrarian Crisis in Nigeria” B.D Umoh attempts to connect agrarian crisis, food shortage and general insecurity. From the secondary data gathered from the National Population Commission (NPC), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) etc, within the demand-supply framework, he submits that there is food deficit in Nigeria. That, according to him, implies food insecurity and nutritional challenges. In concluding the chapter, he deduces that resolving agrarian crisis offers the panacea not only for ensuring food security but also for preventing hunger-driven conflicts in Nigeria.

Doreen Alusa in chapter eleven titled “GMO Politics: Implications for Africa’s Food Export Commodities” examines the politics of agricultural biotechnology and its consequence for the continent’s food export sector. Having examined the nature of the debate between the pro-Genetic Modification and anti-Genetic Modification, the author concedes that Africa has been caught in the midst of the debate but the reality on ground suggests that stakeholders in Africa are majorly concerned with the economic benefits of GM technology. In concluding the chapter, she submits that if Africa must embrace GM technology, it must not only be willing to consume the products but must also specialize in producing GM products.

In the twelfth chapter titled “The Mining Industry of the Democratic Republic of Congo: The Leading Economic Sector for Reconstruction and Development”, Sehlare Makgetlaneng attempts to reconstruct a new model of state reconstruction and development for the DRC. To achieve this objective, he rejects the belief entrenched in elitist circle that mining should be the engine of reconstruction and development in the DRC. He contends that since the mining sector has not benefited the people of the country, it cannot be the pivot of a new beginning in the DRC. To this end, he submits that given DRC’S political economy, agriculture not mining, is central to the national reconstruction and development.

In chapter thirteen titled “Political Security and the Insecurity of Politics in Nigeria” Habu Galadima not only examines the various dimensions of political security in Nigeria but also identifies the core threats vis: leadership, corruption, political participation, ethnicity, religion, nativity, etc. To him, these variables do not only jeopardize democracy but could also lead to insecurity of politics. Since May 1999, contends Galadima, the democratic process has been threatened by myriads of forces. These forces, he further remarks, have further deepened political insecurity in the country. He concludes the chapter by recommending the way forward: allowing broader political participation; promotion of the rule of law; entrenchment of free and fair elections; and the protection of human rights.

There is no doubt that the book has contributed not only to increasing the dearth of literature on human security in Africa but has also enhanced our understanding of the subject matter. However, some lacunae were observed. Firstly, the first chapter of the book should have been designated as the ‘introduction’. Secondly, chapters four, eleven and twelve in form and content
have no connection with theme of the book. Finally, in a book of such nature, a separate chapter should have been designated as the conclusion.

These observations notwithstanding, the book is recommended for scholars of African security and development.