

Review: Sandra Calkins, Enrico Ille, and Richard Rottenburg (eds), *Emerging Orders in the Sudans* (2015)

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Sandra Calkins, Enrico Ille, and Richard Rottenburg (eds) (2015), *Emerging Orders in the Sudans*, Bamenda and Buea: Langaa RPCIG, ISBN 9956792160, 294 pp.

Given the (re-)emergence of violent conflict in both Sudan and South Sudan since the independence of the latter in 2011, the necessity to look behind the violence has become urgent and apparent. *Emerging Orders in the Sudans* encompasses contributions by various – young and emerging, Sudanese and non-Sudanese – scholars mainly grounded in the discipline of social anthropology.

A remarkable sentence in the introduction sets the tone and provides an analysis of the two Sudans in a nutshell: “In fact, the crux seems to be that even the most powerful collective actors of the figuration are unable to achieve their goals” (2). This translates into a highly fragmented localised and internationalised, historic as well as globalised, emergence of orders which the book aims to cover. The editors clarify their interest in going beyond formal politics and its representatives and, further, alert readers to the fact that the current orders of violence have created an incredible amount of human suffering in the Sudans. The book lays bare the appalling lack of accountability by those responsible, buttressed by the absence of the rule of law.

The split of the country with the independence of South Sudan in 2011 is hereby seen as the main symbol of the inability to establish civic order. This inability is grounded in several politics – for example, the colonial establishment of an exclusive political elite (riverain Arabs in the North). Here, a comparative chapter on the constituting order of ethnic elites in South Sudan would have been of great interest. The editors explore the divisiveness of the rhetoric by the political elite in the North, which was deepened by Islamist politics: the Inqaz (Salvation Front), with its civilisation project. The editors conclude that the binary thinking of unity vs. diversity does not leave space for heterogeneity.

The volume proposes a postcolonial reading of the rules of practices establishing institutional orders and of the obstacles to the development or destruction of alternative orders. The practices are classified in helpful categories (classifications, commensurabilities, valuations, justifications) with their semantic forms (rules, categories, procedures). The discourse on rational and purposeful actors is critically reflected upon in the volume. In addition, the usage of the plural “Sudans” allows the editors to avoid cementing borders and boundaries and is reflective of the coexistence of various Sudans “overlapping or nesting into each other” (7). These are

welcome approaches and deeply needed fresh angles in the field of studies of the Sudans.

One would have wished, however, that the editors had succeeded in creating a more solid link between the outline and the chapters. This would have been extremely helpful in mapping and trying to make sense of the current conflicts in the two countries.

The book has three broad frames in which both emergence and contestations of orders are developed and/or contended. “Borders and boundaries” steps out of the conventional North–South perspective and views the Sudans from different angles. Yoshiko Kurita explores corresponding units of observation through the history of revolutionary movements along the Nile Valley. Andrea Behrens brings a historical perspective to the negotiated boundaries between Chad and Darfur, describing the use and meaning of borders and boundaries in conflict. The essentialisation of race as a political tool for the centre to economise the slave trade is described from the microcosm that is the border area. The competing concepts – the French colonialists in Chad vs. the British in Darfur – took different strategies to granting land rights in order to position supportive local powers: while in Darfur Arab elites were chosen by the British to administrate over the other ethnic groups, the French pursued the opposite tactic in Chad, depriving the Muslim elites of their historical powers and placing them under heavy foreign (French) rule. The consequences of these established orders are still playing out in the current conflicts along these boundaries. In a similar vein, Douglas Johnson argues that the establishment of exclusionary borders by regulating land access had far-reaching consequences for the Abyei borderline and rural communities on both sides. Nicky Kindersley takes up the question of resources and borders and discusses the emergence of formalised nationality within the two Sudans through the bureaucratic negotiation of identity and belonging.

Language as a constitutive tool for identity informed by external interests is examined in the chapter by Siri Lamoureaux on the Moro language spoken by a Nuba community in Khartoum, where language classes are used by a foreign charity as a vehicle to introduce Christianity.

The second realm of orders is based on resources, their “production and distribution.” In his chapter, Günther Schlee highlights land use in the Blue Nile region and the meaning of the agricultural schemes for the distribution of political resources and its influence on the current conflicts. Specifically, the use of proxies – in this case the Fulbe, who are armed by the government in order to fight guerrilla movements – is well

covered in this chapter. This could be highly relevant for the future discussion in an increasingly fragmented and militarised Equatoria.

A complex field of socio-economic and political adaptation lies at the core of Zahir Musa Abdal-Kareem's chapter in which he analyses small-scale farmers' engagement in gold mining. He portrays this engagement as an act somewhere between adapting in the face of the new opportunity presented by gold mining and being manipulated by political actors. Again, outside intervention as an integral and influential part of emerging orders is the decisive object of analysis. Immo Eulenberg shows the mutual *laissez-faire* attitude of pastoralists and local governments in southeastern Equatoria.

Sandra Calkins and Siri Lamoureaux both bring external actors and their intentions into the equation, as an element of social change or disruption. Given the huge number of humanitarian and missionary/proselytising projects being conducted by outsiders in the Sudans, this element of order could have been emphasised more analytically and should have included critical discussions on external interventions inside the Sudans.

The question of representation is further considered by Enrico Ille, as he analyses the changes within, and consequences experienced by, a community in a village in the Nuba Mountains, as it has gone from receiving food relief to being subject to development activities – and back – over the last two decades. Mariam Sharif's research on medical kit distribution in the Nuba Mountains also describes the cultural impact of humanitarian services rather than development services. The four contributions aim to trace interventions that have transformed/are transforming wartime institutions into new emerging orders.

Guma Kunda Komey asks how the lack of clarity during the popular consultation for the Comprehensive Peace Agreement led to a multitude of different expectations that have resulted in competing orders. Similarly, the disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) process is described by Timm Sureau as a failed attempt to engineer social change.

The focus on borders and boundaries, production and distribution and, last, organisation and representation provides structure that helps the volume navigate through the multitude of orders on social, political, ethnic, and military levels. To connect the micro spots back to the larger question of emerging orders would have been even more helpful for a better understanding of the emerging orders of violence and elite formation – a topic in fundamental need of research and analysis.

- Annette Weber