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Sam Kniknie and Karen Bscher (editors), *Rebellious Riots: Entangled Geographies of Contention in Africa*. Brill, 2023, 243 pages. ISBN:978-90-04-54239-6.

Reviewed by: Reem Abohussien, political researcher, Cairo, Egypt.

This book sheds light on urban protests in Africa in the context of their relationship with rural protests by examining the points of convergence and intersections across the African continent. It focuses on several countries that represent case studies to clarify the matter practically.

The first chapter provides a summary and a clear vision of the aims of this volume, explaining the reasons for addressing the subject of the study, the study tools, and so on. The editors began with a rhetorical question regarding the reasons for the delay in studying the phenomenon of urban protests in Africa, considering these protests have existed since colonial times. This chapter discusses the different theses that have addressed the phenomenon of these urban protests, presenting the similarities and differences between rural and urban protests, and the points of intersection between them, to study the phenomenon from all aspects. As a result, a diverse group of researchers, who studied geography, anthropology, or conflict studies, were consulted.

To gain a fruitful understanding of the different concepts presented in the study, the editors suggest starting from Tilly and Tarrow's definition of armed protest and rebellion as "interactions in which actors make claims that affect the interests of other actors, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of common interests or agendas in which governments participate as targets, claim initiators, or third parties." From this perspective, armed conflict, civil war, mass protest, social movements, and even riots are not entirely different models or modes of collective social action. They rely not only on social coordination, but largely on the same claims or actors.

The various contributions in the volume focus on studying urban protests beyond the binary of war versus riot and urban versus rural. Using both quantitative and ethnographic methods, ranging from large dataset analysis to ethnographic individual case studies, the researchers critically

de-construct dominant divisions and reconstruct interconnectedness. Cases from Sierra Leone, Niger, Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) present different forms of dissent, collective mobilization, or conflict, and proceed to demonstrate how they cannot be confined to fixed spatial or temporal categories, but instead move along and across time and space. The cases clearly demonstrate how armed conflicts can have multiple threats that change over time. In the case of eastern DRC, which is treated in two chapters of the volume, the long history of violent conflict in that region seems to have explicitly reinforced rural-urban mobility, proximity, and linkages.

The ultimate question of this volume is not whether armed conflict has moved from rural to urban, but where and how urban and rural protest meet and, more importantly, what this meeting produces. The different chapters show how protests, riots, and armed conflict are intertwined and mutually shaped since these concepts are viewed from a relational perspective. This relational approach sheds new light on how armed actors operate in the city, how political mobilization takes place, and how identities are mobilized beyond urban and rural boundaries. Each chapter presents a specific aspect of the dynamics between urban and rural armed conflict, and civil protest. The collection covers geographical cases from Nigeria, the DRC, Niger, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, and Ethiopia. Methodologically, it combines quantitative, qualitative, and ethnographic approaches.

The book begins with Nicholas Dorward and Sean Fox, who provide a quantitative holistic analysis that begins with a critical deconstruction of the urbanization hypothesis of conflict in Africa. As such, they set the stage for the key conceptual questions that the volume itself is positioned towards. The findings point to relevant differences between North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa, with a focus on the latter. Throughout the chapters, the volume addresses intersections and entanglements through the study of a range of themes such as space, identities, practices, and mobilization. Space, or area, is used as a unit of analysis, according to Engel and Nugent, to understand the contested sovereignty and new territorial orders emerging on the continent in times of globalization. In this paper, the city itself is the ideal site for struggles over territorial control. Then, the authors provide two examples of small cities in the DRC's South Kivu, where the countryside and the city meet on the edges of these peri-urban cities, representing an ideal place to understand the entanglements between both rural and urban protests. The study also showed that there is an indirect link between the organization of demonstrations and the participation of some armed groups in conflict

areas in peri-urban cities to secure and maintain community interests as seen in eastern Congo.

Another area where the intersection of rural and urban protest is explored is identities. In many postcolonial states, the relationship between identity and territory is central to claims of representation and rights and is key to the broader political geography of power and control. The question of how urban identities promote peace or conflict is particularly salient in the Ethiopian context. Youth figure prominently in discussions of identities, politics, conflict and space, and young people play a central role in the complex struggles for political transformation in Africa. In the final chapter, Kieran Mitton takes us to Sierra Leone to investigate the attitudes of marginalized young people toward the armed conflicts that shape their city, their daily lives, and their futures.

The third element through which the relationship between rural and urban protests is tested, is mobilization. In order to legitimize political claims, actors mobilize in the form of narratives, discourses, and vocabulary. The mobilization associated with the urban riots and rural protests of the Islamist militant group Boko Haram is an example. Boko Haram uses the same grievances to mobilize recruits: the failure of the state to achieve economic and social stability and latent youth anger.

The fourth element used to examine the relationship between rural and urban protest is practices. The volume also raises concrete questions about the extent to which recruitment techniques in both war and protest resemble each other. For example, Kohler and Sharett explore how the mobilization mechanisms of urban protest and rural rebellion are linked together and use techniques in similar ways. There are proponents of the hypothesis that urban protests have increased in Africa, while rural protests have declined. However, the second chapter argues otherwise by using published data that protests have increased across the continent over the past twelve years but vary by region. It concludes that urban protests have undoubtedly increased in North Africa. But in many places in sub-Saharan Africa, rural protests are still predominant.

The use of broadband communications devices in both rural and urban areas is also discussed, with Niger being a prime example of this. To take everything into consideration, this book provides an in-depth study of urban protests in Africa, mainly sub-Saharan Africa, by linking them to rural protests. This helps researchers who wish to study this phenomenon, with the availability of a huge amount of data, analyses, and information that have been reviewed throughout the various chapters of the book.

This edition is criticized for the fact that the editors penned a lengthy presentation covering the book's contents. As a result of this, it negatively impacted the book. Instead of offering a balanced or evenly weighed publication some of the information was repeated and thus affected the outcome.

**Research Africa**

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