

BOOK REVIEW

Selected African Studies in Memory of Zsuzsánna Biedermann, Edited by **Judit Kiss** and **István Tarrósy**, 2024, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne, ISBN (10): 1-0364-0445-5.

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Studying African issues in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is important for several compelling reasons. Many countries in the region have historical ties with Africa, which shape current political and social dynamics. Understanding migration patterns from Africa helps address integration and multicultural challenges in these societies. Furthermore, Africa's growing economies present new trade and investment opportunities for CEE countries. Consequently, engaging with African issues promotes a broader understanding of global interconnectedness and challenges. Furthermore, African studies highlight human rights and social justice movements, fostering empathy and advocacy for marginalized groups, relevant for CEE countries as well. It also enriches cultural understanding, leading to greater intercultural dialogue and inclusivity. Incorporating African studies in education encourages critical thinking and prepares students for a globalized world. Understanding Africa's role in global geopolitics is crucial for informed foreign policy.

This book contributes to these useful and noble purposes by discussing current African issues at global, regional, and country levels, both from theoretical and real-life perspectives. The individual studies are based on secondary and/or primary research and use various methodological tools, including archival research, field research, case studies, interviews, and statistical analysis. They all focus on topics or themes in which Zsuzsánna Biedermann, a young Hungarian Africanist who untimely passed away in May 2022, was also cultivating an interest in, or had published about.

Part I includes studies on the changing global order and examples for the phenomenon of “the developmental state” in Africa. It features a theoretical analysis of Africa and Central and Eastern Europe's geopolitical roles, and two studies on developmental states, particularly in Ethiopia and a broader African context. These studies discuss state interventionism and the challenges faced by African developmental models.

The first study by Vörös and Tarrósy analyzes how Africa and CEE are repositioning themselves in the 21st century. It discusses key concepts and potential scenarios for the global order, emphasizing the growing importance of Africa in CEE foreign policies. The chapter first looks at key concepts and theories and then contemplates three possible scenarios of the world

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order. The analysis focuses on African geopolitics and examines the potential role of CEE in African foreign policies. It then explores how Africa has regained significance in the foreign policy agendas of CEE countries, which have been European Union (EU) members since 2004. The chapter contributes to the discussion of an enlarged scope for Europe-Africa relations in light of the changing world order, within which the EU also searches for tangible solutions for coping with global challenges, together with the African Union (AU) and its member states, which also seek enhanced collaborations with Europe and other global players.

The second study, by Judit Ricz, reflects on the concept of the developmental state, particularly in Africa. It reviews historical and contemporary approaches to developmentalism, contrasting the East Asian model with Africa's current developmental challenges and the resurgence of state interventionism. Pásztor's study focuses on Ethiopia, examining its developmental capitalism characterized by strong government intervention. It assesses the limitations of public support and bureaucratic independence while comparing Ethiopia's model to East Asian cases to determine its effectiveness. The final study by Solymári and Czirják critiques international development aid, proposing improvements for its effectiveness. It specifically addresses slum conditions in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, analyzing the role of various aid projects, including those from the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta.

Part II addresses pressing global issues affecting Sub-Saharan Africa, such as food security amid Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine, and the dynamics of migration and remittances. The papers analyze how Africa's reliance on grain imports has changed and examine migration patterns and the economic impact of remittances on the continent.

The first paper by Gábor Búr examines the worsening food supply crisis in low-income African countries due to reliance on grain imports from Russia and Ukraine. It analyzes the shift from self-sufficiency to dependency on imports, the role of cereals in African diets, and the impact of Ukraine's invasion on grain deliveries and prices. The paper emphasizes a growing reliance on Africa's own resources rather than on external aid during crises. The second paper by Viktor Marsai investigates African irregular migration to Europe as a reflection of the EU's strategic interests. Using Frontex data, it highlights changes in migration patterns, noting a significant increase in migrants from North Africa. The third study, by Judit Kiss, evaluates the impact of remittances on economic development in Sub-Saharan Africa. It discusses the motivations behind remittances and their effects on both micro and macroeconomic levels, analyzing the annual inflow of \$50 billion. The paper argues that Africa should leverage remittances as a source of development finance, while addressing potential negative impacts like corruption and brain drain.

Part III focuses on Rwanda, exploring gender equality, sexual violence in the Great Lakes region, and language policy. The studies assess Rwanda's progress in gender integration post-genocide, patterns of sexual violence in conflict settings, and the implications of language policy shifts towards English and Swahili, noting the challenges in education and resource allocation.

Judit Bagi and István Tarrósy investigate gender equality post-genocide. Their research, based on fieldwork and desk research, assesses women's political and social integration since 2003. While significant legal and practical advancements have been made, such as increased representation and land ownership for women, challenges remain, particularly concerning gender-based violence (GBV) and the need for ongoing policy attention. Anna Lator examines the persistent issue of sexual violence linked to armed conflicts in Uganda, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The study analyzes socio-cultural dynamics and patterns of



violence, exploring how the nature of conflicts influences these patterns through comprehensive field research. Attila T. Horváth explores Rwanda's language policy, particularly the roles of English and Swahili in a historically Kinyarwanda-speaking nation. The paper reviews the motivations behind language policy changes since the 1994 crisis, noting the benefits of English for the ruling elite. It also discusses challenges in mother tongue education and the impact of globalization on the education system, while highlighting the informal resurgence of Swahili in East Africa.

The book stands as a tribute to the remarkable legacy of Zsuzsánna Biedermann, whose dedication to African studies and commitment to improving economic conditions in the region continue to inspire our collective efforts. Her work exemplified the importance of applying theoretical insights to real-world challenges, aiming to enhance the capabilities and quality of life for individuals across Africa.

The contributions within this volume reflect a diverse range of academic disciplines and address critical issues that resonate deeply with Zsuzsánna's passion for development. From the dynamics of the global order and the concept of the developmental state to pressing concerns like food security and gender equality, these studies offer valuable perspectives on the interconnectedness of CEE with Africa.

As we engage with these complex topics, we not only honour Zsuzsánna's memory but also commit to fostering a deeper understanding of African issues in our region. This dialogue is essential for promoting empathy, cultural exchange, and informed policymaking, paving the way for a more equitable and collaborative future. We hope this book inspires readers to continue exploring and addressing the vital challenges facing Africa today, keeping alive Zsuzsánna's vision of making the world a better place.

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