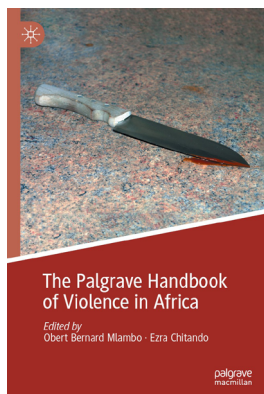# The Palgrave Handbook of Violence in Africa

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The Palgrave Handbook of Violence in Africa is a collection of fifty-six chapters edited by Bernard Mlambo and Ezra Chitando. The individual chapters are authored by scholars with expertise in African studies and profound knowledge of conflicts in Africa. The book is divided into seven different parts discussing systematically the key elements of African culture, and the cultural mechanisms that create, sustain, resist, and mitigate violence in Africa. The book enumerated the enormous role violence has played in the continent's affairs, before, during, and after Western rule and dominance. The book also pays detailed attention to theoretical emphases on the link between violence in Africa and other factors such as colonialism, regionalism, race, gender, warfare, statecraft, elections, apartheid, technology, etc. It also attends to theorises between violence and political regimes in Africa.

In the introduction, the editors stated that violence is a concrete dimension of the African historical and contemporary experience. It is not stereotypical, but rather a live experience of encounters that define and shape existential realities. Although, they made it crystal clear that the aim of the book is not to perpetuate some sort of stereotype of Africa as a violent continent or the home of never-ending forms of violence. Discussing this aspect of the continent is crucial because the continent's socio-political crisis cannot be addressed without attending to the structural, stratified, and epistemic violence that has underlain the nation-state project in Africa.

The book discusses violence in Africa in its various forms of expression, including psychological and cultural dimensions, mechanics, constitutive elements, patterns, progression, characteristics, etc. The chapters did not merely proffer a prescriptive approach to violence in Africa but considered interpretative reflections, and non-deductive data analysis, both at the macro and the micro levels. The handbook also proffers an understanding of violence through the storytelling approach. The introductory part concluded by pointing out that every single discipline of study in the social sciences and humanities is preoccupied with the phenomenon of violence and no single discipline can discuss violence exclusively without borrowing from the other. This is evident as there is the absence of shared definitions of what violence is, its causes, methods, and approaches.

The first part of the book conceptualized violence in Africa. The section attempts to clarify what violence is all about especially from an African lens. Some of the chapters in this category analyzed the use of technological devices in perpetuating crimes in Africa. In the first chapter of this section, Ezra Chitando and Obert Bernard Mlambo asserted that violence is never a simple concept and should never be presented as such. Hence, the topography of violence, technologies of violence, terrorism, civil war and insurgent violence, child soldiers and violence, epistemic violence, structural violence, violence and memory, violence and the law, cultural mechanisms for creating, sustaining, resisting, and mitigating violence, political violence, violence in moments of religious, social, and geo-political transformation, gender and violence, and violence against nature, among many other themes were all touched in the chapter. Contributors to this section laid the foundations for clear and intense forms and causes of violence in Africa, as well as proposed solutions that can contribute towards curbing or overcoming violence. Aside from the conceptualization of violence in Africa, the first section of the book discussed violence in Africa: reflecting on a broad concept; the rate of oppression (ROp); systemic and epistemic violence in Africa; technologies of violence in Africa; border violence in Africa; diaspora and the afterlife of violence; the chemical violence of colonial encounters in Africa; epistemic violence in the postcolony; geographies of violence and informalization; and through the Afrocentricity lens: terror, insurgency and implications for regional integration in Southern Africa from Cabo Delgado province, Mozambique.

The second section of the book discusses State and violence in Africa. The authors highlighted political violence and the mechanics of legitimation in official commissions of inquiry in Africa. Since 1990, there have been more than seventy commissions of inquiry in Africa that have investigated incidents, periods, or patterns of violence, from the various truth commissions. The section further discussed other topics like party politics, violence, impunity, and social, injustices in Zimbabwe (1980–2022). Topics on preventing electoral violence in Africa: towards sustainable peace; EndSARS and Police brutality in Nigerians; among others were all discussed.

The third part examined the phenomenon of violence in Africa and its various effects on youths and children in Africa. Some of the chapters under this section provided an in-depth investigation of how patterns and cultures of violence affect youths and children, analyzing how youths and children are both subjects and objects of violent conflict in Africa. The issue of child soldiers in Sierra Leone, Sudan, Uganda, Eritrea and the Democratic Republic of Congo were well analyzed. In this section, Babayo Sule, Ibrahim Kawuley Mika'il and Mohammed Kwarah Tal discussed other political phenomenon like violence, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, and conflicts in 21st Century Africa. They examined the nexus between the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) among the youth and conflict in Africa.

In the fourth section of the book, the authors analyzed the religious and cultural nature of violence in Africa. Some of the chapters in this section examined the role of religion in conflict escalation and de-escalation. Illustrations on how religion and cultural beliefs have contributed in causing and de-escalating violence in African societies were stated.

In part five of the book, which marks the second volume of this handbook, scholars of African studies and violence explore the issues of violence and gender in Africa. The conceptions and misconceptions of gender ideologies by both genders in Africa were x-rayed by some of the authors in this section. Also, sexual violence against girls and women in African conflicts was highlighted under some of the chapters in this category. An issue like how sexual violence disproportionately affects girls and women in Africa during conflict covers a major aspect of this section. The chapters adopt a discursive approach to examine sexual violence in African conflict.

Part six of the handbook focuses on violence, memory, and the law in Africa. Some chapters in this section presented memory as another dimension through which violence is conceived, remembered, and imagined. The section examined the psychological aspect of conflict and explored the role of memory in contributing to violence in Africa. How various laws in Africa have contributed to the debate on violence in Africa was equally examined by some authors. It also explored how laws are deployed to deal with violence in Africa.

Finally, section seven analyzed how violent conflicts can be prevented and de-escalated not just in Africa but across the globe. The chapter by James Tsabora proposes an institutional response mechanism that could be appropriated and deployed to address the violent conflicts in Africa. Whereas Victor H. Mlambo, Ernest Toochi Aniche, and Mandla Mfundo Masuku in their chapter under section seven "Managing Conflict in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities for the African Union" examined the extent to which the African Union has been successful in addressing widespread violent conflicts in Africa.

The in-depth nature of this book has presented it to serve as an antidote to the long-awaited theoretical and practical solution to minimize violent conflicts in Africa whose origin predates colonialism. By assembling scholars on African studies and conflict studies, the editors have provided both students and researchers of African studies and conflict studies a qualitative and quantitative academic material that will aid further studies on related topics, especially in this twenty-first century.