

# Book Reviews

Weldemichael, Awet Tewelde. 2013. *THIRD WORLD COLONIALISM AND STRATEGIES OF LIBERATION: ERITREA AND EAST TIMOR COMPARED*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 348 pp. \$99.00 (cloth).

Awet Tewelde Weldemichael, of the University of Kentucky, offers a tour de force of comparative military history in *Third World Colonialism and Strategies of Liberation*. Based on his dissertation (UCLA, 2008), it examines a phenomenon he terms secondary colonialism: the acquisition of former European colonies by larger, more powerful neighbors (p. 6).

Secondary colonialism is not inherently different in policy from “standard” European colonialism, but it can elicit varying grand strategies of resistance movements. Weldemichael presents a comparative study of Eritrean and East Timorese anticolonial struggles through this framework of secondary colonialism. Drawing heavily on primary source documents from the respective liberation movements, as well as interviews with fighters and politicians in East Timor, Eritrea, and the diaspora, he presents two unique and often forgotten case studies of colonialism and anticolonial resistance.

He begins with an elaboration of his theoretical framework, noting that both Ethiopia and Indonesia resorted to “imposed provincialism plagued by counterinsurgency” (p. 8). The former Italian colony of Eritrea was passed on to a British military administration, which gradually paved the way for federation with Ethiopia in 1952, which Eritrean leaders, despite their skepticism, believed preferable to continued European domination. Ethiopia then began a ten-year Amharization program in Eritrea: dissolving Eritrean symbols, replacing Arabic and Tigrinya with Amharic, and eventually fully incorporating Eritrea as a province of the empire by force (p. 24). Along the same lines, the Portuguese decolonization of East Timor was derailed in the mid-1970s by an Indonesian invasion and terror campaign (p. 34).

In the first few chapters, Weldemichael describes the birth and growth of anticolonial movements in each country. He points out that each movement’s grand strategy evolved in response to geographic and demographic concerns, counterinsurgency tactics, and international conditions. For these reasons, the Eritrean resistance developed a highly disciplined and centralized military command structure (p. 112). Because of Ethiopia’s role on the continent as a symbol of pan-African unity, few wished to condemn its imperial projects; the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) and its predecessor, the Eritrean Liberation Front, therefore found few long-term allies in the international arena, instead having to struggle militarily alone. By contrast,

the size of East Timor was not conducive for conventional military tactics. The leaders of the Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente (FRETILIN) appealed to nongovernment organizations and international human-rights organizations within the United Nations and abroad for support and recognition. The genocidal streak in Indonesian counterinsurgency warfare enabled them to secure international support (p. 127).

In later chapters, Weldemichael shows that each liberation movement sought internal allies within the secondary colonial power. In the 1980s and 1990s, East Timorese students at Indonesian universities and boarding schools sensitized the Jakarta population to the war in Timor (p. 230). Forging alliances with critics of the Suharto regime, as well as human rights activists within Indonesia, allowed the East Timorese to win domestic support. Similarly, the EPLF entered into tactical alliances with other liberation groups in the Ethiopian periphery. Eritreans offered training and assistance to nascent armed groups, the Tigray People's Liberation Front and the Oromo Liberation Front. Despite programmatic and ideological differences, all three movements acknowledged that a regime change in Addis Ababa was necessary for their struggles to succeed (p. 226).

This book shows the international dimensions of the respective liberation struggles. Weldemichael elaborates on the Soviet Union's role in supplying the Derg in Addis Ababa with weapons and training; he notes how Eritreans won short-lived support from competing pan-Arab and Ba'athist nations. Both the EPLF and FRETILIN received military training and/or monetary support from the People's Republic of China. One of the strongest sections of this book describes the effects of the end of the cold war on the conflicts: neither Indonesia nor Ethiopia could count on their respective supporters. In addition, the Roman Catholic Church kept the East Timor debate alive in international circles (p. 169).

Weldemichael pays attention to the way each movement's grand strategy affected its postindependence trajectory, but this could have been elaborated upon significantly. He does note that the newly formed Eritrean government turned inward, relying on the same military discipline that it had fostered for generations (p. 295). Although it may be beyond the scope of the book, a deeper discussion about this would have been useful. For example, less than two pages cover postindependence relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia; a single paragraph is dedicated to the 1998–2000 border war (p. 292). Nevertheless, Weldemichael should be commended for his analysis of the East Timorese independence elections and subsequent Indonesian scorched-earth warfare (p. 284).

*Third World Colonialism and Strategies of Liberation* challenges readers to rethink conventional categories of colonialism and anticolonial resistance and take seriously the framework of secondary colonialism. Weldemichael is Eritrean by birth, and he has continued to research and publish on Eritrean and Horn of Africa military and security affairs. His work is essential reading for anyone interested in the history of the Horn. His book joins Hepner (2009), O'Kane and Hepner (2009), Pool (2001), Reid (2009),

and others in a growing body of literature critically analyzing the Eritrean liberation struggle and its effects on postindependence politics. Although my knowledge of Southeast Asia is more limited, Weldemichael's use of East Timor as a comparison was helpful and enlightening.

#### REFERENCES CITED

- Hepner, Tricia Redeker. 2009. *Soldiers, Martyrs, Traitors, and Exiles: Political Conflict in Eritrea and the Diaspora*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- O'Kane, David, and Tricia Redeker Hepner, eds. 2009. *Biopolitics, Militarism, and Development: Eritrea in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Berghahn.
- Pool, David. 2001. *From Guerrillas to Government: The Eritrean People's Liberation Front*. Oxford: James Currey.
- Reid, Richard, ed. 2009. *Eritrea's External Relations: Understanding Its Regional Role and Foreign Policy*. London: Chatham House.

*Bernard C. Moore*  
*Michigan State University*

Nasong'o, Wanjala S., ed. 2015. *THE ROOTS OF ETHNIC CONFLICT IN AFRICA: FROM GRIEVANCE TO VIOLENCE*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 208 pp. \$77.27 (cloth).

Wanjala S. Nasong'o's preface sets the stage for *The Roots of Ethnic Conflict in Africa: From Grievance to Violence*, an edited volume, which has three illustrations, nine chapters, a rich bibliography, and an index. The preface provides a general overview of the ideas on which the book rests:

the prevalent propensity for ethnic political mobilization in Africa [and] why such mobilization leads to violent conflicts. . . . The basic argument that underlies all the chapters in this volume is that ethnic political mobilization is a function of deeply felt grievances or threats[,] and whether such mobilization leads to violence depends on the response of incumbent regimes to mobilized groups. (p. xi)

Arguably, political entrepreneurs in and out of government tend to fan the flames of ethnic marginalization. They frequently do so in their desire to mobilize their ethnos in pursuit of their faction's interest and those of their elite ethnic jingoists. Nevertheless, considering how the media have pushed the frontiers of conflict discourse to new heights, this book could not have come at a better time. When the proponents of neoliberalism are effectively