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BOOK REVIEWS

The Benefits of Famine: A Political Economy of Famine and Relief in Southwestern Sudan, 1983–1989 by DAVID KEEN (Chichester and Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 289, £30.00.)

This is an excellent book with several strengths. It narrates what was a much-needed account of the terrible events which took place in southern Sudan in the 1980s, resulting in an estimated 500,000 deaths by 1988 (p. 3). The author does not shy away from apportioning blame and responsibility, and provides a good deal of primary evidence for his conclusions. The text consistently engages with theoretical debates about the causes and dynamics of famine, taking on the inadequacies of Sen's entitlement theory and elaborating on the roles of beneficiaries and the effects of violence on the significance of market forces, which then become what Keen calls 'forced markets'. He also responds to the issue of 'what should be done' by drawing lessons from examples beyond this case study. The book is worthy from all these angles.

The first chapter provides a highly accessible introduction to the theoretical debates and identifies a clear framework within which the book is set, the prime objective of which is to *integrate* the analysis of politics with that of the conflict and famine in the south of Sudan. Chapter 2 presents a very useful review of history which highlights the social, economic and political locations of the Dinka people, and as such is incidently a noteworthy example of writing on ethnicity without a collapse into essentialism or denial of its significance in political and economic dynamics. This historical account also helps to locate Southern Sudan within a comparative framework, not just of the north, but also of other African colonial experiences, something which is rarely undertaken.

Chapter 3 'Victims and Beneficiaries', presents the case study within the useful framework set out earlier, locating within its periodization the relative insignificance of drought as a contributory factor, and analysis of the roles of raiding militias and other players in the war, the re-emergence of widespread slavery, and the role of markets. It is here that Keen outlines his thesis that 'the concept of "market forces" is less helpful in understanding the famine than the concept of "forced markets" ' (p. 111), which I found to be coherent and persuasive. Chapter 4 focuses on the actors driving relief policy within Sudan, and illustrates the ways that domestic beneficiaries acted to create and prolong the famine through the manipulation of relief. The guilty parties included the government, merchants, and the army, but also the SPLA, and religious leaders in the north.

Revelation of the culpability of the international donors is reserved for the whole of Chapter 5, which is damning indeed, and ought to be compulsory reading for anyone embarking on a career in relief aid! The author was able to gain good access to official donors' and NGOs' records and key personnel and so provides a well-substantiated account of the prejudices and choices taken in developing and implementing policy. Highlights include the widespread acceptance amongst the major agencies that the demise of pastoralism represented progress and so although there was concern about high death rates and migration, there was a pervasive rejection of the need to rebuild livelihood systems. Such a rejection was also behind an obsessive fear of the creation of *dependency*. An interesting discussion of the interpretation of *accessibility* of an area during conflict ought to be taken up by donors, as should the argument that relief can be used to *reduce* violence and the abuse of human rights, or the intensification of civil war, if targeted correctly.

Evidence is also provided for widespread incompetence at targeting, supervising and monitoring, and the feigning of ignorance about the effects of militia-raiding, including the re-emergence of slavery. Such condemnation is located within a political analysis of the position of the official donors vis a vis the Sudanese government with, for example, the US

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government providing military assistance upto 1988. Keen provides evidence that the switch in policy in late 1988/early 1989 to one more responsive to the needs of the victims was in large part due to the role of the international press in late 1988 (which was present in force to cover the effects of the flood in Khartoum).

The final chapter begins by locating the analysis firmly within theoretical and policy debates. As well as those outlined at the beginning, Keen emphasises the dangers of translating Sen's simple view of a strong link between democracy and effective famine prevention into a reluctance to intervene against the wishes of a democratically-elected government. The government of Sadiq el Mahdi was a key player in promoting this famine, but the fact that it was elected seems to have been enough to constrain international donors' agendas. He emphasizes the overwhelming importance of long-term shortages and competition over economic resources as being the real causes of conflict and famine here, and thus the need not to isolate famine and conflict from political economy—which has certainly been difficult in the past because of the paucity such analyses of Sudan until recently. (Alex De Waal, (1992). 'Sudan: searching for the origins of absolutism and decay' *Development and Change*, **24**, 177–202.)

Furthermore, Keen argues for the need to move beyond the now widespread view that market forces and poverty cause famine, to emphasize that markets are more often 'forced' than 'free' in these situations, and that it may well be a group's relative *wealth*, rather than poverty, which exposes it to greater risks of famine, as with the Dinka in Sudan.

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Mastering Space: Hegemony, Territory and International Political Economy by JOHN AGNEW and STUART CORBRIDGE. (London: Routledge, 1995, pp. 260, £45.00 h/bk, £14.99 p/bk.)

This book applies Lefebvre's analytical and relational distinction between 'representations of space' and 'representational spaces' to international political economy. Specifically the first section examines the material and discursive spaces of successive geo-political orders (chapters 2–4). The authors deploy an essentialized concept of 'hegemony' to trace the material development of three such orders since the early nineteenth century: the 'Concert of Europe and British Geopolitical Order' (1815–75), the 'Inter-Imperial Rivalry Geopolitical Order' (1875–1945), and the 'Cold War Geopolitical Order' (1945–90). This account is related to the unilinear rhetoric of modernity and Cold War narratives to demonstrate the otherization and marginalization of the non-Western world. The section concludes with comments on the de-territorization of the national state in the age of globalization.

The second section concentrates on the unstable hegemony of the contemporary geopolitical order (chapters 5–7). The authors discuss the relative decline of US hegemony and relate it to the emergence of 'hegemonic pretenders' (e.g. the European Community, Germany, Russia, Japan and China). They nonetheless conclude that none of these contenders seems qualified to assume an hegemonic role. Instead they suggest that contemporary restructuring may result in a system of 'deterritorized' regimes and economic practices supported by regions, localities, cities, transnational economic organizations, NGOs and various international organizations. They argue that hegemony now resides in a system and ideology which they term 'transnational liberalism' and 'market idolatry'. They also offer suggestions about market failure in the international system and the empowering of citizens through creating a meta-narrative drawn from the notion of 'market socialism'.

The concluding section is less satisfactory. By (re-) essentializing 'market socialism' they