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Leonid Issaev · Andrey Zakharov

Federalism and Decentralization in Africa

Globalization and Fragmentation in Territorial
Arrangements

 Springer

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Foreword

In Africa today, conflict situations are extremely diverse. Ethnic, religious and other various tensions pervade life on the continent. The porous state relations make it difficult for countries within continent to live in an egalitarian society. The political landscape in Africa is so complex that it is difficult to know exactly what form of government could stabilize the region. Many attempts have been made to create a just situation on the African continent, but what we have seen suggests that the right form of government for socially just governance remains to be found.

As difficult as it is to find one's way through the jungle of African politics, the two authors, Leonid Issaev and Andrey Zakharov, have not shied away from the task of exploring the processes that shape Africa's politics and society from a new perspective. An effort has been made to look at a little-studied aspect of the continent's multifaceted political trends. The researchers' approach has focused on the study of federalism as a form of government, with a thorough analysis of its impact on the history and society of the continent. To my knowledge, this phenomenon has not yet been studied in such depth in this region, so I can confidently say that the work sheds a thorough and new light on the local political and social system in Africa. Federalism as a political process is not a frequently studied area of political history, so scientific research certainly benefits from a multifaceted approach.

The authors seek to provide a thorough and an in-depth introduction to the concept of federalism on the continent, using case studies to illustrate Africa's major federalism efforts. In the first part of the book, the research starts with the historical (colonial) federalism of the region (Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Cameroon), while in the second part the authors discuss the contemporary federalism (Nigeria, Ethiopia, South Africa, the Comoros), while in the third and final part, the extreme cases of the phenomenon (Somalia, and Mali) are discussed. In each of the chapters, the various forms of the phenomenon are presented, in the course of which, in my opinion, a thorough examination is made of the forms of political tendency. In their efforts, Issaev and Zakharov have clearly endeavoured to research the phenomenon with a thorough scientific rigour, and accordingly we are presented with a detailed and scientifically supported work. In the course of their work, the authors do not seek to prove the correctness of federalism, they only attempt to present the process through

various examples and to outline a selection of its possible future forms. I think it can be deduced from this that the authors take appropriate precautions in the complexity of African political conditions, therefore they do not undertake to make quick judgments on the subject, rather they examine the possible way of federalism and offer the reader the options to decide for himself about Africa and federalism regarding its fate. In my opinion, the case studies are interesting and illustrative, and they try to explore the political peculiarities of the continent in terms of federalism as thoroughly as possible. I believe that the two authors approached the work with sufficient thoroughness and versatility, and faithfully present the African versions of federalism.

In sum, I think the book can be recommended to academic and other readers interested in Africa, since in my opinion, the work has very well and thoroughly examined this previously little-researched area, which presents the continent's political relations in a new light. The scientific research can also be called gap-filling, because it examines African historical and political processes from a side that was not known until now. In my opinion, the work gives a great impression of the complexity of African conditions, and it also contains scientific novelties that can be incorporated into the science of African studies in the future. Therefore, I can only recommend the study of the book, which I believe will prove to be serious research in terms of the proper systematization of African political relations.

July 2024

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Acknowledgments

This monograph is the result of the authors' study of the problems of decentralization in Africa over the last years. First of all, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to HSE University in Moscow, the Russian State University for Humanities, RUDN University, and the Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, which the authors belong to. Through our academic and educational work at these institutions, we have had the opportunity to deepen our understanding of federalism in Africa through discussions with colleagues and students. A great contribution to the preparation of the publication was made by the materials of field research undertaken by authors in Somalia, Mali, Niger, South Africa, Comoros, Ethiopia, and Nigeria in the 2020s.

Finally, the completion of the work on this monograph was made possible by the support of the Russian Science Foundation [#21-18- 00123].

About This Book

This book examines the projects of administrative and territorial reconstruction in Africa from independence till the present time. The rise of separatist sentiments is among the most important problems, with which African continent faced in the twenty-first century. Currently separatist movements with varying degrees of intensity operate at least in 24 African countries. Around 25 movements and groups are looking for independence and the same number for the greater autonomy. The weak cohesion of African societies, predetermined by their ethnic, linguistic and religious heterogeneity, makes Africa a priori predisposed to fragmentation and decentralization. These processes and trends actualize the study of the mechanisms, forms and models of decentralization practiced today in Africa. The subject of analysis can be both federalist and unitary experiences of decentralization. The generalizations made in the course of such an analysis can significantly enrich the current vision of the development of the African continent and its future prospects.

Contents

1 Introduction: Factors of Decentralization in Africa	1
References	6
Part I African Experience of Federal Building: Historical Background	
2 Federalism and Colonialism: History, Practice, and Lessons from Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland	9
2.1 Partnership of the Rider and the Horse	10
2.2 White–Black—Black-and-White	13
2.3 Short-Term Prosperity and Sledgehammer Fiasco	19
2.4 A Bit of the Federalist Theory	23
References	25
3 Federalism and Expansion: The Collapse of the Federal Experiment in Cameroon and Aftermath	27
3.1 Versailles Bifurcation	28
3.2 Friendly Takeover Begins	30
3.3 In the Iron Embrace of the “Big Brother”	34
3.4 Expected and Silent Death	37
3.5 Anglophones Come into Play	40
References	43

**Part II African Experience of Federal Building:
Contemporaneity**

4 “The Black’s Man Burden”: The Nigerian Federation as a Paradox 47

4.1 British Foundation 48

4.2 Birth Traumas of the First Republic 54

4.3 Five Crisis Years 60

4.4 Collapse of the Federation and the Cessation of Biafra 66

4.5 Federalists in Uniform 71

4.6 In Search of “True Federalism” 75

References 81

5 Forcing Union: The Federal Takeover of Eritrea in Historical Perspective 83

5.1 Eritrea’s Return to the Ethiopian Home Begins 84

5.2 The UN Comes into Play 89

5.3 The Federation Game is Over 92

5.4 “Second Federation” 96

5.5 Everyone Against Each Other 100

5.6 Ethiopian Triad 103

References 107

6 Decentralization Under Apartheid and Democracy: South Africa as a Unitary Federation 111

6.1 One-Color Union 112

6.2 Centralization and Decentralization in the Apartheid State 117

6.3 From the Quasi-federalism of Apartheid to the Quasi-federalism of Democracy 127

6.4 “Sleeping Institute”: South African Version 133

References 138

7 The Comoros: An Island Federalism 141

7.1 The Mayotte Case 141

7.2 The Emergence of Federalism 144

7.3 The Islamic Federation 145

7.4 The Rise of Separatism 147

7.5 Union, but not a Federation 149

7.6 Federation for the Wealthy 150

References 153

Part III African Alternatives to Federalism: Decentralization of Unitary Contexts

8 Clan Federalism in Somalia 157

8.1 Unimaginable Clan Palette 158

8.2 Prerequisites for Future Collapse 160

8.3 Who Goes Where: Parade of Sovereignties in Somalia 164

8.4 Somaliland: Something like Somalia’s Switzerland 169

8.5 Puntland: An Obstinate but Loyal Ally 171

8.6 Maahir and Khatumo: Those Who Did not Get Autonomy 173

8.7 Galmudug: Significance and Incapacity 175

8.8 Jubaland: A Difficult Birth 177

8.9 Southwestern Somalia and Hirshabelle: Last but not Least 179

References 182

9 “The Kurds of Africa”: How the Tuaregs Were Left Without Their Own State 185

9.1 Post-colonial Syndrome 185

9.2 Libyan Interlude and New Uprising 187

9.3 Tuareg Multi-party System 190

9.4 Imaginary Unity 191

9.5 Islamist Revolution in Azawad 194

9.6 Islamist Advance into Southern Mali 196

References 198

Appendix A: Rhodesia and Nyasaland (1953) 201

Appendix B: British Cameroons (1949) 203

Appendix C: Nigeria 205

Appendix D: Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa 207

Appendix E: South Africa 209

Appendix F: Comoros 211

Appendix G: Somalia 213

Appendix H: Sahel Region 215

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