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Jakkie Cilliers, Christian Dietrich, eds. *Angola's War Economy: The Role of Oil and Diamonds*. Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, 2000. X + 370 pp. \$16.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-620-26645-1.

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This book is another collection of essays by members of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in Pretoria, in this case diluted by a few outside “consultants” and academics, including one Angolan. Although the editors credit the ISS (i.e., themselves) with “continuing to produce incisive analysis of the conflicts ravaging the African continent” (p. ix), they can no longer claim (as they do in their press release) that “this study reflects possibly the most complete work on the Angolan war economy to be published in recent years”. For that accolade now belongs to Tony Hodges, whose far more comprehensive and focused study—*Angola from Afro-Stalinism to Petro-Dollar Capitalism*[1]—came out last year, when the ISS book was being reprinted (and was reviewed by this reviewer for H-Africa in August 2001). But even before that, there were the two widely acclaimed Global Witness studies on the role of diamonds and oil in Angola’s war economy: *A Rough Trade* (London: 1998), and *A Crude Awakening* (London: 1999).

This collection, however, is not only about Angola’s war economy (which accounts for about half of the sixteen chapters). Also included are a number of other topics which do not appear to be directly related to the main theme of the book. Among these is “The War for Independence” (by the ISS’s Richard Cornwell), which begins with the arrival of the Portuguese in 1492 and ends with the departure of the South African Defence Force (SADF) in 1976. Almost the entire chapter is based on John Marcum’s monumental study of *The Angolan Revolution*, cited in 78 of the 103 endnotes), which is not bad in itself but which scarcely contributes to an understanding of “resource wars”. [2] Perhaps this is what the ISS’s Jakkie Cilliers had in mind when he also undermined the theme of the book in the introductory chapter by stating that, “the argument that ‘greed not grievance’ lies at the root of

insurgency war in a country such as Angola is not convincing, as illustrated in a number of chapters” (p. 16).

A similar example of deviation from the book’s main theme of Angola’s war economy is the chapter on “Ethnicity and Conflict in Angola” by Assis Malaquias, an Angolan scholar who now teaches in the US. His position is that, while Angola’s conflict is being depicted as a resource war, this view does not take into account the important underlying causes of the conflict, i.e., “the dominant politico-military forces’ reluctance to share power and wealth within an inclusive multi-ethnic and multi-racial political system” (p. 95). One of the major consequences of this “ethnic-inspired civil war”, he writes, has been “the collapse of government in Angola”, since the conflict has “paralysed the state and facilitated the usurping of power by unaccountable elites” (p. 96). While this is very much a UNITA position (which has become more widely accepted since the demise of Savimbi), it also draws upon the concept of “bureaucratically weak states” employed by William Reno (see Chapter Ten “The (Real) War Economy of Angola”) to place Angola in the context of other “failed” or “shadow” states in West Africa.

Also questionable are the chapters by three other ISS contributors on “The Arms Dilemma” (Hannelie de Beer and Virginia Gamba, Chapter Four) and UNITA’s “Support Structures” (Jakkie Potgeiter, Chapter Twelve), which are more concerned with the Cold War than resource war issues. Both also are historically-based and cover the same years of the independence struggle as Cornwell’s survey in Chapter Three. However, their sources are less likely to be Marcum than the UNITA lobby in the United States (W.M. James, Carl Gershman and the Free Angola Information Service), Savimbi’s political adviser (Sean Cleary), Savimbi’s authorised biographer (Fred Bridgland), the disgraced International

Freedom Foundation (IFF) exposed as a SADF front, and numerous SADF-approved war historians (such as W. Steenkamp and Peter Stiff). Nevertheless, if such sources are to be used, they should at least be identified as purveyors of “total onslaught” propaganda and their claims discounted accordingly.

While one of these authors (de Beer) was actually in the SADF, where she is said to have “interpreted developments in various African countries, especially Angola” (p. 369), the other (Jakkie Potgeiter) is identified here as “head of the situation room” at the ISS (p. 370). He defines his mission in Chapter Twelve: “Understanding how UNITA’s insurgency strategy shaped its development of support structures; how it operated in the past; is still operating today; and how it will keep UNITA in the bush for as long as it takes to achieve its objective; requires some basic reflection on the events that shaped that strategy” (p. 255). But his most incredible claim is that “UNITA established a self-reliance structure unparalleled on the continent” as a result of the military and other support supplied by apartheid South Africa and the Reagan/Bush administrations in the United States. In effect, “self-reliance” was achieved and sustained by foreign intervention, although only for UNITA, not the Cuban-Russian-supplied MPLA.

Many other Cold War canards and UNITA myths appear in these chapters. To list only a few: “the strategic importance of the Angolan coastline” for NATO security (p. 72); UNITA was “probably the strongest of the political parties” in 1975 (p. 258); “[t]he war restarted in 1992” because the MPLA attacked UNITA in Luanda (p. 81); the decisive battle for Cuito Cuanavale ended in a “stalemate” rather than a defeat for South Africa (p. 79); and, “the dynamics of this conflict” (undefined), not Savimbi’s overweening ambition to rule Angola, “torpedoed every

single peace agreement and international peace mission in Angola since 1991” (p. 89).

Most of the other chapters are of a technical nature, dealing with such subjects as formal and informal diamond mining and networks, petroleum prospects, UNITA’s diamond mining, diamond smuggling routes and the airborne component of sanctions busting. But there is also a useful and comprehensive survey of “The Political Economy of Resource Wars” by Philippe Le Billon of the Overseas Development Institute (Chapter Two).

This volume could also have been improved by better proof-reading, especially of the endnotes. For example, the renowned historian of Africa, Basil Davidson, is identified as “D. Basil”, Fred Bridgland and Colin Legum are incorrectly spelled, the title of the Steenkamp book is missing, the IFF is not spelled-out and it is said to have “proved” (instead of “provided”) information to the authors. But at least the incorrect page numbers in the table of contents were corrected in the reprint.

Notes:

[1]. Tony Hodges, *Angola: From Afro-Stalinism to Petro-diamond Capitalism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

[2]. John A. Marcum, *The Angolan Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press 1969-1978), 2 vols.

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