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**Book review:**  
**Karbo, T. & Virk, K. (Eds.). (2018). The Palgrave Handbook of Peacebuilding in Africa. Palgrave Macmillan, 498 p.**

**S.V. Kostelyanets**

Institute for African Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russian Federation

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**Рецензия на книгу:**  
**The Palgrave Handbook of Peacebuilding in Africa /**  
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**С.В. Костелянец**

Институт Африки РАН, Москва, Российская Федерация

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In *Pax Africana: The Continent and Diaspora in Search of Themselves*, prominent Russian Academician A.B. Davidson argued insightfully that the first and foremost question for scholars in African Studies to address is how Africa sees itself [Davidson 2009: 5]. *The Palgrave Handbook of Peacebuilding in Africa* strives to do exactly this — not to simply review the concepts and practice of conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding on the continent, but to look into the past, present and future of Africa through an Africa-centered prism, to discuss bitterest and sharpest sorrows of Africans, as well as their sincerest hopes, and to raise difficult questions about the role of external actors — the UN, Western nations, emerging powers, etc. — in promoting African security and development.

The book is written by an impressive group of African and non-African scholars — professors and practitioners, diplomats and policymakers — who principally stand by the concept of *Pax Africana* — “an agenda for peace in Africa, with this peace to be guaranteed by Africans themselves” [Karbo, Virk 2018: 4]. The concept evolved into a once compelling maxim of the African Union (AU) — “African solutions to African problems”, which, according to the reviewed book, has been undermined by the spread of violent extremism on the continent — “from the Sahel to Somalia” [Karbo, Virk 2018: viii]. The editors have dedicated their book to the 50th anniversary of the 1967 publication of *Towards a Pax Africana: A Study of Ideology and Ambition* — a seminal work by the late Kenyan scholar Ali Mazrui, whose pioneering ideas of a

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“Monroe doctrine” for Africa and inter-African interventionism inspired many African intellectuals.

Indeed, Africans, much like modern Russians, are hard-pressed to generate an idea — continental or, in the latter case, national — that would unite them and set on a path toward integration and development. In fact, there exists a striking parallel between Africa and the post-Soviet space in terms of the legacy of artificial borders [Davidson 2009: 5], which, naturally, leads to the proliferation of intra-state and inter-state conflicts in the two regions. Consequently, the editors and contributors of the reviewed volume test the hypothesis that achieving a true and lasting peace in Africa demands the realization of a “new” *Pax Africana*, which primarily entails strengthening the military aspects of the AU through the further development of such instruments as the African Peace and Security Architecture and the African Standby Force. More broadly, the book aims at presenting the theoretical, practical and geopolitical underpinnings of peacebuilding in Africa since the end of the Cold War. Methodologically, the editors suitably acknowledge the distinction between the concepts of conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding developed by the former UN Secretary-General B. Boutros-Ghali, organizing the book accordingly.

There are six parts in the book, broken into 25 chapters. In addition to the aforementioned concepts, the book befittingly discusses the role of external actors (Part VI). While all themes in the book deserve readers’ attention, chapter 16 “The Political Economy of Peacebuilding in Africa” examines, perhaps, one of the most intriguing aspects of conflicts and peacebuilding in Africa — the development of “war economies” and patronage systems, which may linger and even flourish amid post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. The identification of stakeholders in these informal economic structures has already been recognized by scholars as a critical component of peacebuilding [Denisova

2013: 162], but the book offers one of the more comprehensive models in this regard.

The authors of the book come to a number of important conclusions: that African countries are not yet ready to pay the full price of Africa’s peace and security and still place parochial interests above regional or continental priorities; that coordination and communication mechanisms between the AU and international, regional and national bodies, as well as within the Union itself, are inadequate; that African leaders continue to subvert democratic institutions for their own ends; that the involvement of foreign actors may deliver much needed funding but immensely complicates conflicts; that structural inequalities and cultural violence continue to lie at the root of most conflicts and are rarely addressed. Yet overall the book aspires to present a cautiously optimistic perspective: indeed, values of pan-Africanism and Afrocentrism persevere among African intellectuals, especially since the global evidence suggests that a region may only become competitive in the world if it overcomes cultural and economic divisions within its borders.

The book could certainly be of great interest to students not only of African Studies, but also to experts on international relations and security studies. Perhaps, some readers would like a discussion of modern Russian involvement in African security matters — in the CAR, Libya and elsewhere, but, confessedly, it has become much more visible already after the publication of the present volume. The absence of a dedicated chapter on the role of the US in promoting African peace and security or, alternatively, undermining *Pax Africana* (bar the section on the role of Hollywood) is more conspicuous: after all, Washington both maintains the largest foreign troop presence in Africa and has mediated the greatest number of peace agreements on the continent since 1960. Nevertheless, the book surely succeeds in mapping the big picture of peacebuilding in African context, making a considerable contribution to the study of this problematic subject.

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**About the author:** *Kostelyanets Sergey Valer'yanovich* — PhD in Political Science, Leading Research Fellow, Head, Centre for Sociological and Political Sciences Studies, Institute for African Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences (e-mail: sergey.kostelyanyets@gmail.com).

**Сведения об авторе:** *Костелянец Сергей Валерьянович* — кандидат политических наук, ведущий научный сотрудник, заведующий Центром социологических и политологических исследований Института Африки Российской академии наук (e-mail: sergey.kostelyanyets@gmail.com).