

Azevedo, Mario J. *Roots of Violence: A History of War in Chad*. Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1998.

Roots of Violence is a useful, if somewhat uneven, narrative history of warfare in Chad from pre-colonial times to the early 1990s. The jacket note indicates that the author refrains from blaming presidents Félix Malloum (1960-75) and ¶ Francis Tombalbaye (1975-79) for using ethnicity to foment violence and instability and 'demythologizes' many assumptions about Chad by clarifying the role of violence in that country. However, this innovative approach does not extend to the French colonial period (1910-60).

Instead, the author accepts the traditional view that the colonial system was responsible for the violence that has beleaguered Chad since independence and maintains that the French colonial state relied on the army and police "to impose control and elicit conformity." Apart from the fact that the latter observation applies to all states, the author's analysis of the pre-colonial period contradicts the material in the chapter about French colonial rule. In that chapter, the author correctly points out that warfare and instability have plagued the territory that eventually became Chad "for centuries." But instead of seeing these factors as part of a sad, unbroken saga, the author suggests that were it not for the fifty-year period of French rule, Chad would have sorted out problems that have caused conflict since time immemorial. Regrettably, the *Roots of Violence* contains no convincing evidence to support such a view.

To be fair, blaming European colonial powers for Africa's current woes is a popular theme in literature pertaining to the continent's military history. Such an interpretation absolves current leaders of responsibility for the chronic warfare that plagues so much of Africa. It also frees academicians and other Africa watchers of the responsibility of examining factors like corruption, arms trafficking, human rights violations and the politics of exclusion that are characteristic of undemocratic, dictatorial governments. Of course, such an approach would place the blame squarely on African leaders and their henchmen, something many observers are loath to do.

Despite this shortcoming, *Roots of Violence* is a worthy addition to the literature about Chad. Meanwhile, readers can hope that the author will apply his considerable skill to a more balanced analysis of the colonial period in a future volume.

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