

Editor's Introduction

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Editors' Introduction

This special issue, titled *Rethinking Genocide, Mass Atrocities and Political Violence in Africa*, presents new approaches and perspectives on the study of genocide in Africa. The issue was made possible by the hard work and contributions of our guest editors, Laura Collins, Terrence Lyons, and Wale Adeboye. The guest editors worked diligently over the last year and a half to put together a diverse and compelling group of authors, ensuring the issue includes authors based in African universities, and that each article was peer reviewed by an African scholar. This issue of GSP is intended to deepen the scholarly conversation in Genocide Studies with new voices and perspectives, and one theme that ties together every article is that each author is critical of the way "genocide" is deployed in analyzing violence and conflicts in Africa. A great deal of scholarship on violent conflict in Africa is often conceptualized through the lens of terms such as "genocide," "civil war," "mass atrocities," "religious violence," "ethnic violence," or "terrorism." While these concepts are important, they often conceal more about conflict than they reveal. These concepts focus our analytical gaze on society-wide or country-wide sociological and political events and processes, but they often lead us to overlook the finer-grain local dynamics of conflicts as well as the role of global economic systems and regional competitions. Within this context, the issue as a whole forces us to ask whether the traditional paradigms of understanding violence and peace are still relevant to understanding conflict in African contexts? As several authors imply, it might be that the word genocide is an entirely unhelpful analytical framework.

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