

**Mareike Schomerus. 2021. *The Lord's Resistance Army: Violence and Peacemaking in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 326 pp.**

Mareike Schomerus's *The Lord's Resistance Army: Violence and Peacemaking in Africa* provides a detailed account of the Juba Peace Talks that took place between the government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The work is based on exclusive interviews with LRA's top commanders, fighters, and their leader, Joseph Kony, to offer insight into the conflicted system surrounding the peace negotiations. The author emphasizes the importance of the political and interpersonal dynamics surrounding these talks and the formal negotiations in determining the outcome of this peace process. She specifically analyzes the experiences of LRA members in these talks. Schomerus thoroughly explores the complex interpersonal and intricate relationship between laws, conflict resolution, peacemaking, military intervention, and humanitarianism. Her analysis of the Juba Talks forces exploration of questions about the significance of a signed agreement in the concluding stages of a peace deal and the difficulties of transitioning from war to peace if there's no political change within the context.

This case study is of particular importance for the scholarship of contemporary peacemaking in the sub-Saharan African region characterized by democratic backsliding, civil war, and misperceptions about peace processes in the region. By focusing on the LRA, one of Africa's most notorious rebel groups, and their participation in the 2006 Juba Peace Talks with the Ugandan government, Schomerus suggests that the transformation of conflict requires a self-reflective process and a deeper understanding of actors' behavior and experiences during the peace process. She argues that peace processes should be rethought and not treated as project-managed endeavors with clearly defined start and end points (p. 282). The author employed a qualitative approach to analyze the actions of the individuals involved, specifically by being present at all major ceremonies throughout the Juba Talks and engaging with the rebel groups multiple times, highlighting the impact of rebel group members' past experiences on the peace talks. The book contributes to broader research on the relationship between peace negotiations and the resolution of complex conflicts. The author emphasizes the need for a non-linear international justice system model to address violence and she highlights the unintended consequences of an unclear framework for managing tensions arising from international intervention during the Juba Peace Talks (p. 274).

The first two chapters provide context within the broader discussion on war, peace, and information, emphasizing the interconnected nature of these concepts rather than viewing them in isolation. These chapters also examine the historical relationship between these concepts and their impact on previous peace negotiations between the rebel group, both its military wing (LRA) and its political wing, the Lord's Resistance Movement (LRM) (p. 1) with the government of Uganda during the Juba Peace. These chapters explore how the actors involved in the peace process perceived their roles and constraints and how dynamics of power from previous conflicts were reflected in the beginning of the talks (p. 69). The author confronts the challenge of handling potentially unreliable information, taking on methodological risk, and showing her determination to engage with the LRA and get multiple perspectives of various actors so there is a greater understanding of what was occurring.

The remaining chapters shed light on personal narratives, identities, and adjusted identities, as well as the experiences of all involved parties, particularly the LRA/M. These chapters also explore the myths surrounding Kony and the group's efforts to shift the war narrative in their favor. The author argues that external parties focused on establishing behavioral patterns and predicting future events to ensure the Juba Talks' success. She argues that outside actors have not critically paid attention to the internal operational dynamics of the LRA, often misinterpreting the actions of the LRA and how they engaged with the peace talks.

Overall, Schomerus offers valuable insights into the complexities of finding solutions in conflicted peace processes, especially how when peace is no longer profitable for some its desirability seems to decrease. The case analyzed in this book can provide a basis for future research on the nexus between peacemaking and international sanctions on rebel leaders, specifically assessing how these leaders respond to peace processes, even when they have warrants out for their arrest. This book provides an engaging analysis of complex political situations surrounding the Juba Talks, as well as the consequences of misinterpreting the LRA/M response to the peace process. I fully recommend *The Lord's Resistance Army* be read by those interested in peacemaking and conflict resolution within the African continent.

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