Manufacturing African studies and crises

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Abstract:
Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, the author of this book, is a historian by academic training. But he is a polymath and almost an intellectual bionic boy: he is an award-winning novelist, a short story writer, a social scientist, philosopher and literary critic. Manufacturing African Studies and Crises (henceforth abbreviated as MAS&C) is a very interesting and provocative book whose arguments and overall tone and style never flag. I say provocative not simply because he takes on all branches of Africanist scholarship and demolishes most of their cherished orthodoxies. This is also because his own ideas do actually provoke response and further thoughts from the reader, be it in agreement or disagreement. It is also provocative in one original sense: it is very rarely that the crises that have beset Africa since colonial times are ever joined to the 'studies' of the continent. After all, 'study' of a particular phenomenon or subject is supposed to increase our knowledge of it, and therefore enhance our ability to solve problems emanating from it. But Zeleza shows very convincingly in this book that 'studies' of Africa, from colonial times to the present, plus the solutions arising therefrom, have in fact contributed their own fair share to those crises that not a few of the crises, be they man-made or natural, were in fact manufactured by the studies.