

De Villers aims neither at proposing an overarching history of the Congo (such as Ndaywel è Nziem or van Reybrouck) nor a thick analysis of a particular period and region (such as Verhaegen, Schatzberg, Stearns, or Vlassenroot & Raeymaekers). In contrary, the main intention of *Histoire du Politique au Congo-Kinshasa* seems to be a dialectic engagement with post-colonial historical events and concomitant theoretical trends to explain larger governance and power dynamics that shaped and continue to shape Congolese politics and the state.

In doing so, the book successfully proves how politics in and political analysis of the Congo have developed parallelisms – e.g. the heydays of dependency theory in the 1970s and the Mobutist state's concomitant engagement with Western allies during this era but also more recently, e.g. when it comes to dogmas of state-building. Drawing from a few decades of studying the Congo, de Villers displays an impressive memory and command of sources, which – even if the past years receive comparatively less scrutiny – is of great help to any scholar of the region.

Without specifically explaining his choice of conceptual approaches, de Villers offers a dense garland of liberal, critical, and institutional theory to investigate the social, economic and political realities of post-colonial statehood and power struggles in a case as contested as the Congo. Perhaps though, the chronological-cyclical structure of the book makes for some of the used concepts standing slightly isolated while in fact they may intimately speak to each other (or criticise one another, such as with Olivier de Sardan's critique of Bayart or Chabal/Daloz).

In sum, de Villers offers a thorough and rich account of the Congo's post-colonial political history. The book's particular strength lies in its comparative assessment – identifying continuities and ruptures – of the country's first four to five decades of independence as well as its unique combination of historical-descriptive and theoretical-analytical techniques to shed light on the Congo's intricate and complex politics and society. An important read for Congo researchers and a timely reminder of how much we can, despite a rapidly changing world, learn from history.

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Mobilizing Transnational Gender Politics in Post-Genocide Rwanda by

RIRHANDU MAGEZA-BARTHEL

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Rirhandu Mageza-Barthel's new book, *Mobilizing Transnational Gender Politics in Post-Genocide Rwanda*, represents a valuable contribution to understanding gender equality policies in present-day Rwanda. It offers a crucial middle ground between popular media accounts that celebrate the nation for its impressive inclusion of women in politics – most notably, the 2013 parliamentary elections in which women candidates secured 64% of the available seats – and academic accounts that warn that while women's visibility in

public life is at an all-time high, the current President Paul Kagame and his political party, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), dominate parliament, making it difficult for women parliamentarians to implement meaningful changes to counter the lack of agency still endured by rural Rwandan women across the country. Mageza-Barthel does this by bringing interviews with women political activists who were intimately involved in high-level negotiations with the international community and the Rwandan government into conversation with important shifts in international and domestic policies aimed at promoting gender equality. In the process, her analysis tells us much, not only about how integral these political actors were for influencing Rwanda's current gender equality policies, but also how they were able to impact present-day norms supported by the United Nations and other international institutions, successfully challenging 'women's invisibility in theories of how politics is done' (p. 17).

Mageza-Barthel begins with a brief overview of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, followed by discussion of how the unprecedented sexual violence inflicted on women prompted a small cohort of women genocide survivors to advocate for gender equality. Chapter 1 then provides a framework for understanding the late twentieth century evolution of gender norms within the United Nations (UN), against which Chapter 2 then explores how these efforts played out in the context of post-genocide Rwanda, and to a lesser extent, across Africa. This sets the stage for a return to Rwanda's pre-genocide gender norms in Chapter 3 – characterised, with few exceptions, by women's exclusion from politics, business and other potential avenues to power – during the nation's colonial and post-independence period, during which ethnic tensions were often leveraged by leaders to distract the public from more pressing political challenges. This ultimately led to the emergence of the extremist Hutu Pawa (Power) movement that bore primary responsibility for perpetrating the genocide, including the extreme sexual violence endured predominantly by women associated with the nation's ethnic Tutsi minority, but also Hutu and Twa women who had married or had children with Tutsi men, among other social ties. With the RPF's military victory, and their stated commitment to establishing 'a participatory and representative democracy as a remedy for the abuse of power it accused the previous regimes of exercising' (p. 66), women genocide survivors were provided with a critical opportunity for advocacy.

Chapter 4 then focuses on how this advocacy work played out in the context of the 1995 Beijing World Women's Conference, which subsequently informed gender equality policies implemented by the RPF's broad-based transitional government. Of particular importance, Mageza-Barthel demonstrates the balance that needed to be maintained throughout these negotiations, highlighting how advocates worked with existing gender norms – for example, eschewing overtly feminist rhetoric in favour of 'motherist' terms and relying on influential male allies 'as conduits to further women's interests' (p. 95). Chapter 5 then evaluates the sustainability of the subsequent advances, particularly the revision of the 1999 Matrimonial Regimes Law to ensure women's inheritance rights, and the drafting of the 2003 Constitution to ensure relevant international gender norms were implemented domestically. Mageza-Barthel finds that the

input of women advocates was instrumental to this process, but still required the support of influential men in several instances. Nonetheless, their achievements during this period established a foundation for ongoing meaningful involvement of women in Rwandan politics as demonstrated by the laws that were enacted after 2003 – the topic of Chapter 6. Considering the 2005 Organic Land Law and the 2008 Gender-Based Violence Law, Mageza-Barthel argues that following monumental success in influencing the 2003 Constitution, ongoing efforts have met with ‘spotty affirmation of women’s rights,’ particularly regarding the Organic Land Law (p. 142). This spotty affirmation largely results from the women advocates’ inability to anticipate which policies might have the best outcomes for rural women, highlighting the salience of class divisions in the post-genocide period. Ultimately, Mageza-Barthel concludes that a select cohort of Rwandan women have had a high degree of success in making their voices heard, both in influencing UN gender norms and in shaping post-genocide Rwanda’s political sphere, though sizeable challenges remain, particularly in meeting the diverse needs of rural Rwandan women.

Taken together, Mageza-Barthel maps the remarkable accomplishments and sizeable challenges experienced among a small cohort of Rwandan women who have been able to become valuable ‘agents of reconstruction’ in debates around gender equality since the genocide (p. 94). Her contribution would be enhanced, however, had she conducted a more thorough analysis of Rwandan gender norms, currently limited to women’s exclusion from politics during Rwanda’s colonial and post-independence period. While this limited historical scope allows her to cast the advocates whom she has interviewed as exceptional, which indeed they are, analysis of Rwanda’s pre-colonial and colonial history would have allowed her to connect them to a legacy of powerful women elites who wielded an impressive degree of political power in their own right – most notably in the role of *Umugabekazi* (Queen Mother). Of particular relevance, the *Umugabekazi* and other notable Rwandan women elites, most of whom were of Tutsi heritage, were often faced with similar tensions in negotiating political power, both with their male counterparts and with the kingdom’s diverse rural majority. This is a minor missed opportunity, however, in what is otherwise a rich contribution to knowledge on post-genocide Rwandan politics and the impact that women from the global South have had on UN gender equality norms.

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Ethnicity, Democracy and Citizenship in Africa: Political Marginalization of Kenya’s Nubians by SAMANTHA BALATON-CHRMES

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Ethnicity, Democracy and Citizenship in Africa is an excellent analysis on the historical and contemporary status of the Nubian community in Kenya, across the history of the Nubians’ relation to the British colonial authority through the post-colonial regimes. Balaton-Chrimes’s book addresses the political question