

where security forces threaten civilians. The UK's role as primary donor, examined by Mark White,¹ should be employed to ensure elections are free and fair, while procuring clear recognition for the legitimacy of that process.

As Sierra Leone moves towards its 2012 elections, the role patrimony politics plays may determine whether a 'fragile' Sierra Leone can be 'rescued'. For this purpose, *Rescuing a Fragile State* identifies both continuing and emerging peacebuilding concerns. It is an important read for those seeking to understand where post-conflict Sierra Leone has come from, and where it might go in the future.

1. White particularly examines the UK's SSR support even on the intelligence unit, a point of concern for Sierra Leone's independence. This concern is exaggerated when considering apparent UK influence over Sierra Leone's intelligence operations. See United States Department of State, Internal Cable, Sierra Leone Stability, Part III: Security Sector, 2 December 2009, available at: <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/12/ogFREETOWN471.html#>, accessed 10.9.2022.

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The Lion of Judah in the New World: Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia and the shaping of Americans' attitude toward Africa by T. VESTAL

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'In present-day Ethiopia', begins Theodore Vestal's book, 'few know just how popular their monarch was in the New World' (p. xi). This is a valid observation. But could we not also say the same about the younger generation in present-day America? Is it not the case that far fewer Americans today have knowledge of the Ethiopian monarch, let alone positive memories of him? Vestal writes: 'the images of Africa and of Africans that the American people developed during Haile Selassie's prominence will no doubt be referred to by historians, psychologists, and sociologists – as well as the media – as having played a part in the election of Barack Obama as president in 2008' (p. xiii). This is an empirical claim which can be verified empirically. Whether or not Emperor Haile Selassie's charm offensive has remotely influenced the election of Barack Obama as the 44th president of the United States, this book is invaluable for at least three groups of people: experts and students of African area studies, comparative history and political science.

Africanists will benefit from the descriptively rich data which have either been unknown before or have not been systematically organised in this way about a long-reigning monarch in north-east Africa. There is much in the book about the personality and political instincts of Haile Selassie, especially as they pertain to his foreign policies, which are invaluable for comparative historians. Political scientists will have much to extract about the nuances of the relationship between a weak state in the periphery and a rising global power.

It is clear that many Americans were fascinated by Emperor Haile Selassie. In 1930 and 1936, he was named *Time's* man of the year. The *New York Times* wrote

in 1954 that he was 'a man of courage, intelligence and great humanity' (quoted, p. 89), and carried the full text of his speech to the joint session of the US Congress. American presidents who had known Haile Selassie, too, and many of them had indeed known him or about him, were generous in their praise for the African monarch. In 1954 Dwight Eisenhower described him as 'a defender of freedom and a supporter of progress' (p. 53). It was a measure of his weight in the eyes of America's political class that he was the only African leader to be invited to attend the funeral of President John F. Kennedy. In 1963 President Lyndon Johnson told the emperor that he looked to him for advice and counsel (p. 134). President Nixon honoured him by inviting him to the US as the first foreign leader to visit the White House after he was elected president.

At least two sets of generalisations can be drawn from this book about the attitudes of America's presidents towards Emperor Haile Selassie and his attitudes towards them. Franklin Roosevelt barely knew the emperor, even though the two had met aboard USS Quincy off the coast of Egypt in February 1945, when Roosevelt was returning from his meeting at Yalta with Joseph Stalin and Winston Churchill. Dwight Eisenhower respected Haile Selassie and was appreciative of his decision to send Ethiopian troops to fight alongside Americans in Korea in the 1950s. Harry Truman, who was focused on the emerging Soviet threat, ignored Haile Selassie, perhaps also because the relationship between Ethiopia and the US was rudimentary and stable at the time. John F. Kennedy, who was not even born when Haile Selassie (then known as Ras Tafari) came to Ethiopia's political scene in 1916, was intrigued by him. Lyndon Johnson who, like JFK, had known the emperor at least since his years in the US Congress, cared less about him, preoccupied as he was with Vietnam and domestic political issues. Richard Nixon liked him partly because of the royal reception he received when he visited Ethiopia first as the US vice-president and, later, as a private citizen. As far as Haile Selassie's own attitudes towards America's presidents were concerned, it appears he was deferential towards Eisenhower, indifferent towards Truman (whom he met possibly only once at the funeral ceremony for John F. Kennedy in November 1963), affectionate towards Kennedy, puzzled by Johnson, and disillusioned with Nixon.

Vestal tells us in passing that Haile Selassie was the first foreign leader to visit Germany after the Second World War, arriving there with loads of blankets made in Ethiopia, for immediate distribution to the war-ravaged Germans (p. 90). In light of such endeavours, it is not implausible to argue that Haile Selassie projected 'soft power' decades before the concept entered the realm of public diplomacy.

Understandably, Vestal does not touch at all the dismal record of Haile Selassie in dealing with his 'subjects' at home. The author nevertheless sheds a positive light on his image in the New World and, through it, on Ethiopia, the country he ruled for forty-four years. This book represents not merely 'an American's view of an Ethiopian's influence on Americans' (p. xiii); it is also the definitive story so far about Haile Selassie's international stardom.

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