

short run, such as post-election political agreements, could have negative long-term implications for democracy.

The volume as a whole, and some of the individual chapters, would have benefited from a stronger theoretical structure. Perhaps as a result of the exclusive focus on electoral violence, not enough attention was paid to relevant theories from well-developed bodies of literature on political violence, authoritarian repression, vote-buying and electoral malfeasance. The comprehensive statistical overview also calls into question some of the conclusions from the case studies. Most notably, the case studies describe elections as trigger points for simmering tensions, but Straus and Taylor find that, on average, election periods are slightly less violent than non-election years.

Bekoe compiled a valuable collection of empirically rich research on an understudied topic. The volume provides a much needed foundational text for the study of electoral violence, while also uncovering empirical puzzles and research questions worthy of further investigation. Scholars, civil society leaders, government officials and foreign donors will learn a lot from this volume about the important topic of electoral violence.

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African Democracy and Development: Challenges for Post-conflict African Nations, edited by CASSANDRA R. VENEY and DICK W. SIMPSON

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The literature on the challenges faced by post-conflict states is abundant. It is thus welcome that this edited book does not try to provide broad discussions but rather tackles precise and essential aspects of post-war situations. This constitutes the common thread of the book as it is quite successful in picking diverse but key issues related to post-conflict contexts. The book's second unifying principle is that it has a geographical bias towards Sierra Leone, Rwanda and to a lesser extent Liberia and Mozambique.

The book first offers in-depth, analytical case studies of some of the main challenges in a post-war context, with Chapters 2 to 7 dealing respectively with the tension between justice, peace and reconciliation, the role of ex-combatants, the competing memories in a post-violence era, land reform, elections and the ambivalent roles of NGOs. Whilst these issues are far from unknown in the literature, these chapters offer excellent analytical discussions well supported by each case study. For instance, Jessica Schafer in Chapter 3 convincingly challenges academic views and policy programmes on ex-combatants by exploring their political awareness and their complex relations with civilians in Mozambique. In Chapter 6, John Yoder offers an interesting discussion of the nature of elections in post conflict situations through the cases of Sierra Leone, Liberia and DRC. He argues that elections should be conceptualised as 'a stress test' imposed on institutions, society and leadership useful to identify the different blockages to democratisation a country might face. Particularly interesting as well is the contribution of Fredline M'Cormack-Hale in Chapter 7. By drawing on the Sierra Leonean case, she shows how

NGOs' visions of development and ignorance of the local context can undermine state building by encouraging the population to bypass, or impose excessive demands on the state.

Second, the book includes chapters whose contributions are rather empirical. Chapters 8 to 12 provide detailed information on Sierra Leonean and Liberian governance challenges and the role of the diaspora and the African Union in reconstruction. With the exception of Chapter 8 by Arthur Abraham, which offers an analytical history of the chieftaincy institution in Sierra Leone and discusses its role in the post-war context, it is disappointing that these chapters are often overly descriptive. It is also regrettable that the introductory and conclusive chapters are redundant in their efforts to summarise each contribution and link them together. It might have been more useful to place the contributions in the current theoretical debates about reconstruction and democratisation.

These weaknesses notwithstanding, the book offers several extremely interesting discussions on post-war situations in Africa. It will interest predominantly scholars and students looking for well-grounded analysis on specific post-conflict challenges. The book will also appeal to those looking for empirical information on the countries explored in the book, especially Sierra Leone and Rwanda.

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Ambiguous Pleasures: Sexuality and Middle Class Self-Perceptions in Nairobi

by RACHEL SPRONK

New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2012. Pp. 310. £60 (hbk)

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In *Ambiguous Pleasures*, Rachel Spronk examines the lifestyles and sexuality of young professionals in Nairobi. She employs an innovative approach that simultaneously questions and aligns the linkages between middle class urban identity, Africanness, gender and sexuality. Asserting the paucity of studies on African sexuality beyond the epidemiological approach, Spronk grounds her motivations as seeking to account for 'the personal, intersubjective and social dimensions of sex' (p. 3) in what she considers a 'worlding' city. This is achieved through a set of six thematically structured chapters, the core of which is based on a collection of vignettes assembled from her informants.

Presenting the methodological framework and remit of her approach, she elucidates her treatment of 'middle class' in Nairobi as merely descriptive of educated and salaried young professionals. Here it is also argued that public discourse on gender, respectability and Africanness is uniquely coalesced and interpreted through sexuality, comprising both social and bodily/personal constituents. Her treatment of the medicalisation of African sexuality, to which she devotes her third chapter, is similarly linked to the Kenyan discourse on gendered morality.

Chapters 4 and 5 comprise the narrative bedrock of her approach. Focusing on a small selection of her informants, she weaves their respective biographies with their sense of gender and sexuality, framing the whole in a shifting context of abstruse modernity. Her treatment of contemporary femininity is linked in