LGBTQ rights. The aim of these case studies is to provide the book's intended undergraduate audience with specific, digestible, and engaging episodes and issues in Africa's recent past through which to approach the political, social, and economic complexities of African democracy. In most cases, the examples the authors highlight have the potential to open up such debate, particularly in terms of what turned out to be their most innovative chapter – the final one on security. Eschewing the expected emphasis on terrorism, the authors approach the question of security through a focus on access to food, gender-based violence, corruption, and peacekeeping. In doing so, they present a narrative of security where the local and social outweigh the often totalizing and obscuring rhetoric of the so-called war on terror.

Overall, as a book designed to survey Africa's recent political history for the undergraduate classroom, *Africanizing Democracies* achieves its goals. However, it is also a relatively safe book. Only in the most perfunctory fashion do the authors attempt to question their own and the scholarly use of such core concepts to the book as 'democracy', 'democratization', and 'good governance', let alone the very idea of 'Africanizing democracies'. They initially present their use of the phrase 'Africanizing democracies' as an analytical lens through which to explore how 'Africans have constructed and reshaped democracy in order to fit their own political ideals and agendas' (p. x). What emerges, though, is a reading of Africa's recent past through the often static and confining prism of a neoliberal democracy that marks so much of the political scientific and journalistic work published on Africa. By settling for this definition of democracy, the authors in turn silence the political and institutional processes through which such an understanding of democracy has developed – often in contested fashion – into near hegemonic prominence in African and international political circles over the last three decades. A short undergraduate survey would be the ideal place to do the historical work of complicating this narrative of African democratization. Not only would such a discussion push the analytical boundaries of our idea of 'democracy', but its inclusion in such an undergraduate text would create a unique venue through which to introduce students relatively early in their academic careers to the diversity of ambitions, uncertainties, and pressures comprising twentieth- and twenty-first-century African political thought, aspirations, values, and realities.

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SITES OF EXCEPTION

Adia Benton's *HIV Exceptionalism: Development through Disease in Sierra Leone* is an indictment of so-called partnerships in global health, in which sites of exceptionalism, discordant with local realities and healthcare needs, are created around specific diseases like AIDS. Benton terms this an 'ideological verticality, in which HIV is exceptional and requires separate funding, programs and personnel' (p. 7). At the same time, discourses and practices around HIV/AIDS are also typified by 'methodological horizontality'; they 'seep into all kinds of development and health planning' (p. 7). Her book thus seeks to, 'describe a complex set of relationships between transnational governance, as exemplified by the HIV treatment regime and global health projects (and others associated with post-conflict development)' (p. 9). The book is organised in three clear interwoven parts: The Exceptional Life of HIV in Sierra Leone; Becoming HIV-Positive; and, HIV and Governance.

The book reads easily, is theoretically informed, and the ethnographic data, while located mainly in the capital of Freetown, is rich. For anyone who has worked in Sierra Leone her depiction of the unnecessary loss of life that results from uneven development and irrational postconflict rebuilding is true to experience. Why is HIV demarcated as 'exceptional' in a country with low prevalence? The question of why some bodies, impairments, and diseases matter and others do not, echoes across Sierra Leone's history; the parallel to other 'sites of exception' such as Ebola has already been noted.[1] Both Ebola and HIV give rise to the indiscriminate use of a top down one-size fits all approach in postconflict contexts. The book also raises questions about the role of transnational advocacy and activism,[2] revealing the need to rethink humanitarian and health interventions so that they are commensurate with local conceptions of health equity, evidence, and realities of social justice. The book does not address the history of how 'development' has been structured in Sierra Leone; in particular it does not draw out the importance of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) to securing aid from neoliberal institutions. It might have been interesting to explore this, as Benton has nicely in her work on Ebola.[3] Focusing more on the influence of neoliberalism might also have shed light on ambivalence directed towards the delimited 'bio/body politics' of the state, on the popular perception of the state as eating body parts, and on why rational behavioral change models were imposed to advocate for a politics of individual responsibility.

The histories of colonialism and neocolonialism also frame how sites of visibility and invisibility become linked to the body, impairments, and even genes (that is, sickle cell). How are those eugenic constructions reversed and repaired? One might argue for an ontological and epistemological decolonisation of health and humanitarianism in Sierra Leone. Benton cautions that hyper-visibility on a policy level in global health may not yield greater attention to the social or individual experience of living with HIV, nor produce sensitive and multifaceted ways of managing stigma. Yet, if we are thinking critically about what ontologically and epistemologically matters in the global south, in terms of understanding

1 P. Farmer, 'The caregiver's disease', *London Review of Books*, 37 (2015), pp. 25–8.
2 A. De Waal (ed.,) *Advocacy in Conflict: Critical Perspectives on Transnational Activism* (London: Zed Books, 2015).
3 A. Benton and K. Y. Dionne, '5 things you should read before saying the IMF is blameless in the 2014 Ebola outbreak', *Washington Post* (5 January 2014).

health, illness, disability, and explanations of unnecessary deaths, it does seem that the realms of the moral, secret, and spiritual are rather neglected here.

Nevertheless in highlighting how HIV is made exceptional Benton recovers numerous silences and opens a conversation foregrounding the unarticulated moral epistemologies people struggle with. She also adds to our understanding of why the Ebola outbreak happened, what that epidemic speaks to, and how states of exceptionalism are created. In this sense, this is currently a crucial book to read and learn from.

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BEYOND THE HUMAN RIGHTS PANACEA

Key Words: Democracy, development, governance, ideology, state.

There is faith in the international community that placing human rights at the centre of the global democracy and development agenda is vital. This has been the mantra of governments, international organizations, and activists committed to building a world in which state power is constrained and the rights of citizens are paramount. To attain this goal requires a strong democratic framework of governance. A democratic framework for governance, rooted in the rule of law and strong institutions, makes for the ideal setting in which poorer countries in particular can develop and meet the needs of their people.

The 1980s saw a number of African authoritarian regimes come under pressure to restructure their political systems and so open up space for human rights, especially the civil and political rights sacrificed after decolonization on the altar of nation-building. Using a number of countries as his case studies, E. Ike Udogu describes the movement from dictatorship to democracy. At the core of his argument is the African encounter with European rule. State formation, the tensions between ethnic groups compressed into a single political space, and rapacious elites seem to him to account for why the postcolonial state deliberately disregarded civil and political rights in particular.

With his focus on history, Udogu seems to suggest human rights abuses in Africa are path dependent. European rule was at best benevolent despotism; ripping apart precolonial African constitutional orders, this despotism was carried into the independent state as the new elite ensured that the laws European powers had used to rule would persist in different forms. Udogu misses the opportunity to expound on the importance of path dependence as an explanation for the persistence of undemocratic forms of governance in Africa. Understanding how societies are trapped in a web of bad laws is important in demonstrating why such laws are difficult to uproot and replace with laws that respect and promote