

Challenges of Globalization,” in which he expresses the view that Republican administrations can do nothing right in Africa, and Democratic administrations are much more successful. In fact, Clinton’s “new partnership with Africa” was all talk and no action. On the other hand, Bush 43’s efforts have been much more substantive, especially in the area of debt relief, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the deepening and widening of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, the transformation of World Bank loans into grants, and the Trans-Saharan antiterrorist initiative. Moreover, Keller’s failure even to mention Chester Crocker’s diplomatic triumph in the 1988 New York accords leading to the independence of Namibia, and the subsequent unraveling of apartheid, is particularly unfortunate. It is time for the “constructive engagement” haters to get over it, and stop denying that peace in southern Africa and the end of apartheid happened on the Republicans’ watch.

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**Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo, ed. *Liberal Democracy and Its Critics in Africa: Political Dysfunction and the Struggle for Social Progress*. Dakar: CODESRIA, 2005. Distributed by Zed Books. xviii + 213 pp. Tables. Notes. References. Index. \$59.95. Cloth. \$19.95. Paper.**

Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo provides readers with a disappointing collection of descriptive articles on liberal democracy and the emergence of democratic institutional processes in select African countries. *Liberal Democracy and Its Critics in Africa* is a confusing read that does not live up to its stated aims. While it contains several engrossing chapters of some importance to Africanist scholars, others are less reader-friendly, with priority given to esoteric jargon and abstract reasoning.

Lumumba-Kasongo sets the tone of difficult prose in both the preface and the introductory first chapter. The two contributions openly contradict one another. The preface provides some evidence of a common theoretical and methodological thread, posing a series of “critical” questions that the book aims to address and declaring as its stated goal a critical analysis of the Western principles of liberal democracy, articulated by “African scholars who want to see social progress happen on the continent” (x). That the book will offer new insight into the consolidation of liberal democracy on the continent seems assured by the end of preface. Chapter 1, in contrast, reads like a cut-and-paste version of Lumumba-Kasongo’s previous writing on the subject, with no clear argument emerging on which the individual contributions to the book can hang their collective hats. Common themes or points of intersection are not revealed. Instead, readers are asked to struggle with viscous prose that ultimately befuddles more

than it illuminates. Also clear are the Marxist leanings of the editor and an overall lack of commitment to liberal democracy, despite earlier arguments that liberal democracy can and will make a significant difference in the lives of ordinary Africans as they “struggle for economic, social and cultural progress” (16). Lumumba-Kasongo’s concluding chapter does little to clear up the confusion; he even introduces unexamined themes.

Despite the lack of guiding light, there are some gems to be found in the book, particularly for English-speaking readers. Essays from French-speaking scholars are reproduced in English (chapters 2, 3, 5, and 8). Of particular interest are Tlemçani’s article on the police state in Africa and Onsarigo’s contribution on the participation of women in the Kenyan democratization processes. In the main, however, the book fails in its attempt to provide a theoretical and methodological contribution to the literature. It does nothing to give voice to “ordinary” Africans on whose behalf it has allegedly been written and to whom it is dedicated. Africa is presented unproblematically as a monolithic continent, rather than one of great diversity and differing forms of liberal democracy from, for example, democratic Botswana to collapsing Zimbabwe, and the variety of countries between those two poles.

Instead, we are led blindly through the procedures and processes of electoral democracy in a handful of African countries, rather than being offered critical analyses of the global, national, and local actors who are promoting liberal democracy across Africa, and why they are doing so. The stated promise of the book—to provide valuable insights on the functioning of liberal democracy from the perspective of Africa scholars living in the communities on which they are writing—falls far short. *Liberal Democracy and Its Critics in Africa* may appeal to a select group of senior scholars but is of limited use for students, policymakers, or practitioners.

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