

It is hard to isolate what is unique to South Africa from what is not, although this slippage between geographies is also part of their point. Where and when crime's sovereign effects begin and end are not the main questions they ask, but they are worth considering.

In the end, *The Truth about Crime* does not provide what its title promises. Instead, it offers something more valuable – a glimpse into the machinery that refines fear, mistrust and violence into actionable social-scientific 'facts', often with dire consequences for those against whom they are turned. The work has appeal across disciplinary boundaries and is sure to incite substantial discussion in the many places that its analysis touches.

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doi:10.1017/S0001972019000755

Jesse Salah Ovadia, *The Petro-developmental State in Africa: making oil work in Angola, Nigeria and the Gulf of Guinea*. London: C. Hurst and Company (hb £45 – 978 1 84904 476 9). 2016, 246 pp.

Jesse Ovadia's *The Petro-developmental State in Africa* is a masterly overview of the trajectories and prospects for oil-fuelled capitalist development in the petro-states of the Gulf of Guinea region, based on case studies of Nigeria and Angola. Exploring the nexus between local content policies and petro-development, Ovadia argues that 'a complex set of new domestic and international realities' represents a 'new moment' in the oil-rich Gulf, which 'opens up new opportunities for state-led development and capitalist transformation at a time when new producers of oil and gas are sprouting up across Africa' (p. 2). He notes that the current conjuncture 'opens a path to economic development through natural resources' (p. 2) and refutes the assumptions of the hegemonic and deterministic 'resource curse' school of thought that has influenced scholarship and policy thinking on the natural resources–development nexus in Africa.

By engaging in a transformational critique of the oil curse, the author brings natural resources as a positive factor back into the debate on development in Africa. Pushing the line that neoliberal policies have failed to lift these countries out of economic stagnation, the book argues that local content policies (LCPs) can provide the necessary leverage for African petro-states to pursue viable alternative paths to failed market liberalism by generating new investments and employment and growing an entrepreneurial African capitalist class. The book sets itself a rather lofty goal of seeking 'how countries of sub-Saharan Africa can throw off centuries of imperialism and underdevelopment' (p. 2), but it does well by grounding itself less in polemics and more in theoretically sophisticated and empirically rigorous material.

Its seven chapters provide a critical analysis of petro-development in Nigeria and Angola – Africa's oil giants – focusing on the evolution, trajectories and challenges of local content development in the upstream and downstream sectors of their oil industries, which are largely dominated by foreign oil multinationals. Chapters 3 to 6 analyse the relationship between the petro-state, ruling elites and oil policies, how oil companies and state oil corporations have implemented and managed LCPs, and the extent to which civil society actors and social movements have been able to influence oil policies to serve popular developmental

aspirations. The concluding chapter explores future prospects for local content-influenced petro-development in Nigeria and Angola.

The book makes certain important points. These include the observation that opportunities for state-led development cannot be foreclosed in Africa, that some petro-elites can take advantage of the 'current moment' to pursue capitalist development rather than primitive accumulation, and that civil society can potentially play a decisive role in either pushing the developmental project forward or allowing it to slide backwards. This position runs through the chapters on local content as an instrument of petro-development, the conditions under which it will succeed, and the prospects for the future. Reviewing the evolution and implementation of LCPs in Nigeria and Angola, the book provides a balanced analysis of the modest gains and challenges, including the place of indigenous oil companies and state oil corporations, and the role of dominant elites in conflating their narrow interests with national interests. While conceding that civil society in both countries is severely limited in its capacity to influence developmental outcomes, the author still maintains that possibilities exist for new social struggles that may result in shifts in the status quo.

In its conclusion, the book reiterates the possibilities for the oil–development nexus in Africa, even though Ovadia clearly states that 'a large-scale movement to encourage a successful, democratic state has not taken hold' (p. 194). In his view, the way forward lies in a form of regional petro-cooperation, drawing on 'a fortunate combination of elite interests, state autonomy, international forces and agency' (p. 194). The author posits that the countries of the Gulf of Guinea 'would certainly benefit from cooperation and an exchange of knowledge and best practice on a wide range of fronts, from environmental policy and programming to industrial policy and petroleum taxation' (p. 195). However, it is noted that 'internal dynamics between countries and leaders in the Gulf of Guinea seem to foreclose this possibility in the short to medium term' (p. 195).

Drawing on comparisons between Nigeria and Angola, the author makes several important observations but ends by underscoring the strategic importance of the current moment. This brilliant book opens up new vistas – theoretically and analytically – to a capitalist development project in oil-rich African states, and extends the frontiers of existing knowledge on Africa's political economy of oil. But it could have done better in explaining the rather inchoate nature of the petro-elite, its internal contradictions, including its transnational features, and the complex identity of petro-politics, even within the so-called petro-states. The book could also have gleaned additional insights from some of the critique of the resource curse produced within Africa by authors such as Michael Watts and Kenneth Omeje, and by including existing studies that place local content policies in comparative perspective. However, the book represents a bold effort to grapple with the slippery notion of African state-led (democratic) petro-development in an innovative and refreshing manner. It will definitely alter the way in which the natural resources–development nexus in Africa is debated for some time to come.

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doi:10.1017/S0001972019000779