

Political Violence in Kenya: land, elections, and claim-making by KATHLEEN KLAUS.

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Political Violence in Kenya is a meticulously researched study that connects the development of land narratives to electoral violence. The book carefully traces how the politics of accessing land and formal property rights shaped land narratives within Kenya's Rift Valley and Coast regions, and how these narratives, in turn, impacted the electoral violence that took place in 2007–8. While the book is framed as a response to scholarship on electoral violence, which shows how land narratives serve as a coordinating device in the local production of violence, it should also be read with great interest by interdisciplinary scholars interested in land. The book reveals the power of narratives related to justice and threat on identity formation and inter-group relations.

The first empirical section (Part 1) answers the question: why do contentious land narratives develop in some areas and not others? Klaus demonstrates how the property rights environment shapes popular understandings of group threat. She argues that when both groups have equally secure property rights, represented here by state titles, each side is less likely to question the claims of the other. By contrast, inequality in land rights is fodder for the growth of contentious land narratives. Klaus focuses on areas in which the state exerts significant control over access to land: settlement schemes and land-buying companies. This allows her to trace the allocation processes that created inequality in rights and helps to isolate some of the factors that contribute to differences in land claim-making. Klaus supports her argument by leveraging paired case studies to disentangle the effects of the property rights environment and ethnic group membership on land narratives formation.

Part 2 addresses the overarching puzzle of local variation in electoral violence. In this section, Klaus argues that elites and citizens coordinate around land narratives to co-produce violence. She relies on process-tracing and comparative case studies to show how contentious land narratives impact the occurrence and forms of electoral violence. This section of the book provides a fascinating account of the ways in which land narratives may connect to the logics of violence, which the author describes as opportunities to alter the status quo, preemption, revenge, and desire for material gain. These categories highlight the multiple meanings of land and land rights. Klaus then draws out how these logics of violence inform the types of violence that actors use, delineating the connections between narratives and outcomes. While Chapter 6 introduces how land narratives are used in the co-production of violence, Chapter 7 explores the conditions that make this more or less likely. In particular, Klaus describes how strong land patronage systems, in which politicians have control over access to land, create opportunities for electoral violence. In doing so, this portion of the analysis links national-level partisan politics to the very local dynamics of land claims and political violence.

Finally, Part 3 leverages an original survey to examine the correlates and consequences of experiencing violence at the individual level. First, it shows that respondents who reported hearing contentious land narratives are more likely to have experienced election violence. Second, the chapter explores a number of potential effects of electoral violence, including openness to ethnic outsiders, fear of ethnic

border zones, trust in political leaders and engagement in interethnic community meetings. This section reinforces the earlier claims in the book and opens up a number of important questions for future research.

The great strength of this book is in the systematic and detailed study of the processes that connect land rights to identity and threat formation to electoral violence. Klaus introduces a number of new conceptual frameworks to guide the reader through each link of the chain. These include new categorisations related to land narratives, property rights equality, logics of electoral violence, methods of electoral violence, and land patronage. Such analytical contributions help illuminate how narratives exert an impact at each stage. In doing so, the book advances our understandings of how ideas and institutions related to land rights affect politics, democracy and political violence.

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Authoritarian Africa: repression, resistance, and the power of ideas by NIC CHEESEMAN and JONATHAN FISHER
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While multiparty elections are now widespread, the promise of democracy has not always lived up to expectations. In *Authoritarian Africa*, Nic Cheeseman and Jonathan Fisher provide a timely and expert account of the diverse factors that have sustained authoritarianism in Africa from independence to present day. The book's core argument is that to truly understand the persistence of authoritarianism, one needs to look beyond the tactics that help rulers hold on to power, to the conditions that facilitate authoritarian forms of politics to begin with. Cheeseman and Fisher place currency on the lingering impacts of colonialism, as well as the continued involvement of international actors in Africa's domestic politics. Likewise, the book illuminates the often-overlooked role of narratives of political legitimisation and the power of ideas. *Authoritarian Africa* is expertly written and draws on numerous historical and contemporary examples to provide an engaging and illuminating textbook.

A key contribution is the book's ability to balance complex analysis of the diversity of authoritarian politics on the continent within the confines of a highly accessible text. *Authoritarian Africa* builds on the scholarship in history and political science to highlight the role of state capacity, resource wealth, and international support. This is wedded with a deep appreciation of African history and broad knowledge of specific cases and political figures. The book avoids jargon, and instead clearly explains key terms and makes effective use of contextualising information regarding specific events and individuals. This makes the book appealing to a wide range of readers not necessarily versed in either authoritarian or African politics. The timing of the book cannot be overstated either. As concerns with the state of democracy in Africa (and worldwide) compound, it is imperative to have a widely accessible overview of the nuanced dynamics of authoritarian rule.

In Chapter 1 the authors assert that the fundamental seedling of authoritarianism in Africa was the colonial experience. These arguments are rooted in a specific