

Book Reviews

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Boekresensies

A vast and all-embracing study of Africa

John Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent* (3rd edition)

Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2017

402pp

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R570

The third edition of John Iliffe's history of Africa (the first and second editions were published in 1995 and 2007 respectively) has by no means diminished in quality nor in consequence. The key difference between the third edition and the second is the change in the title of the thirteenth chapter and there are also some significant revisions to include analysis on recent socio-economic and political developments on the continent. Otherwise, the structure and depth of the publication remain essentially the same with a few revisions made to incorporate current scholarship. This is a masterful book which qualifies both as an ideal textbook for teaching and as an introductory course in African history, ideally, at the graduate level, and as a general reference work for those who seek to understand the continent's very complicated past.

Iliffe concerns himself with writing about Africa's past from the origins of humankind to the present. This allows him to present Africa and Africans as the "frontierspeople" of humankind who colonised an extremely hostile region on behalf of the entire world and continue to populate the rest of the world. In doing so, Iliffe adopts demography as his basic framework to historical enquiry. He weaves his narrative creatively in ways that demonstrate how African people have responded to the hostile environmental, ecological and climatic conditions which exposed the continent to varying forms of virulent and fatal diseases that often affected population growth. Thus, for Iliffe, perennial shortages in population conditioned the evolution of Africa's social, cultural and political practices, which revolved around the development of elaborate codes to increase population, viz: emphasis on fertility and processes of internal colonisation beyond local frontiers. This then is the major thrust of the book. Yet, Iliffe introduces two sub-themes. The first being the continent's partial integration into, and isolation from the Eurasian core of the Old World. Partial integration exposed Africans to Eurasian cultural and technological influences, as partial isolation enabled the development of distinctive cultural forms. The second sub-theme deals with how African peoples experienced suffering and the concomitant ideology and social practices which this engendered.

The first three chapters of the book deal primarily with the pre-history of Africa. Drawing on archaeological evidence and current research into evolutionary biology, Iliffe examines the origins of the human race and the peopling of the continent and the rest of the world from about 3-6 million years ago; the emergence of pastoralism and agriculture and the concomitant development of sedentary lifestyle; the diffusion of metal technology as well as the movement of Bantu-speaking people to populate Eastern and Southern Africa. In these early chapters, Iliffe not only draws out Eurasian influences on developments in

Northern Africa but also weaves an intricate narrative that connects the history of sub-Saharan Africa to that of North Africa – an approach which he sustains throughout the book.

The introduction of Christianity and Islam into Africa is treated in chapter four. Iliffe provides a crisp narrative of the history of these two universalist religions showing in what ways they drew Northern Africa, especially, into wider developments in other parts of the world. In doing so, he examines how the African people also adapted these religions to their needs and the complex interaction between Christianity, Islam, politics and socio-economic developments on the continent. Yet, the chapter also examines local struggles against political dynasties; Arab migration and settlement, especially in the Maghreb; family and gender relations; the emergence and collapse of agrarian economies; and the connection between Islamisation and commercial developments in Eastern and Western Africa.

The next two chapters address the development of colonising societies, political developments and patterns of trade in Africa from about the eleventh century until the eighteenth century. Iliffe uses the term “colonisation” to show in what ways powerful and expansive populations imposed their authority over weaker societies, thus engendering the development of the first micro-states on the continent. In doing so, he examines the constraints that the austere environmental conditions of the continent imposed on the people and how this caused the development of social practices that revolved around fertility. He also delves into the development of codes of honour that were aimed at mitigating the challenges associated with demographic growth. In these chapters, Iliffe underscores the extraordinary agency of the African people and their determination to survive despite acute environmental constraints such as recurrent drought, famine and disease. These constraints, according to Iliffe, have had an enduring impact on the continent because they were partly responsible for shaping and conditioning economic developments and political organisations. He shows convincingly in what ways population density and its distribution influenced African peoples’ proclivities towards political segmentation and their acute unease for centralised political authority.

Chapter seven examines the most unfortunate and dehumanising episode in human history – the Atlantic slave trade. The chapter considers not only the event itself but also provides a crisp narrative that illustrates the confluence of European maritime advancements, the emergence of New World agriculture and indigenous African practices that made this tragic episode possible. In addition, Iliffe provides a compelling narrative of the demographic, political, economic and social impacts of the trade on African people as well as the impact of the abolition of the trade on the African continent. Throughout the chapter, Iliffe underscores one of his sub-themes – that of suffering as a key feature of the African experience, showing in what ways Africans have had to endure the ruthlessness of humankind and what responses they developed to mitigate the impacts of the bitter experiences of the Atlantic slave trade.

Four centuries of depopulation, degradation and demoralisation of African societies resulting from the Atlantic slave trade was followed by a brief period of legitimate commerce. Yet, this period once again drew Africa into a global political system that was characterised by the increasing use of firearms and European dominance. This is the thrust of chapter eight. In this chapter, Iliffe considers African people’s proclivities during the

nineteenth century towards political consolidation – a development that was underpinned by expansion in economic activities and varying demographic developments. Yet, Iliffe seems to suggest that whereas the key forces of political segmentation in African societies – underpopulation and economic stagnation – were relieved by population growth in some places at some periods, these were exacerbated by the decline in other areas.

Thus, dividing the continent into four zones, he demonstrates the lack of uniformity in development trends during the period. Beginning with Northern Africa, he explains how efforts at economic modernity and attempts to overcome political segmentation were truncated by demographic stagnation which was caused by the outbreak of epidemic diseases. But also, European aggression towards this region impinged on efforts at building lasting policies. In West Africa, the nineteenth century Jihads suggested African proclivities towards political consolidation. Yet, once again, in this region, famine, epidemic outbreaks and constant warfare impinged on demographic development, as tendencies towards segmentation hindered efforts to build enduring states, except in Hausaland. In Southern Africa, whereas the Zulu expansion offered prospects for building lasting states, the withdrawal of African populations from the interior opened it up for later Afrikaner occupation. In the meantime, in the Cape, a burgeoning European colony was taking a firm foothold. And in Eastern Africa, whereas commerce offered the possibility at political consolidation, the opening up to the outside world brought about the disintegration of polities that had hitherto survived for about two centuries.

The Berlin Conference (1884–1885), set the ground rules for European countries to partition Africa among themselves. Thus, the late nineteenth century ushered in a relatively brief but eventful period of complete European occupation of the continent. This occupation and subsequent developments are the overriding concern of chapters nine and ten. In these chapters, Iliffe examines colonial state formation, nationalist activities, education, religion and economic change. Despite the so-called redeeming features of colonial rule such as literacy, new economic opportunities, among others, imperial pomposity, the incompetence of colonial administrators, the injustices and the iniquities of the colonial system engendered varying forms of African political activism, which eventually led to the overthrow of colonial rule. Yet, as Iliffe illustrates, the type of resistance was largely shaped and conditioned by the style of administration established by the colonial authorities. In these chapters, Iliffe returns strongly to his overarching framework – demographic developments as the key driving force of developments on the continent. He underscores the role of colonial medicine in improving health and its subsequent impact on population growth – arguing that the staggering increase in population between 1920 and 1950 was the most important consequence of the colonial invasion. Ironically, the dynamics of population growth were consequential, also, for the collapse of colonial rule.

Iliffe continues in this line of argumentation in chapter eleven which is dedicated solely to developments in South Africa from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century. In this chapter, he argues that the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand stimulated industrial developments in South Africa in ways that were different from other parts of the continent. In the main, Iliffe argues essentially that while industrialisation imbued the South African state with the power to perpetuate racial segregation, it also contributed in many ways to the collapse of the apartheid system. What

was essential to apartheid's collapse, he claims, was increased African population made possible by South Africa's industrialisation.

The last two chapters of the book focus on the present conditions of the African continent. Chapter twelve deals with independent Africa. As Iliffe demonstrates, independence provided Africa with both opportunities and challenges. The decline in infant mortality ensured that most African countries experienced dramatic population growth as new African leaders embarked on sweeping educational and social reforms that offered hope for a better future. Yet, after about two decades, optimism gave way to despair as African countries entered a period of economic decline and political declivity. Iliffe argues that the Africans' concern with localism – that is viewing national issues in terms of local concerns – and the vestiges of colonial state formation – which was done by loosely bringing together unrelated ethnic groups, served to impinge on state-building in the post-independent period. At the end, by 1980, not only had Africa been trapped in external debt, but also, authoritarianism and political instability had become key characteristics of the continent. And to these problems was added the outbreak of the HIV pandemic in the late 1970s.

The West and the World Bank's remedy for economic decline – the foisting of a structural adjustment policy on African states achieved only partial results, as Iliffe demonstrates. In the end, economic deprivation pushed African people to turn more closely to God by flooding orthodox churches and thronging to emergent Pentecostal movements. Paradoxically, as Iliffe shows, economic declivity weakened authoritarian regimes and paved the way for a wave of democratisation which also brought the need for gender parity to the fore. The prospects of recovery from acute political and socio-economic challenges during the last decades of the twentieth century and the early part of the present century form the thrust of the final chapter. Here Iliffe shows that despite the potential for economic prosperity, poverty continues to be widespread as demographic challenges remain the bane of the continent. Then again, he shows that competition over resources underpinned by ethnocentric concerns, political conflicts occasioned by growing inequality, and massive youth unemployment conjoined with militant Islamic proclivities, are still some of the key challenges confronting the African continent.

Iliffe has succeeded in writing a history of the continent that covers almost every region in a manner that is coherent and proficient. His analytical rigour and ability to draw insightful generalisations on patterns of developments on the continent is unsurpassed. Yet scholars hoping to use this book as a teaching aid may need to turn elsewhere for deeper discussions on some of the themes and regions that Iliffe covers in less detail. Again, some of his assertions tend to be too-swift generalisations that may be difficult to prove. For example, Iliffe's claim that corruption is an "ancient feature of African politics that acted as a means by which weak rulers exploited their subjects..." (p 287) is debatable. In addition, the next revision should adopt gender-neutral terms such as "frontierspeople" and "humankind" rather than "frontiersmen" and "mankind." Despite these minor concerns, Iliffe deserves commendation for a masterful history that is both eloquent and coherent.

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**A remarkable analysis of government institutions
in the pursuit of social engineering endeavours**

Jeffrey Butler, *Cradock: How Segregation and Apartheid Came to a South African Town*

University of Virginia Press, Virginia, 2017

272 pp

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R843

In this, his last book, the late Jeffrey Butler explores the fundamental socio-economic dynamics that moulded the physical nature of South African communities. The political arsenal of governments from the period of segregation and apartheid wielded influences on the development of communities and every aspect of the citizenry. The existence and nature of many townships such as Soweto, Sharpeville and others were shaped by social engineering endeavours implemented by the apartheid regime. The housing structures built by the apartheid government in townships are an indication of the survival of symbols associated with the contestation of memory, place and identity. Robust deliberations on the history and development of townships, although somewhat onerous because of its plural content base, require intellectual rigour and stamina. Nevertheless, the development of townships has received much attention from scholars in an attempt to gain a better understanding of processes that shape communities, towns, and urban centres.

The discourse on histories of environments and communities has yielded vigorous academic work, but in *Cradock* the author shows that histories of communities can never be presented in their totality. The book falls within a discourse under the umbrella of local/regional histories with a focus on the built environment and the experiences of community members in their daily lives. Regardless of the broader thematic framework, Butler offers a critical and much needed historical analysis of the history of Cradock – the excellent presentation of analysis makes it clear that he was a resident of the region. From the outset, Butler highlights the way the political experiences of the Cradock community members shared similarities and differences with “Southerntown” (p 1) (Indianola and Mississippi). The global contextualisation of Cradock indicates that South Africa’s historical processes are by no means unique. Furthermore, Butler places the development of Cradock in the context of the development of cities such as Johannesburg, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth.

The strength of the 185-page book lies in the intensive use of primary sources, such as the newspapers *Midlands News*, *The English Daily*, and *Evening Post*, as well as the author’s extensive archival work. These resources are critical in outlining the development of Cradock and the lifestyle of its residents. Primary sources have been used expertly to highlight the marked disparities of living conditions between the various socio-economic classes. Most interestingly, Butler interrogates the stimulus that fundamentally governed relationships between community members in an environment heavily determined by race relations and the political subjugation of the black community members during the period of segregation in South Africa and the early phases of the implementation of apartheid.

This thorough account of the geographical development of Cradock indicates a significant migration of black people into the town in search of a cash wage livelihood. This tendency increased from about 1933, when the South African economy blossomed in the aftermath of the crippling, worldwide depression of 1929 to 1933. The promise of work in the towns offered good financial prospects compared to the lower wages earned in the farming economy. Similar to the development of Johannesburg, Cradock's black population increased rapidly and so too did the need for accommodation to house the influx of workers. The proximity of Cradock to its growing townships was a drawback, and many would-be workers went into the town to seek employment. Regent Street separated the African township and the areas inhabited by people of mixed race, Indians, and whites. A small number of Coloureds lived together with the black people in the African township (referred to as the old location), and they could also be found in mixed areas, sharing spaces in a plural society that contradicted the government's proposed separate development. The community members of this plural society were able to own property in free-hold, mainly because the municipal authorities had minimal legislative control over people living in areas that had been declared free-hold.

The inevitability of political fracas in Cradock was stimulated by the first police raid of the African location in 1925. The justification for raids was evidence of a growing societal problem associated with the brewing of African beer, usually carried out by black women. Raiding of suspected properties was to ensure control and order, especially over weekends. The Liquor Act of 1928 made beer brewing by Africans illegal, even though the practice formed a cultural base for ceremonies adhered to by black people. The implementation of the act highlighted the political advantages the whites enjoyed over the majority: Africans were unable to purchase liquor, unlike the coloured community who were able to acquire liquor in town outlets and hotels. The practice of raids stimulated political discourse on the inconsistencies inherent in the control of lodgers in the township. Alcohol became a social "problem" and was highlighted by the Temperance Society and religious bodies, whom Butler calls the "teetotallers". The key figure here was the Reverend James Calata, who was against the banning of beer brewing by the local authorities, insisting that it was an important part of African culture. This is symbolic of the power of local governments in circumscribing the development of what they deem "inappropriate" in African townships.

The strength of Butler's book is located in the interrogation of the connectivities between mayors (local governance) and the national government. Butler unpacks the influence of the broader government on policies that shaped the political arena of Cradock. From its inception, Cradock experienced minimal influence from the national government. It managed the maintenance of the town, including water supplies, sanitation, and the built environment, almost on its own. Furthermore, Butler explores key challenges pertaining to an ever-expanding town and points out that the inequality was vividly evident in the nature of the provision of ablution facilities and access to tap water. The African township was characterised by long lines of people with their buckets, awaiting their turn to collect water. The white residents in town and elsewhere had access to water and far better sanitary conditions. Of utmost concern was the spread of water-related diseases that contributed to infant mortality in the area – this raised questions around the misuse of funding that derived from the beer hall in the region. Even more so, access to health

facilities proved to be a challenge to authorities because one nurse (Mary Butler, who later resigned) in the township was responsible for the well-being of the entire community. The municipal officials were slow in addressing the issues relating to public housing and the sustainability of health in the locations. The only hospital, the Metcalf Hospital, depended heavily on donations from well-wishers to provide healthcare for black residents.

The inception of apartheid in 1948 saw a slew of apartheid legislation. Foremost among these were the Urban Areas Act of 1923, devised to promote separate development, and the Immorality Act to prevent miscegenation. The principles of separate development began to orientate the demographic structure of Cradock, with constant dialogue on the feasibility of separating the racial groups – as was the case with District 6, Cator Manor, Top Location and Sophiatown. In addition to separate development and restructuring of the town, Butler’s book contextualises and emphasises race and class issues. At the centre of the dialogue is the economic condition of poor whites and how the middle and upper white class preferred geographical distance and buffer zones between them and others.

Butler is particularly keen to investigate gender issues and acculturation processes in the African township. In addition, he strives for a deeper understanding of gender roles, children’s experiences, and miscegenation in Cradock. Though it is understood that black women earned wages as domestic employees, their domestic role is not presented fully. Nor is the livelihood of Indians and coloured people. In addition, Butler looks at the inadequate healthcare facilities and the high infant mortality rate; the desire for engagement with social issues such as sports, identity, miscegenation, music, experiences of relocation, determinants of home, and the vibrancy of the township leaves the reader searching for a longer and more detailed study. The book achieves its goal of revealing the heavy hand of national government on local municipalities and shows how these relationships were ambiguous and conflict-laden. Lastly, Butler shows the efficiency and inefficacies of organisations such as APO and ANCYL, the Ratepayers’ Association and other bodies in resisting the implementation of legislation that they deemed inappropriate.

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**The decontamination of post-apartheid Afrikaner identity
through white Afrikaans women’s *ordentlikheid***

Christi van der Westhuizen, *Sitting Pretty: White Afrikaans Women in Postapartheid South Africa*

UKZN Press, Pietermaritzburg, 2017

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240 pp

R365

Christi van der Westhuizen begins her book, *Sitting Pretty: White Afrikaans Women in Postapartheid South Africa*, with the then president, Nelson Mandela’s invitation to Afrikaner women to join the ranks of “a newly imagined, inclusive community” (p 3), during the opening of the first democratic parliament on 24 May 1994. Through his

reference to Ingrid Jonker, who recognised the *volk's* black other in her poem “The Child Who Was Shot Dead by Soldiers at Nyanga”, Mandela pointed out the democratic potential opened for Afrikaner women’s subjectivities in South Africa’s fledgeling democracy. Van der Westhuizen investigates how Afrikaans women responded to Mandela’s offer of identification and if they stepped into the subject positions of democratic discourse in terms of race, class, gender and sexuality. She asks if Jonker’s counterparts readily absorbed postapartheid discourses of the humanisation of the *volk's* others and how they, in turn, produced these discourses.

Van der Westhuizen positions her study within theories of the discursive formation of subjectivity: “... how individuals adopt identities and are turned into subjects” (p 11). The study is built on a sound empirical and theoretical basis. Her findings are based on a poststructuralist discourse analysis of twelve editions of the popular Afrikaans women’s magazine, *Sarie*. Her other data is focus groups and interviews with women who identify themselves as heterosexual, Afrikaans-speaking, white and middle-class. Interviews were conducted with 25 respondents between the ages of 30 and 65 in Johannesburg and the northern parts of Cape Town. Six in-depth interviews were selected from the focus groups.

The first chapter of *Sitting Pretty* is an exposition of *ordentlikheid* as ethnicised respectability and a historical identity configuration that holds Afrikaner identity together through adapting to historical change. *Ordentlikheid* is examined through intersectionality defined as “the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations” deconstructing assumptions of master categories of inequality through an “anti-categorical analytical approach to intersectionality” (p 24). She motivates the usefulness of *ordentlikheid* which “allows for the discernment of the productive interactions between various social markers of difference – particularly class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and age” (p 60).

By historicising the term, she then shows how it was employed in the upliftment of Afrikaners through the role it played in destigmatising Afrikaner whiteness as being backward in relation to European modernity. The stigma was resolved by colonial and apartheid governments, but apartheid created a new stigma: Afrikaners as oppressors. After apartheid, *ordentlikheid* presented the possibility of overcoming a twofold stigma: “Afrikanerhood as lesser whiteness in relation to the white English-speaking South Africans and Afrikanerhood as morally stained as a result of its intimate implication with apartheid and resultant culpability” (p 61). Van der Westhuizen elaborates further on this finding in her second chapter where the *Sarie* magazine is seen as a discursive instrument in this destigmatisation of Afrikaner whiteness, aspiring to achieve equal status with hegemonic Anglo whiteness.

In the second chapter of the book, Van der Westhuizen shows how *ordentlikheid* is anchored in the *volksmoeder* (mother of the nation). This immensely interesting chapter shows how *Sarie* contributed to advancing the Afrikaner nationalist hegemony by positioning a version of “woman” which modernised the *volksmoeder*, adding a bit of glamour “to its ethnoracial heteronormativity” (p 63). Aiming for equal footing with Anglo whiteness in postapartheid South Africa, *Sarie* aspires to the ethically feasible option of establishing *ordentlikheid* as the carrier of “racial and sexual respectability” (p 100),

rinsing the stain of apartheid from the Afrikaner. Van der Westhuizen finds that the *Sarie* discourse resolves a tension in Western women's magazines between agency and submission through a call to self-responsibility and self-improvement and the *volksmoeder's* "selfless assumption of responsibility for others while also assuming sole culpability for any failure in the accomplishment of heteronormative prescriptions" (p 100). Black people are subjected to a blackout in *Sarie* through exclusion from the magazine's white world. Those who are permitted are domesticated and serve the purpose of exonerating white Afrikaans readers of *Sarie* ("*Sarie* subjects") from apartheid culpability. Lesbian counter-discourses are thwarted with lesbians being completely excluded, cementing the heteronormativity of the magazine. Gay male others are permitted in the capacity of "male feminine vassals channelling the prescripts of the *volksmoeder*". Hegemonic masculinity is foregrounded ("God-father-husband-man") and "[t]he patriarchal overseer counteracts whatever inadvertent feminist effects *Sarie's* neoliberal espousal of self-actualisation might have" (p 101).

Chapter three approaches the postapartheid version of the *volksmoeder* from the vantage point of how subjects adhered to or resisted its interpellation. The chapter explores the actualisation of the discourses of *Sarie* in women's lives through an investigation of the responses of the interviewees. She points out that the *volksmoeder* is not dead and the three precepts of silence, service and sexuality in the name of reproduction are supported by postfeminism and neo-liberalism. Silence weaponised Afrikaner women making them "spiritual soldiers" guarding the "inner-room" of the late apartheid Afrikaner home. In postapartheid South Africa, her silence confirms the power of men in the home "in contrast to women's possible success and voice in democratic South Africa's public sphere" (p 147). Service owed to the *volk* continues in the form of household labour, reproduction, managing effect and establishing a space for male leisure. Male supremacy is confirmed through the division of labour. The knowledge of female pleasure and sexual agency is suppressed. The kind of discourses found in *Sarie* thus depoliticises women and revitalises *ordentlikheid* "through the normalisation of the woman/wife as mother and the objection of its racialised and sexual and gender non-conforming others" (p 148).

Van der Westhuizen then moves her examination to the discursive possibilities of "manhood" in Afrikaner identity in chapter four. She builds on her previous chapters by bringing this gender pole into visibility. Her approach to Afrikaner male identity is a novel one. It is analysed through the discourses of Afrikaans white women. A neo-nationalist configuration of Afrikaans white hetero-masculinity emerges from the vantage point of the hetero feminine other. The dominant form of postapartheid Afrikaner manhood is that of the "patriarchal overseer" of the *volksmoeder*. By allowing the reinstatement of *ordentlikheid* the Afrikaner man also promises to decontaminate Afrikaner identity by representing the nobility and goodness of Afrikanerdom. Van der Westhuizen argues that "[t]he attempted restoration of male Afrikaner moral authority contains an internal gender ploy: to counteract the upheavals that democracy brings to the white Afrikaans sex-gender regime" (p 175).

Chapter five investigates how *ordentlikheid* manifests in space. Van der Westhuizen looks at the inward migration of Afrikaners to their neo-nationalist enclaves. "White South Africa" is privatised and neo-nationalism recreates it on a microcosmic scale with the home as the heart of the enclave. Afrikaans spaces are constantly being created:

“Culture, ethnicity and class are deployed as Trojan horses to continually whiten spaces and reinforce racial hierarchies” (p 191). The *volksmoeder* “re-entrenches normative men at the pinnacle of the enclave’s sexual and gender hierarchies” (p 192). In this way these spaces also reinstate *ordentlikheid*.

White Afrikaans women responded to the democratisation of South Africa through the performative task/objective of becoming *ordentlik* (respectable) again. Afrikaans women address their white guilt through *ordentlikheid* as a moral imperative, trying to function within an ethnicity that was taken apart because of its racist past and remnants. This process is enacted in a material context through their position as middle-class women. Their identity is also constructed within the enduring icon of the *volksmoeder* of which “sitting pretty” (*jy moet mooi sit* or *sit mooi*) physically expresses the race, class and gender criteria of this ethnic identity construction. The project of *ordentlikheid* is a normative one – it challenges an Afrikaner woman to “organise their bodies in accordance with certain prescriptions” (p 4). *Ordentlikheid* also re-establishes Afrikaner identity’s moral worth within the complex process of democratisation.

Van der Westhuizen also shows how the project of *ordentlikheid* is not new but has a long history. Today *ordentlikheid* is, seen from one angle, a form of dealing with guilt, but pre-1948 (and even thereafter) it was also a reaction to the dehumanising experiences suffered by Afrikaners at the hands of British cultural hegemony and Social Darwinism which reminded them of their inferiority in all sections of society. Avoiding anachronism when looking at those Afrikaners one cannot help but feel compassion. However, history shows its irony in the deeply tragic repetition of the dehumanisation the *volk* experienced themselves – oppressing their black other throughout the twentieth century. Van der Westhuizen’s book has an element of hope in highlighting the role of shame in the transformation of the Afrikaner’s relationship with the other: “With shame as effective practice, dissident white subjects work against the psychosocial degradation of whiteness to overturn the colonial denial of humanity to black people” (p 20). Her work points to the transformative possibilities of dissent and resistance expressed in white Afrikaans women’s subjectivities.

It is impossible to cover all of Van der Westhuizen’s valuable insights and the analytical sophistication of *Sitting Pretty* in this short review. I encourage any academic interested in the complex contestation of identity in postapartheid South Africa to read this excellent contribution to critical whiteness studies.

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A unique assessment of South Africa’s post-apartheid foreign policy

Adekeye Adebajo and Kudrat Virk (eds), *Foreign Policy in Post-apartheid South Africa: Security, Diplomacy and Trade*

I.B. Taurus, London and New York, 2018

500 pp

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R549

Foreign Policy in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Security, Diplomacy and Trade, addresses the urgent need for a comprehensive examination of South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy. Complementing recent scholarship on South Africa's foreign policy, this volume differs in its historical, geographical and thematic comprehensiveness and demonstrates that South Africa's foreign policy is shaped by its domestic context, particularly overcoming the legacies of apartheid.

Divided into five main parts, the first part, titled "Key Themes in South Africa's Foreign Policy" comprises five chapters. Chris Landsberg emphasises domestic imperatives in driving South Africa's foreign policy. Devon E.A. Curtis investigates Pretoria's (still seen internationally as South Africa's administrative capital rather than its post-apartheid renaming as Tshwane) peacemaking diplomacy arguing that it is void of a clear and comprehensible approach to the African continent, raising "questions about the overall peacemaking enterprise and its limits as well as the future ability of South Africa to deliver" (p 70). Sagaren Krishna Naidoo's chapter reflects on the country's defence and security role, indicating that the consequence of an inadequate continental roadmap on South Africa's defence institutions has "generated a wider debate over the domestic and foreign policy goals of successive post-apartheid South African governments" (p 94). Although Pretoria (Tshwane) made human rights the guiding principle of the country's diplomacy it has been inconsistent in upholding such rights. Careful not to label South Africa as deviant, Nicole Fritz provides a fuller assessment of the country's foreign policy as it relates to human rights and accounts for the roles of the judiciary and the legislature in protecting human rights. Brendan Vickers and Richard Cawood discuss the expansion of South African firms into Africa and beyond. They propose co-ordination between business and the state and the expansion of home-grown companies.

Part two of the book examines South Africa's key bilateral relations in Africa. Lloyd M. Sachikonye's chapter interrogates South Africa's bilateral relations in Southern Africa. He argues that South Africa's bilateral relations with Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe "have not necessarily followed the same trajectory" (p 153). Underpinned by the close affinity between Frelimo and the ANC, relations with Mozambique have been relatively smooth, and finds "expression in the foreign policies of the two countries" (p 160) and South Africa/Angola ties warmed up with the end of the Angolan civil war in 2002. By 2013 Angola was regarded as a key strategic ally with relations improving as the personal chemistry between Jacob Zuma and Eduardo do Santos was significantly close. Meanwhile, relations with Zimbabwe have been uncertain in the context of domestic difficulties in the country. Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja focuses on South Africa's bilateral relations in the Great Lakes.

Still in part two, Nzongola-Ntalaja uses the crises in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo and notes the encouraging outcome in South Africa's peacemaking efforts in the region. However, relations with Rwanda have been cool subsequent to Rwanda meddling in Congo's affairs and the violation of South Africa's sovereignty in the alleged "carrying out assassination plots against two dissidents granted asylum in South Africa" (p 182). Adekeye Adebajo examines South Africa's relations with three strategic countries in West Africa: Nigeria, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire, while Adebajo captures South Africa's relations with Nigeria as one of rivalry (political and economic) for leadership on the continent.

In the case of Ghana, relations have been dominated largely by economic issues, with South African companies expanding into the region. Côte d'Ivoire experienced South Africa's peacemaking efforts and economic presence because Pretoria regards the country as an economic gateway to francophone West Africa. Gilbert M. Khadiagala investigates South Africa's bilateral relations in Eastern Africa. The chapter stresses that South Africa's foreign policy approach towards the region is through the building of "political and economic ties with Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Sudan/South Sudan" (p 215). Despite close historical links with Tanzania as well as links between the ANC and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, the region is marginal to South Africa's foreign policy in comparison to Southern Africa. Rawia Tawfik looks at South Africa's bilateral relations in North Africa. Algeria is South Africa's main strategic partner in the region. But with the country facing a period of unrest like much of the neighbourhood, the chapter unpacks whether South Africa has been able to recalibrate its foreign policy towards the region.

Part three considers South Africa's key multilateral relations in Africa. Chris Saunders and Dawn Nagar explore relations between South Africa and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). In search of enhancing its global status, SADC has not been a priority in Pretoria's foreign policy. Apartheid-era destabilisation efforts also raise suspicion of a South Africa dominated bloc. Richard Gibb's chapter argues that South Africa's "interests have determined the nature, evolution and character of the Southern African Customs Union (SACU)" (p 275). The chapter uses South Africa's relationship with SACU to gauge the country's foreign policy objectives as it relates to multilateralism, regional integration and how "the African power manages 'hegemony'" (p 275). Eddy Maloka examines the evolving relationship between South Africa and the OAU/AU. He notes that South Africa has taken a three-pronged approach to the AU; direct leadership, cooperation with other countries and support of institutional initiatives. It has promoted certain positions of the AU globally, all in an effort to stimulate its African identity continentally and internationally.

Part four of the book interrogates South Africa's key bilateral relations with the United States (US), Britain, France and China. Stephen R. Weissman unpacks the pragmatic relationship between South Africa and the US despite public criticism of the latter. Pretoria and Washington have agreed on a number of important foreign policy issues. As he puts it, "Mandela and Clinton came together on non-proliferation and Burundi. Mbeki and Bush worked together on the DRC and Zuma and Obama have cooperated on the DRC and Sudan" (p 331). Daniel Large traces the uneasy relationship between South Africa and Britain. With South Africa's standing in world affairs elevated post-1994, a recalibration of relations ensued. In particular, Britain has sought to end foreign aid to South Africa to pursue a more economically balanced relationship. Examining South Africa's relationship with France, Roland Marchal stresses co-operation economically and on other issues even though differences exist. Liu Haifang examines the growing relationship between South Africa and China. Grounded on the history of solidarity between the ANC and China, the rapid expansion of bilateral and multilateral relations has elevated South Africa's prompting its inclusion in the BRIC bloc. However, relations remain vulnerable to influences from powerful Western states as the Libya case demonstrates with South Africa going against fellow BRICS members and voting for military intervention (allegedly after Obama convinced Zuma to support the resolution).

The last part of the book investigates South Africa's key external multilateral relations with the United Nations (UN), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group (ACP) and the BRICS. Doctor Mashabane argues that South Africa has used the UN to influence certain global issues. Elected twice to serve as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, the chapter highlights South Africa taking up a serious leadership role on issues affecting Africa. Faizel Ismail discusses South Africa's performance in the multilateral trading system, arguing that domestic imperatives informed the country's participation in the WTO prior and after the Doha Round of 2001. South Africa's pragmatic and flexible approach has seen her profile as an effective participant enhanced. Mxolisi Nkosi's chapter examines South Africa's decision to join the ACP Group, despite not enjoying the privileges that came with this association. Nkosi postulates that South Africa's foreign policy objective of strengthening "South-South ties to help protect against economic marginalisation" (p 429) was a common theme throughout the Mandela, Mbeki and Zuma administrations. Kudrat Virk focuses on South African-BRICS relations. Although it joined the bloc in 2010, Virk notes deep challenges to South Africa's role as it shares a platform with countries significantly larger economically, that have no regional demands as in the case of South Africa, which purports to promote the African agenda. The challenge for South Africa is to manage its ambitions of leadership on the continent and to be an equal and effective partner with other BRICS members.

The chapters in this book make a fundamental contribution in assessing South Africa's post-apartheid foreign policy. They show the complexities and challenges faced by relatively small players that have ambitions to have an impact internationally. With contributions from South Africans and non-South Africans alike, the book offers a comprehensive study of the evolution of South Africa foreign affairs, offering critiques, warnings and policy proposals. It stresses that South Africa's foreign policy objectives and engagement with the international community addresses domestic imperatives, in particular the legacies of apartheid. The strength of this book is its geographical scope, highlighting the ambitions and inconsistencies in South Africa's foreign policy. Predictably, a study of this nature is limited in its capacity to discuss in-depth relations between South Africa and individual country and institutions, particularly those with whom it has deep historical relations. Despite this shortcoming, it remains an incredibly significant study in capturing South Africa's re-engagement in world affairs post-1994 and how its status has developed internationally. It also provides a window into international affairs and the struggles by the global south to transform international institutions in order to claim a space and voice to contribute to international decision-making.

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**Reviewing the place of South Africa's
religious and traditional leadership post-1994**

Dhammamegha Annie Leatt, *The State of Secularism*
Wits University Press, Johannesburg, 2017

232 pp.

ISBN: 978-1-776-14057-2

R380

This book by Annie Leatt is a fascinating insight into the rich and long history of religious activity in South Africa pre- and post-apartheid. The author meticulously investigates the concept of secularism and how often it is misunderstood in the broader South African environment. While the book and the concept at first seem fairly complex, the author does an excellent job in exploring the concept and history of religious activity in South Africa. Moreover, the linkages the author makes between religious entities, traditional authorities and political parties are superbly narrated and tie into the current South African political environment where numerous political leaders still try to appeal to traditional and religious authorities.

In the opening chapter, in careful detail, the author addresses certain underlying assumptions concerning this concept in South Africa, stating:

The African National Congress (ANC), religious groups, press and political commentators all say that democratic South Africa is secular. But religion and things that look a lot like religion continue to be important and visible in South African politics and public life (p 1).

This statement re-opens a debate and discourse which are usually under-reported and misunderstood. Over and above this, the chapter introduces the reader to ideas and debates relating to American First Amendment Secularism, Laicite, Atheist Marxists, Leninists and Maoists and, most importantly in the new South Africa, details on where and how secularism relates to the colonial and imperial administration and political secularism in contemporary South Africa.

Chapter 2 looks at the South African morality tale: religion, tradition and racialised rule. It is perhaps one of the most important chapters in the book because it expands the dimensions and trends that led to the current state of citizens' understanding of secularism. Leatt begins the chapter well by explaining: "South Africa has a long and complex history of entanglement between religion, tradition and political rule. Until the political transition in the 1990s, governance was not secular" (p 27). Systematically, the chapter teases out how the concepts of race and tradition gave rise to the types and forms of religions institutions in South Africa in the subsection titled "Differentiation and Separation". The most fascinating subsection, though, is one on the "Political Theologies and the Metaphysics of Race", which provides a good historical analysis of the major theological and political debates that inform the rise of racialised theology in South Africa. Particularly interesting is the capturing of the history of the Protestant Mainline Churches, African Independent Churches, Dutch Reformed Church and how this contested existence dealt with the dawn of democracy in 1994.

In the third chapter, Leatt details how a racially divided state, even along theological and church lines, now contends with how it will carry two key ideas. Firstly, how do you get people from a purposefully designed, racially divided background, to see

each other as common citizens in a united South Africa? Secondly, and perhaps most pertinent to the book at hand, where and what role is now to be ascribed to theological institutions, who themselves have a broader mandate than being simple brick-and-mortar institutions. Churches, even the historically divided ones based on race, were now asked and, in some instances, tasked with assisting the introduction of multiparty democracy in a secular environment. In a way, one can claim that the chapter highlights the numerous contradictions that led to the debate surrounding secularism.

Chapter 5 presents a very insightful historical account of how the early foundations of the South Africa state sought to be purposefully secular in approach yet made sure that religious figures featured prominently in the political theatre. This assessment is supported by Leatt when she stresses the fact that the nationalist foundations of the legitimacy of the new South Africa did not make religious presence or content central. But religious leaders and discourses did participate in many events of this early nationalism (p 140). This chapter details neatly how, at certain political events, religious leaders (and traditional authorities), despite being non-actors in the political landscape, are viewed as important entities in the political theatre of South Africa.

In the final chapter, Leatt uses a broad time span before and after the coming to power of former president Jacob Zuma to analyse the state of secularism in South Africa by tracing various themes like governance, homosexuality, the rise and role of traditional leadership and high levels of South African religiosity. She concludes that currently the South African state of secularism is one that is evolving and that despite the constitution advancing a certain understanding of secularism, the broader South African society could and might in time, redefine what the end-picture of secularism in South Africa might look like.

The State of Secularism is a fascinating and worthwhile read, especially when one considers the numerous news highlights in 2019 that centre around the proliferation and misbehaviour of “prosperity pastors” in South Africa. The proliferation of such “prosperity pastors” or, as more mainline churches claim, “charismatic charlatans” is bringing to the fore the importance and role (Christian) religion plays in South Africa’s socio-political and economic landscape. While the South African constitution is revered the world over, it is interesting to note that on a personal level, South Africans who are mostly conservative might not necessarily revere it as much as once thought. This two-sided nature of South Africans going forward will lead to questions regarding the constitution and secularism.

The book should perhaps also have considered the two-sided nature of South Africans and what this might mean for South Africa’s post-1994 project. For instance, will the political problems in the Middle East, particularly those between Israel and Palestine, find an even more unhealthy expression in the South African political environment? Also, how will the ANC’s policies going forward be able to accommodate the rural and urban divide, when the role of traditional leaders is on the ascent but most South Africans are becoming more urban? The author’s deep research could have allowed her to answer these and other such questions.

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Engaging with the fall of a tyrant

Geoff Nyarota, *The Graceless Fall of Robert Mugabe: The End of a Dictator's Reign*

Penguin Books Random House, Cape Town, 2018

Ix + 200 pp

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R220

That there is a flourish of literature on the fall of Robert Mugabe from power in November 2017 is not surprising. Mugabe was and still is a historical and political figure that invites the attention and curiosity of scholars and journalists alike. What is surprising is that some convenient accounts of the fall of Mugabe do more to conceal than reveal the complicity of some who write on Mugabe's legacy of tyranny and political violence in Zimbabwe. Rigorous critiques of tyranny and tyrants that may lead to reflections on futures of democracy and freedom in such countries as Zimbabwe require courageous and critical scholars and journalist who are prepared to admit their own complicity, ideological and practical, in the cultivation and irrigation of tyrants. In *The Graceless Fall of Robert Mugabe*, Geoff Nyarota squanders an opportunity to stand amongst courageous writers that critique tyrants and also reflect on their own contribution to tyranny and despotism through their writings and political activism.

As a veteran Zimbabwean journalist and prize-winning, internationally acclaimed editor, Nyarota had a golden opportunity not only tell the story of the rise and fall of Robert Mugabe but also to reflect that Mugabe destroyed Zimbabwe, not as a single, powerful individual but a tyrant who had the support of journalists and editors that published daily stories in his praise – and silenced other stories that told of the tyrant's massacres and large- scale corruption. For many years in Zimbabwe, Nyarota edited *The Chronicle*, a state-controlled newspaper that was Mugabe's mouthpiece. This newspaper achieved notoriety for its determined refusal to expose massacres of the Gukurahundi genocide in Matabeleland. In his book, Nyarota conveniently forgets this history of his journalism that was complicit in Mugabe's tyranny and violence, and only remembers – in graphic detail – how Mugabe had him dismissed from his job for exposing the corruption of ministers and high-ranking government officials who were close to Mugabe. In that way, Nyarota not only tells half the story of the rise and fall of Robert Mugabe but also participates in the tyrannical and deceptive journalism that hides the complicity of powerful editors and journalists in the violence of tyrants.

One of Nyarota's observations in this book is that "it took Mugabe just two decades to bring a Zimbabwe that possessed much promise of peace and prosperity, down to its knees" (p 57). The political and economic collapse of Zimbabwe is compressed by an otherwise perceptive and experienced journalist and editor; he give the full blame, the sole responsibility to one powerful individual – Robert Mugabe. In that convenient and easy way, Nyarota's vividly told account of Mugabe and Zimbabwe silences rather than reveals the stark truth: that Mugabe not only had supporters, flatterers and sycophants but also powerful editors at his side. They used their craft to edit out all evidence of ruthless massacres and genocide; they cushioned his tyranny, protected him from due probity. The wider world was largely prevented from the horrific accounts of Mugabe's massacres and

genocide by newspapers such as *The Chronicle*. Reports of cruelty were artfully edited to conceal the crimes of a dictator.

Nyarota is so loud and large about his fight, as an editor, against the corruption of Robert Mugabe's ministers and supporters. Yet he is dismissive of the genocide, labelling it of less importance. As he puts it: "whether by design or coincidence, as Gukurahundi paled into a painful memory, a new phenomenon crept into centre stage-official corruption" (p 40). Up to this day, to its victims, the genocide, except in the minds of conspirators with the perpetrators, has certainly not paled into a vague memory; it remains an open wound, a bleeding injury that cries out for justice. In his sympathy with Robert Mugabe's violent rule, a partiality that he fails to conceal even now when he wants to be counted as an anti-Mugabe hero, Nyarota becomes stingy with some stark truths and generous with some constructions and other confabulations. ZAPU, a political party older than ZANU-PF and which, tellingly, fought the anti-colonial struggle, is reduced by Nyarota, to an insignificant "ZAPU, which was a mainly Ndebele-based faction popular in South-western regions of Rhodesia" (p 8). However, the truth is that ZAPU was a nationalist party and never a faction; it is ZANU-PF that began in 1963 as a faction that splintered from ZAPU. Nyarota conveniently insulates himself and his readers from such stubborn truisms of history. Joshua Nkomo, the leader of ZAPU who was called "Father Zimbabwe" for his nationalism and statesmanship is compressed by Nyarota to a lightweight leader that Zimbabweans followed out of respect. While Nyarota celebrates the massive crowd that received Mugabe when he landed from exile in 1980, the immense and equally electric crowd that received Joshua Nkomo on 13 January in 1980, two weeks before Mugabe, is simply explained away – the many people "might have come to welcome Father Zimbabwe, as Joshua Nkomo was fondly called, merely out of respect and possibly, out of curiosity to see the first nationalist leader to return home" (p 24). That Nkomo was called Father Zimbabwe because he was the very symbol of the nation ahead of the "enigmatic" Mugabe, as Nyarota describes him, is expertly edited away by a legendary editor that Nyarota is.

The Graceless Fall of Robert Mugabe, a book that promises to narrate the beginning and "the end of a dictator's reign" in an honest fashion, is instead carelessly, and also rather contrivingly, allowed to collapse into a narrative of the personal courage, journalistic heroism and editorial sacrifices of the one and only Geoff Nyarota. Concerning his persecution by the Mugabe regime when he became the editor of the popular and independent *Daily News*, Nyarota is graphic and revealing. The reader learns that several times the offices and printing press of the newspaper were bombed by state security agents. The killer tendencies of the Mugabe regime are graphically unmasked. As a brave journalist and editor, Nyarota tells the reader:

I was arrested on six different occasions, on baseless charges. An agent, Bernard Masara, was hired and paid by Innocent Mugabe-one of Mugabe's nephews and a top CIO official – to assassinate me. A last minute change of heart on Masara's part saved my life (p 51).

Nyarota's personal persecution and oppression by a tyrannical regime are not allowed to fade into pale memory in this book. Surprisingly, the mysterious and suspicious death, in a

fire in his house, of General Solomon Mujuru, a retired soldier who had become an internal ZANU-PF opponent of Mugabe, is reduced by Nyarota to an accident that resulted from the general's negligence and possibly his drunken habits. Much like a hired lawyer and a sophist, Nyarota goes to ridiculous pains in dismissing the suspicions of the Mujuru family and millions of Zimbabweans who with good reason believed the general was assassinated. That the same agents who were hired and paid to assassinate him could well have been sponsored by the Mugabe regime to eliminate the general. The regime certainly had a reputation for assassinating individuals and communities that were anti-Mugabe but this is argued away with embarrassing dexterity by a seasoned editor who is seemingly determined to be the biggest and most serious victim of the Mugabe tyrannical regime. No doubt, Nyarota is interested in fortifying his new-found reputation as a gallant scribe who braved the tyranny of Mugabe. The fact that he once defended the despotism of Mugabe energetically is dutifully buried and flowers are grown on the grave.

This book is forcefully and beautifully written with lucid prose and a compelling command of language that is clearly meant to convince. In its picturesque descriptions of people, incidents and events, the publication is the true primary script for the movie makers. It has been written to be a "classic" of beauty but it has no power because its potential power is taken away by Nyarota's partiality to himself and manipulation of historical fact – po notably his earlier support of Mugabe and ZANU-PF as the editor of a government controlled publication.

Chapter 1 describes the events that accompanied the coup and narrates Mugabe's journey from a humble teacher to a guerilla leader who eventually became the president of Zimbabwe – and stayed in power for far too long. Mugabe's heroic return from exile and the bush war is narrated in Chapter 2, where his popularity in the early days of Zimbabwe's independence is described. The tales of the Gukurahundi genocide, the persecution of Joshua Nkomo and the official corruption of Mugabe's ministers are told in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 describes the tragic decline of Zimbabwe from being the breadbasket of Africa to becoming the basket case of the continent. Mugabe's marriage to Grace Mugabe who was once his secretary occupies Chapter 5. The factional political fights that erupted in ZANU-PF and divided the party (while focusing on Mugabe as a strong and undisputed leader) are narrated in Chapter 6, while General Solomon Mujuru's death by fire is the subject of Chapter 7. The political shenanigans of Grace Mugabe, which in part led to the fall of her husband from power are treated in Chapter 8. The troubled political fortunes of the man who was to succeed Mugabe, Emmerson Mnangagwa are engaged within Chapter 9. In Chapter 10, Nyarota returns to the events and incidents of the coup that dethroned Mugabe and the next chapter, Chapter 11, continues with descriptions of the dramatic rallies and factional conspiracies that preceded the coup. Mugabe's tragic fall from power that was as spectacular as it was intriguing, is treated in Chapter 12, the final chapter. Here, as throughout the book, Nyarota has a rather convenient engagement with tyranny; he erases his own complicity in the dark and bloody works of one of Africa's most venal tyrants, Robert Mugabe.

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