

lingering outside time, unable to find a place in the modern world. Drawn into his critique are shortcomings in the prevailing sovereignty regime, the follies of Afro-optimism and -pessimism, and the persistent Victorian conceptualisation of history as social progress. Thoroughly refuting such hypotheses, Ellis moves on to challenging widely held assumptions that pollute Western conceptions of African agency. Remarketing on the continent's putative irrelevance, Ellis emphasises changing forms of insertion in the global political economy, and notes Africa's growing importance in matters of religion, resource scarcity and global criminality. Against the 'tribal animosity' tropes still lingering in Western media accounts, Ellis argues that urbanisation and the constant reinterpretation of ethnicity portend deep shifts in the political demography of coming years. Where it is assumed that Africans are universally poor, he contends that they are finding opportunities in the financial crisis to push back on global patron-client relationships, citing growing markets for securities and an ascendant middle class. The sum effect is a provocative re-evaluation of Africa's past and present trajectory.

Among the study's few faults is the unfortunate tendency to revisit thematic or historical arguments in numerous passages, sometimes at varying lengths and with only tangential relevance to the topic at hand. While such repetition is unavoidable for a wide-ranging analysis, *Season of Rains* would have benefited from adherence to a clearer structure. Moreover, Ellis's profusion of case studies falls short of cumulatively demonstrating his theses. Two paragraphs on Kenya's transition at independence to a one-party state are insufficient to establish the manufacture of political identities (p. 100), while passing remarks on Zimbabwean and Congolese leaders' condemnation of veiled threats to African independence do not fully illustrate evolving notions of sovereignty (pp. 142–4). Additionally, underneath this wealth of vignettes remain substantial geographic blind spots: Tanzania and Botswana garner few mentions, island-states fare no better, and much of West Africa simply goes unnoticed. This oversight undermines the study's generalised conclusions. Ellis might have narrowed his broad observations and opted for fewer, more effective, case studies to support them.

Notwithstanding such quibbles, this work is powerful, nuanced and engaging. Its judicious treatment of state formation consolidates recent scholarly advances, and provides a blueprint for future study of modernity and development in Africa. A terse drawing-together of on-going social, economic and political change, *Season of Rains* is an exhortation for fresh thinking from which all readers will benefit.

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**Rescuing a Fragile State: Sierra Leone 2002–2008** edited by L. GBERIE

Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009. Pp. 134, £16.99 (pbk).

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Lansana Gberie's edited collection undertakes the ambitious task of reviewing post-conflict reconstruction in Sierra Leone. While often cited as a success story,

the extent to which conventional 'peacebuilding' has addressed the systemic issues that drove pre-war discontents remains questionable. The contributors highlight interplays between transitional justice, security sector reform (SSR), economic governance and donor engagement. While the primary focus appears to be a technical evaluation of institutional efficiency and accountability, many contributors draw links between global pressures, patrimony politics, historic cleavages and inadequate institutional or process outcomes. *Rescuing a Fragile State* suggests that the interaction of these variables instructs the success of medium to long-term reconstruction and peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. In particular, the contributors look at how aid, transitional justice and SSR have affected local and global socio-economic and political pressures. The most instructive of these pressures are Sierra Leone's ethno-regional patrimony politics and neo-liberal economic orthodoxies. Lansana Gberie and Ian Smillie's critical contribution identifies corporate support for these systemic problems, and the extent to which these forces overwhelm anti-corruption efforts, aid, institutional reform, and any move towards a new social contract.

The aforementioned insight is to some extent diminished by some distorted assertions. Some contributors, including Penfold, Gberie, Saunders and Smillie, adopt historical narratives that subsequent inquiries, including that by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, have dispelled. One is that the RUF solely caused the 1999 Lomé Peace Agreement's disintegration. The Kabbah government, supported by the UK, also played a destructive role. Penfold and Smillie rightly highlight Clinton administration support for Liberia's former President Charles Taylor, the RUF, and the Lomé peace process. However, they fail to identify the importance and weight of Anglo-American congruence and coordination in policy towards the region. Zoe Dugal and Peter Penfold identify the change in transitional justice emphasis from truth and reconciliation to prosecution, without linking it to a US shift in policy towards the region, particularly over Charles Taylor. These processes also assisted the reassertion of patrimony politics and a culture of selective prosecution. The US position helps explain Special Court politicisation identified in Penfold's analysis, and the expediency of the 'blood diamonds' narrative Lansana Gberie cites as so influential in mobilising the international community around Sierra Leone.

At the local level, Ozonnia Ojielo examines the political role of chieftaincy and societal cleavages. He cites government failure to address chieftaincy's role in patronage politics as the systemic causal factor behind Sierra Leone's 'poor' governance, asserting that this failure undermines government initiatives on transparency and institutional oversight.

This book also confronts an issue that facilitated and prolonged conflict, namely Sierra Leone's weak security apparatus. Ishmail Rashid and Major Don Saunders provide academic and practical insights into the institutional challenges and consequences of failing to get the balance right between fiscally responsible downsizing and management of demobilised combatant expectations and discontents. The contestation of the presidency by former Junta leader Julius Maada Bio elevates these concerns and lends weight to Danny Hoffman's claims that community militia mobilisation is legitimate

where security forces threaten civilians. The UK's role as primary donor, examined by Mark White,<sup>1</sup> should be employed to ensure elections are free and fair, while procuring clear recognition for the legitimacy of that process.

As Sierra Leone moves towards its 2012 elections, the role patrimony politics plays may determine whether a 'fragile' Sierra Leone can be 'rescued'. For this purpose, *Rescuing a Fragile State* identifies both continuing and emerging peacebuilding concerns. It is an important read for those seeking to understand where post-conflict Sierra Leone has come from, and where it might go in the future.

1. White particularly examines the UK's SSR support even on the intelligence unit, a point of concern for Sierra Leone's independence. This concern is exaggerated when considering apparent UK influence over Sierra Leone's intelligence operations. See United States Department of State, Internal Cable, Sierra Leone Stability, Part III: Security Sector, 2 December 2009, available at: <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/12/09FREETOWN471.html#>, accessed 10.9.2022.

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**The Lion of Judah in the New World: Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia and the shaping of Americans' attitude toward Africa** by T. VESTAL

Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011. Pp. 231, \$44.95 (hbk).

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'In present-day Ethiopia', begins Theodore Vestal's book, 'few know just how popular their monarch was in the New World' (p. xi). This is a valid observation. But could we not also say the same about the younger generation in present-day America? Is it not the case that far fewer Americans today have knowledge of the Ethiopian monarch, let alone positive memories of him? Vestal writes: 'the images of Africa and of Africans that the American people developed during Haile Selassie's prominence will no doubt be referred to by historians, psychologists, and sociologists – as well as the media – as having played a part in the election of Barack Obama as president in 2008' (p. xiii). This is an empirical claim which can be verified empirically. Whether or not Emperor Haile Selassie's charm offensive has remotely influenced the election of Barack Obama as the 44th president of the United States, this book is invaluable for at least three groups of people: experts and students of African area studies, comparative history and political science.

Africanists will benefit from the descriptively rich data which have either been unknown before or have not been systematically organised in this way about a long-reigning monarch in north-east Africa. There is much in the book about the personality and political instincts of Haile Selassie, especially as they pertain to his foreign policies, which are invaluable for comparative historians. Political scientists will have much to extract about the nuances of the relationship between a weak state in the periphery and a rising global power.

It is clear that many Americans were fascinated by Emperor Haile Selassie. In 1930 and 1936, he was named *Time's* man of the year. The *New York Times* wrote