

made within African/black diaspora studies since the discipline became established in the academe. The author, Okpeh Ochayi Okpeh, challenges emerging scholars to move forward with research that addresses concerns in the twenty-first century. Okpeh also discusses the need for multidisciplinary perspectives and methodologies, particularly focusing on slavery as a watershed in the historical development of people of African descent.

The second part of the book is hopeful and continues with further discussions on major events in the twenty-first century and its impact on the African diaspora. Hettie V. Williams commences this section with a discussion on the racial identity of President Obama. She argues that he displays what she terms “other blackness,” which entails “a complex sense of self-awareness” situated on “the hybridity of the everyday” (p. 117). The argument sounds convincing except the theory underpinning this is often drawn from the black British context, and the implication is that one model fits all, which is erroneous considering the specificities of American race politics.

We get a more varied discussion in the final section of the book which focuses on the black diaspora in the Latin world. In this section, contributors from different disciplinary standpoints discuss the black presence in the Latin world and the challenges of navigating black identity in places such as Peru and Mexico. The Latin world is often silenced in scholarship on the black Atlantic, so many of the arguments in this section will provide fresh perspectives for both undergraduate and graduate students who are interested in this region.

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Leonardo Arriola. 2013. *Multiethnic Coalitions in Africa: Business Financing of Opposition Election Campaigns*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 304 pp.

Sirens wailed as droves of my neighbors headed into the Kibiko forest to the site of a helicopter crash which claimed the life of former Kenyan Minister of Interior and major beneficiary of the Goldenberg scandal, George Saitoti. Those who arrived at the crash site before the police cordoned off the area made out well: duffel bags of money were scattered all around. Saitoti had been on his way to a political rally and, as is the norm in election season, needed to demonstrate both his appreciation of voters and his strength as a candidate, and packed the helicopter accordingly. Winning elections anywhere in the world requires financial exchanges, but in Kenya’s case, these exchanges, between candidates and voters, candidates and coalition partners, or even incumbents and candidates of rival parties, take on added significance and many interesting dynamics.

Leonardo Arriola’s *Multiethnic Coalitions in Africa: Business Financing of Opposition Election Campaigns* grasps how elections in Kenya really work, which is a refreshing exception to the simple models projected by donor-driven optimism. Arriola interprets complex and opaque electoral strategies in Kenya and Cameroon in a clear and concise manner. He attempts to show “how opposition candidates are able to forge multiethnic electoral coalitions in some African countries but not others” (p. 8). His main thesis is that when incumbents lose control over the private sector, notably the private finance sector, opposition candidates are able to amass

sufficient wealth to make pre-electoral financial commitments to coalitions that are broad enough to mount a successful challenge.

Arriola develops his argument along familiar lines: politically insecure leaders of new African democracies responded to challenges from rival centers of capital with “financial reprisal regimes” (p. 20), which constrained emerging threats by restricting private banks and using central banks to regulate access to finance. These methods were effective until the early 1990s. Exogenous shocks and subsequent demands from the international financial institutions, which in Kenya’s case were reinforced by donors enforcing reform conditionality, made incumbents concede to financial and political liberalization. These concessions gave opposition movements opportunities to attract funding and organize in ways that had previously been too dangerous. Arriola inserts new elements into this old narrative. He explains how candidates prove to potential coalition partners that they are both committed and have staying power. He also explains differences between the relationships that Kenyatta and Moi had with the Kenyan business sector and how this shaped their financial strategies.

Most of Arriola’s argument is well supported. He thoroughly traces the evolving nexus between African politics and finance over four decades. He connects his analysis to a wide spectrum of the great theorists of African political economy in a generally balanced approach. To rule out other explanations, he tests against thirty-eight variables ranging from settler mortality rates to geographic features.

There are parts of his arguments, however, that raise questions. For one, Arriola bases his entire thesis on one election in Kenya, the 2002 National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) victory which brought Kibaki into his first term. This was indeed an impressive event, and how the opposition coalition was able to resist fracture, when they had consistently fractured in the lead up to previous elections, definitely warrants investigation. This one successful coalition in Kenya is contrasted to unsuccessful coalitions in Cameroon, and is used as the central crux of his argument. One election is not a trend, however, and provides a weak basis for the rest of the book, especially when the two subsequent Kenyan elections in 2008 and 2013 contradict what occurred in 2002.

Arriola also gets a few details wrong about his case studies. In trying to show that the 2002 election was unique, he claims the opposition did not fracture along ethnic divides. He is right that the top two candidates were both from the Kikuyu community, but the blocs, which constituted the coalitions supporting these candidates were divided along neat ethnic lines. Also, even if ethnic divides had been partially overridden in the 2002 election, it would not have been the only Kenyan election when this happened.

Arriola is fair in claiming that his data proves that the freedom of the private banking the opposition’s likelihood of forming and maintaining a successful coalition. If he reined in his claim of answering why some opposition coalitions replace incumbents while some do not, Arriola’s book would be a very successful endeavor. In any event, it is a worthwhile read for anyone following African elections.

Note: The views expressed in this review do not reflect the views of the U.S. government.

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