

# BOOK REVIEW

**David Everatt, ed. *Governance and the Postcolony: Views from Africa*.** Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2019. ix + 327pp. Photographs. Bibliography. Index. \$35.00. Paper. ISBN: 9781776143443.

*Governance and the Postcolony: Views from Africa*, edited by David Everatt, is a compelling analysis of the concept of governance through the lens of African postcoloniality and the Global South. It boasts thirteen chapters systematically divided between two sections, including an introduction and conclusion, capturing different topical issues, with a total of seventeen contributors. The collection gives voice to practitioners and scholars in the fields of African government and politics, international relations, public policy, and administration.

The selection of scholarly contributions in this volume is varied but connected with logical coherency, and characterized by strong points. It reminds readers that power is the major focus of governance, and holding its operators accountable is critical to its success (20). This is a crucial point, and it is reiterated throughout the book. In the introduction, Everatt presents an analysis of the concept of governance in relation to power, context, and application (1–15). He answers the following questions: How is governance defined in the context of fairness and accountability? How is governance conceptualized within the purview of African postcoloniality? How is governance defined in global and local contexts? What is the nexus between accountability, power, and governance? These questions provide the basis of the highly thoughtful, impressive, and informative introduction.

This volume utilizes a plethora of case studies to x-ray “governance and the postcolony” in the context of the African perspective. For example, Chapter Two examines “African shared values in governance for integration: progress and prospects” and finds that those societies that succeeded in good governance uphold an inclusive accountability along with a legal system which is reinforced by the rule of law (45). Therefore, for the sub-Saharan countries to experience good governance and democratic accountability, the rule of law must be upheld across all sectors of society. This volume again illustrates that the first consideration in governance should be the idea of the “public interest” (109).

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These essays draw attention to poor crisis management systems in West Africa, occasioned by “poor governance, political instability, a weak economy, corruption and minimal infrastructure” (124). Chapter Seven articulates public policymaking through adversarial networks of governance in South Africa. A curious omission in this chapter is a comparative analysis of case studies of selected African countries’ public policymaking processes; this topic often is either ignored or unnoticed in research and literature.

I found the most exciting analysis in Chapter Ten, “Law and Governance: Has the South African judiciary overstepped its oversight mandate?” This chapter dwells on specific themes not previously examined in the study of governance from the perspectives of South Africa’s judiciary institution, narrating the concepts of executive, legislative, judiciary, judiciary oversights, and separation of powers in South Africa. Kirti Menon and Jody Cedras (Chapter Eleven) also look at “factoring the world” by exploring “governance of public higher education in South Africa.” This chapter addresses each of the models—bureaucratic, collegial, and political—for decision-making systems in South Africa (237).

As argued by Darlene Miller et al. in their chapter, “radical resistance at universities often revolves around visible historical vestiges of power, such as language, symbols and the demographics of those in power” (260). The handbook concludes with David Everatt’s thought-provoking chapter, “Low-hanging Fruit or Deep-seated Transformation? Quality of life and governance in Gauteng, South Africa” (Chapter Thirteen). Everatt argues that “the issue is not to find a stick with which to beat government, but to point to the obvious strategic error made in their use of power to transform the country” (304).

This scholarly book provides an interesting analysis of the concept of governance from the perspective of the Global South, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa; it will continue to expand the frontiers of knowledge, which is the ultimate purpose of intellectual research and advocacy. The breadth of topics covered and its richness in intellectual arenas dish out the vast terrain of “governance and the postcolony: views from Africa,” making this volume an essential analytical tool and reading not only for students in the fields of African government and politics and international relations, but also for academics, practitioners, and advocates of democracy and good governance, the relevance of which continues to reverberate beyond the Global South.

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**For additional reading on this subject, the ASR recommends:**

- Balakian, Sophia. 2020. "Navigating Patchwork Governance: Somalis in Kenya, National Security, and Refugee Resettlement." *African Studies Review* 63 (1): 43–64. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2019.53>.
- Krämer, Mario. 2020. "Violence, Autochthony, and Identity Politics in KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa): A Processual Perspective on Local Political Dynamics." *African Studies Review* 63 (3): 540–59. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2019.69>.
- Thurston, Alexander. 2018. "The Politics of Technocracy in Fourth Republic Nigeria." *African Studies Review* 61 (1): 215–38. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2017.99>.