

# SCHOLARLY REVIEW ESSAY

## Crime and Policing in Africa: Tactical Politics, Authoritarianism, and the Rule of Law

**Marie Muschalek.** *Violence as Usual: Policing and the Colonial State in German Southwest Africa.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019. 255 pp. Maps. Photographs. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$49.95. Cloth. ISBN: 9781501742859

**Mirco Göpfert.** *Policing the Frontier: An Ethnography of Two Worlds in Niger.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020. 192 pp. Illustrations. \$16.99. Ecopy. ISBN: 9781501747236.

**Robert A. Blair.** *Peacekeeping, Policing, and the Rule of Law after Civil War.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. 267 pp. \$103.53. Cloth. ISBN: 9781108835213.

**Samuel Fury Childs Daly.** *A History of the Republic of Biafra: Law, Crime, and the Nigerian Civil War.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020. 272 pp. \$103. Cloth. ISBN: 9781108840767.

In 2020, Nigerian youths took to the streets to demand the disbanding of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit of the Nigerian Police with a long history of extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, extortion, torture, and other atrocities. The Nigerian government created the division in 1992 following the killing of an army colonel, under the pretense of fighting a crime wave which was sweeping the country. In the “societies of enmity” (Achille Mbembe, “The Society of Enmity” [*Radical Philosophy* Vol. 200, No. 1], 23–25) we live in today, the growing militarization of law enforcement in the context of the “war on crime” has put even solid democracies in grave danger and continues to justify authoritarianism and military regimes worldwide. The expansion of state powers through the violent exploitation of its growing “margins,” (V. Das and D. Poole, eds., *Anthropology at the Margins of the State* [School of American Research Press, 2004]) tarnished with the signs of

© The Author(s), 2023. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the African Studies Association.

doi:10.1017/asr.2023.102

danger, illegality, and precariousness, has shown that bureaucratic power and state violence walk hand in hand in instituting highly unequal but economically viable social orders in postcolonial Africa and elsewhere. Those movements configure an emergent threat coming from a tactical level of political action and show that contemporary political power can indeed emerge from the tip of a machine gun, proving Walter Benjamin's critique of Hannah Arendt's famous image ("Critique of Violence" in *Deconstruction, a Reader* [Routledge, 2017], 62–70).

The books reviewed here are remarkable references for us to contemplate how we view those things, showing crime and policing as profoundly interconnected dimensions in social life and statecraft. The reader will realize that while violence and crime might disrupt lives, they are nevertheless crucial conveyers of social order in contexts of high inequality. They address the flimsy legitimacy of the state beyond capital cities, in both rural and frontier areas, and show that policing is not only vital to the rule of law, but it also can be its most threatening element, because police officers are not mere enforcers but also repairers and tactical lawmakers. We must be able to see the state being made in places and ways that seem to "unmake" state orders, to see efficient control where others see failure. We hope the reader can see that African Studies should not be just about Africa. As we march toward a global apartheid, as Achile Mbembe wisely envisioned, Africa becomes a strategic place to think about the world.

In *Peacekeeping, Policing, and the Rule of Law after Civil War*, Robert A. Blair conducts multi-method research on the conditions for United Nations (UN) interventions to succeed in (re)establishing the "rule of law" in the aftermath of civil wars. Analyzing the case of post-war Liberia under UN intervention, the author gives an operational definition to the concept as people's willingness to resort to state-sanctioned mediation to the detriment of community-based alternatives of justice. Blair's analytical framework combines cross-national administrative data on the deployment of civilian and uniformed UN personnel from thirty-three post-conflict African countries since the end of the Cold War, using original sub-national data from Liberia, collected during interviews with UN and government officials, and an extensive survey of 243 rural Liberian towns and villages during four years of fieldwork. The author layers his empirical evidence with fantastic clarity and organization throughout the book. It is hard to miss his overall argument, which is constantly reviewed in each chapter's topic. The result is a book that is easy to read (and review).

In contexts of legal pluralism or among populations too accustomed to predatory state practices in urban peripheries, rural areas, or frontier communities, the gap between state law and lived values tends to reduce adhesion to publicly sanctioned forms of justice and social control. In those areas, asking why people report specific crimes to the police can provide powerful insights into the social bases of state legitimacy and the elusive and contested nature of police authority. Liberia is one of the poorest countries in the world, ravaged by almost two decades of civil wars, political and social

instability, totalitarianism, and extreme human suffering. The Liberian state's material and symbolic reach within the countryside and border communities was limited in this context.

Between 2003 and 2018, however, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) applied its state-building capacity to rebuild the social bases of state legitimacy, focusing on restructuring the police and other security and justice institutions. According to Blair, the Liberian National Police (LNP) regained people's trust across the country after ten years of an intense and transformational reform process in which UNMIL recruited and trained 4,000 police officers, monitoring their performances through joint patrols and co-location of UN LNP officers at police stations (219). The higher the frequency of the patrols (weekly), the greater the willingness of residents and informal leaders to report serious offenses to the Liberian state. According to Blair, more opportunities for meaningful exchanges with the communities during joint patrols proved beneficial in showing the value of formal conflict resolution alternatives. The book does not mention potential sources of resistance and sabotage from the police to the invasive reform methods applied by UNMIL, but we can assume there were many. Speculations aside, the fact is that the author's approach demonstrates the critical role of policing in upholding (or destroying) people's beliefs in the regulatory powers of state law and its capacity to deliver justice in ways considered fair and adequate.

According to Blair, in rural Liberia, people would resort to state mediation in search of more objective and neutral venues for justice, compared to the partiality of community alternatives. His conclusions resonate with other studies addressing the material and symbolic reasons for colonial subjects to support Western cosmologies and colonial state orders. This process often resulted in more efficient colonial controls and exploitation, as seen in Marie Muschalek's book on the hybrid composition of colonial police in Namibia. In this context, people would adhere to state institutions as a means of re-stating or acquiring status in the new colonial reality, circumventing traditional social hierarchies. In those analyses, however, the ideal neutrality and objectivity of rational Weberian state bureaucracies seldom figure as the primary reasons for that movement. The state tends to be perceived as having a "side," representing a specific socio-ethnic group; or as a "class unto itself," acting on its own interests, as Nicos Poulantzas would say (*Political Power and Social Classes* [Verso Books 2017]). That leaves us wondering if the complexities involved in people's choices to uphold state order in rural Liberia might be more perceptible if Blair had given more space to analyzing his qualitative material in the book.

Blair details his theoretical frameworks, describing the rule of law in post-conflict settings as a "chicken and egg problem" (60). He then details his research parameters, suggesting a scalar analysis of the multidimensional nature of the rule of law across three interrelated dimensions: macro, meso, and micro. At the macro level, UN missions would operate as "catalysts for state reform," promoting legislative and structural reforms. At micro and meso levels, UN missions would act as "state surrogates," emulating public

functions and working with law enforcement agencies in the field, interacting directly with deeply distrustful communities. Finally, interconnecting the three levels, the UN missions functioned as “liaison,” operating as a third-party link between citizens and the state, and between state and non-state authorities. According to Blair, successful multidimensional peacekeeping operations manage to (re)establish the rule of law by effectively restoring the legitimacy and operational capacity of the state to provide a credible and unified framework for resolving disputes across four approaches to the rule of law: police reform, justice sector reform, prison reform, and legal reform. He also establishes conditions for the rule of law across the three analytical dimensions. At the macro level, state authorities should agree to abide by the constitutional restraints on their powers, deferring to an independent, legally designed arbiter when jurisdictional conflicts arise. At the micro level, the citizens’ inclination to rely on state rather than non-state authorities to adjudicate crimes should increase. At the meso level, we should see increased compliance from non-state authorities to the legal limits on their powers, renouncing mechanisms of dispute resolution that violate state law, such as trial by ordeal and mob justice.

Blair concludes by showing that peacekeeping and the rule of law are weakly correlated during ongoing conflicts but positively correlated across the four approaches (prisons, police, justice system, and laws) once the fighting stops. The correlation is more robust within the one-to-two-year period after the conflict stops, when the structural and legislative changes are easier to introduce. They are stronger following the deployment of UN civilian personnel and become weaker when it comes to uniformed peacekeeping troops. The correlation is even more vital for UN personnel deployed in rule-of-law-related activities and more successful in contributing to the rule of law when the host state is engaged.

*Policing the Frontier: An Ethnography of Two Worlds in Niger* by Mirco Göpfert addresses the issue of the complex and often conflicting interests and moralities shaping policing practices between police work environments and the regulatory demands of communities. The author focuses on the dilemmas of rank-and-file police officers enforcing the law in contexts of weak penetration and legitimacy of state institutions, where, according to him, the state becomes tangible as a “frontier.” For Göpfert, the state-as-frontier manifests simultaneously as a space and a condition. As a space, the state is an area of constant friction between two very unlike and often contradictory cultural practices and power-knowledge systems, where perfect legal-bureaucratic form, seeking to govern society through outmoded structures and regulations, meets the chaos of everyday life and the imperative of reciprocity in social relations. As a condition, the state-as-frontier is tragic, an inescapably incomplete project of order, civility, and legality. State bureaucrats are the frontline of the efforts to “close the frontier,” a futile task encouraged by the idea of a perfect bureaucratic-legal government of society.

By radically experiencing the state as a frontier, police officers in Godiya (a made-up city in rural Niger, created by the author to protect his

interlocutors in the *Gendarmerie Nationale Nigérienne*) felt a pervasive sense of injustice and frustration about their work. According to Göpfert, they saw state law and institutions as inadequate at producing justice for the ways of life of real people. The opposition between “*les textes*” and “*le social*” marks this existential and ontological condition of the state-as-frontier for the gendarmes in the Godiya post. After introducing their dilemmas, trying to produce mutually compatible forms of sociality and morality between bureaucratic form (*les textes*) and lived life (*le social*), Göpfert’s book examines the social and institutional conditions of police decision-making, when to work “by the book” and when to “make arrangements.” According to Göpfert, the gendarmes produce a connection between *les textes* and *le social* through storytelling and translation when they decide to work by the book. Alternatively, “making arrangements” is a way to promote a separation between these two worlds, maintaining communal peace by allowing alternative and mutually compatible forms of articulating bureaucratic forms (such as contracts and summons) and reciprocity (payment of informal fees and exchange of gifts) and preventing the breakdown of the overburdened Nigerien justice system.

In line with Giorgio Agamben’s conceptualization of the “state of exception,” Göpfert notes that the gendarmes’ initiative to seek arrangements can be seen as a declaration of “exception to the State.” Despite its recognized intrinsic value in keeping the system running, making arrangements can expose the gendarmes to disciplinary measures and prosecution. In its three parts and nine chapters, the book depicts the gendarmes of the Godiya post as essentially tragic creatures, constantly trying to create spaces of action outside state law, caught between the impossible task of patching the gap, pleasing their bosses, and avoiding punishment for their actions. The author uses Dominique Monjardet’s threefold character of the police as a state bureaucracy, a public service, and a profession to show that the gendarmes must work through conflicting expectations about their craft from the public, the prosecutors, and their superiors. However, the liminal condition of the gendarmes was not pushing toward status transformation (127). The frontier is a permanent state of their work; they can only alleviate the tensions and reduce uncertainty but never resolve it—a condition of “permanent make-do and resourcefulness” (130).

Göpfert uses Victor Turner’s “social drama” concept to describe making arrangements as “repair work.” Repair work is not just about patching the regulatory gap of state orders, but also about relationships and reputations, helping to restore social order. To unveil the native theory behind making arrangements, Göpfert explores the association of gendarmes’ work as “gyara,” a commonly used ploy in Niger for repairing things employing improvised materials and techniques. According to the author, despite the inflow of surveillance technology and resources to the “war on terror” in Africa, channeled primarily through the United States, the everyday street work of what he calls “gendarmes-as-surveillants” translating the illegible noise of the social has been shown to be more critical to preventing the

expansion of groups such as Boko Haram in Niger than drones and other surveillance gadgets. This perception aligns with Blair's findings on the importance of joint patrols for the rule of law in Liberia.

*Violence as Usual: Policing and the Colonial State in German Southeast Africa* by Marie Muschalek is a book about the power of violence, not on its excessive or exceptional forms, in warfare or genocides, but the everyday workings of petty, formal acts of violence as a quotidian practice of colonial life. She explores the meanings people attributed to violence in the settler colony of German Southeast Africa (GSA, present-day Namibia) in the early twentieth century, focusing on the epistemic anxieties and complexities around the acts of physical violence considered appropriate social conduct in the "treatment of natives." Submitted to the imperatives of construing a viable, productive system on the eve of the German genocidal war of 1904–1907, the everyday work of lower-level state agents in defining who were the proper wielders of violence and how much and what kind was necessary to discipline native labor was strategic. Using the administrative archives and patrol reports of the *Landespolizei* (*Kaiserliche berittene Landespolizei für Deutsch Südwestafrika*) in the German Federal Archives in Berlin and the National Archives of Namibia in Windhoek for that period, Muschalek reveals the central role of the German colonial police in the control of indigenous labor. Her anthropological approach to the documents shows that based on a "practice of (violent) improvisation" (13), the men of the *Landespolizei* acted as post facto legislators, fine-tuning labor coercion according to an intricate system of official regulations and institutionalized meanings, and helping to establish a moral economy of normalized violence that was economically viable and "appropriate" along social and racial hierarchies in the colony. Muschalek calls the social order built on these routinized violent acts "violence as usual."

Muschalek does impeccable and sensitive work in addressing the thorny subject of the positional nature of violence and its multiple meanings, producing a historiography of colonial rule in the GSA that very skillfully connects aspects of day-to-day police work, everyday life in a settlers' colony, and the macro dynamics of state power and economic exploitation. To introduce the reader to the complexities of her analysis and use of archival evidence, Muschalek opens her book with the story of police assistant Hans, who left the service in the *Landespolizei* after being beaten by his direct superior, a staff sergeant named Adolf Bauer. In the aftermath of the episode, Hans took his own life. In the reasons Bauer gave in the proceedings, Hans had beaten a prisoner under his custody with the butt of his rifle, an act of violence seen as inappropriate. What was being questioned, however, was not the use of violence itself but the instrument employed to inflict the punishment. To complicate things further, Hans was a Black man, and so was the prisoner, and Adolf Bauer was a White German. For Muschalek, the case is emblematic because it illustrates the complexities of the moral economy of violence that sustained colonial rule, and the role of the *Landespolizei* in its refinement in a context of asymmetrical alliances and reciprocities operating

along racial ideology and social orders in the GSA. It also uniquely raises the issue of how power relations are embedded in the archival references.

In the *Landespolizei*, one-third of the staff was “native,” meaning Black or mixed-race. They were incorporated into the police force as “assistants” and assigned subsidiary tasks (maintenance, tracking, and translating) to the core of police work in the GSA. Their German police supervisors saw them as aides, according to institutional and race hierarchies. Their presence in the archives used in Muschalek’s research is mostly subsidiary to the acts and perspectives of German officers. As she points out, the physical abuse suffered by police assistant Hans only found its way into the archives because of its tragic outcome. It was exceptional in one way but not in many others. Staff Sergeant Bauer’s application of corporal punishment against a fellow police officer was an ordinary reality in the *Landespolizei*. Although not authorized by the regulations and informal norms of military life, it was justifiable under the “paternal right of chastisement,” the right of every White resident to wield violence in the colony to “educate” the native populations through physical discipline. Throughout her book, Muschalek practices a sort of epistemological justice when she finds in those same archives good reasons to suggest that the mixed-race composition of the *Landespolizei*, often perceived as a weakness by their authors, was one of the organization’s main strengths as a colonial social institution.

Muschalek develops this point by showing how the experience of living and working together, sharing a violent trade under the conditions existing in the colony, might have created opportunities to find common grounds for the development of a racially hybrid organizational culture, while still upholding racial hierarchies and social order through the practice of authorized violence. The author analyzes three elements of identity formation: social class, soldiery, and masculinity (14). Despite coming from entirely different lifeworlds, Muschalek finds striking similarities between German and African soldiers in terms of their self-understanding, motivations to join the force, professional anxieties, and insecurities over the extensive mandate of the *Landespolizei*. They were connected by their mutual valuation of honor and masculinity and their previous martial experience. They also shared the condition of a “lost generation” of men who saw their social order collapse and were willing to acquire social status by associating with specific economic resources (horses and guns) and a particular patron (the state).

In the everyday, where the amalgamation of this hybrid organizational culture was taking place, yet another tension marked the emerging professional identity of the men in the *Landespolizei*, the one between the soldier and the bureaucrat. After the German genocidal war in the GSA, the *Landespolizei* was tasked with policing a peacetime society, expanding its mandate to include a wide range of civilian assignments. In this context, bureaucratic work became an essential feature of police institutional experience, and acts of violence that might not have needed justification during wartime were now the object of extensive reasoning and contextualization in police reports. The German colonial state had vast ambitions of control and social order.

However, it left unanswered the question of how to bring about that order (55), leaving considerable room for maneuver and independence, especially in remote police stations. Bureaucratic training and operational guidelines focused more on the appearance, uniforms, and movements, as if compliance and authority could naturally emerge from the sight of a military man in uniform carrying a gun. In this context, “an ideology of the primacy of practice and experience had taken root” (73), validated through “retroactive bureaucratic confirmation,” turning everyday violence into policing via the recording, organization, and justification of improvised violent dispensations under inscribed codes of behavior and normativity (69–70).

In this context, self-defense became the standardized post facto justification for firing a weapon, becoming part of the regulatory and customary conditions under which a shooting was considered professional and authoritative in the colony (81). In Muschalek’s view, the high degree of flexibility and adaptability of the Landespolizei-improvised ways of “making do” (157) were central components of colonial rule and statecraft (163). Through their practice of post facto bureaucratic justification of day-to-day violence, policemen acted as ad hoc lawmakers (160). The author describes the array of improvised means and functional violent practices deployed by ground-level police to “get things done” (115) in the production of an economically viable peacetime order in the colony as “tactics” (123). In Michel De Certeau’s formulation of the concept, the low-level violent acts of the police belong to the realm of tactics which have the potential of being effective within an overall unstable and dysfunctional power constellation (124). According to the author, her research findings challenge the idea of violence as an indicator of the colonial state’s weakness by showing that daily normalized acts of violence can produce complex, meaningful, and economically viable colonial social orders. Although specific to the German colonial enterprise in Africa at the turn of the twentieth century, many of the author’s conclusions could easily apply to how power is engaged in postcolonial states worldwide.

Using an approach similar to that of Muschalek, in *A History of the Republic of Biafra: Law, Crime, and the Nigerian Civil War*, Samuel Fury Childs Daly discusses the often neglected “productive” aspects of war and violence. As disorderly and dysfunctional as they may seem, those lifeworlds, economically viable social orders, and political economies show how power can be appropriated by a murky spectrum of state and non-state agents. The book encompasses the period around the Nigeria-Biafra War (1967–1970), also known as the Nigerian Civil War, from the pogroms against the Igbo in the North years before to the immediate aftermath of the conflict, when Nigeria instituted a prolonged military rule under the pretense of fighting crime and threats against its sovereign state which lasted until 1999. In present-day Nigeria, political instability, corruption, and crime are entwined with the country’s image, and authoritarianism has gained new meanings and traction in the context of the “war on terror” in the West African region.

Biafra was a short-lived sovereign country that existed for just three years in the southeast of Nigeria. It was home to a predominantly Igbo population,



avoiding a wave of ethnic violence in the North. After a brief period of peace and nationalist ardor, the Nigerian state waged a ruthless war to reincorporate Biafra into its territory. The reality of embargo and constant bombarding imposed by Nigeria and its allies aggravated the already dire situation in newborn Biafra, and people had to develop tactics to survive, faced with chronic food shortages and the constant threat of violence from state and non-state actors. Those tactics often involved breaking the law. As Daly argues, this wartime mentality, the availability of guns, and the enduring political and economic instability after Biafra's defeat sowed the conditions for two major crime trends that haunt Nigeria today: armed robberies and the advance-fee fraud internationally known as "four-one-nine" crime. In the author's words, his book is a "(...) story of how warfare sowed the seeds of crimes" (4) by creating a crisis that catalyzed a "reaction between elements" (5). Those "elements" are diligently laid down throughout the book using a storytelling method, which produces a sensitive reconstruction of the overwhelming circumstances of war under which Nigerians and Biafrans had to live and find ways to make a living.

The stories presented here were extracted primarily from legal archives, particularly court proceedings, and criminal records, produced by the courts and special tribunals of the Republic of Biafra and post-war Nigeria. Daly's historical method includes an ethnographic perspective in analyzing the documentary evidence and oral history. He also uses secondary references and reports from international aid and government agencies in the United Kingdom, France, and South Africa. He interviewed law practitioners, war veterans, defendants, and many former Biafrans about their lives in this short-lived sovereign country. Their narratives show how the war created room for crime and survival tactics to mingle and ferment in the everyday lives of ordinary people and low-rank soldiers. A background of broken promises, violence, and political persecution in Nigeria made the idea of the "rule of law" a driving force behind the founding of Biafra. Because of that, Biafra's legal-judicial system was paramount in building the new country's identity after independence, and some of the documentary materials clearly emphasize the importance of the laws and judiciary system. Daly found court proceedings written on schoolchildren's books, on the back of love letters, with blood stains, as evidence of a concerted effort to keep the courts functional during the war.

In 1970, the young Biafran Republic collapsed under the pressures of dire economic and humanitarian conditions and lawlessness. According to the author, reconciliation was a legal and political problem. As a legal matter, the reconciliation process was about the erasure of Biafra from jurisprudence, and dealing with rights and contracts granted under Biafran law became a problem. In politics, the problem of erasure concerned the rebuilding of a social order torn apart during the war. According to the author, the political order that emerged in the reinstated East Central territory was repressive, paranoid, and capricious. Special Tribunals worked alongside common law courts, and the image of the military remade

important aspects of the civilian administration. The state assumed new powers to maintain public order, further hollowing out the remaining aspects of civilian legal culture (154). The official position of the Nigerian government, “no victor, no vanquished,” was seen as contradictory at the politico-institutional level and in everyday life.

In the final stages of the war, the multiplication of sources of violence blurred the distinctions between common crime (assault, rape, robbery) and warfare violence, and martial excesses could come from Biafran or Nigerian soldiers, especially in the reincorporated eastern territories. Many Nigerians would connect the crime in the state (or state corruption) with the crimes happening in the streets, especially in the former Biafran territories (175). According to the author, in that context, people started imitating the protocols of military conflict in how they treated one another, and that is “how the war worked its way into everyday life” (83). Armed robbery gangs assimilated the martial skills of former soldiers, and “[t]he war made certain forms of untruth necessary, and even acceptable, in a way that they had not been before” (113). In wartime, carrying the correct papers was a matter of life and death, and knowing how to forge them became immensely valuable. Untruth and concealment became survival tactics, “[d]eception worked like camouflage, and cultivating uncertainty about oneself was a way to hide from a postwar state that few people trusted.” Armed robbery, like deception, was also seen as “an avenue to start a new life” and “a way out of poverty” (225). The destabilizing effects of leftover guns, post-war scarcity, and a poorly planned process of military demobilization and reintegration explain the highly unpredictable and hostile social environment that “allowed the customs of war to metastasize rather than bringing them to an end” (188). Daly calls those lingering behaviors “sensibilities of war” (185).

All four of these books address the issue of the limited capacity of the state to consolidate sovereignty at its margins, as it struggles to assert authority in frontier spaces and rural communities. They also analyze the expansion of repressive state apparatus and military rule as an interplay between local history, international politics, securitization flows, and statecraft in response to dissent and nonconformity in those spaces. Due to their low adhesion to state-centered interventions, African frontier and rural areas tend to be more susceptible to co-optation from jihadist groups. Those dissident or diverse communities often become the enemies of the war on terror, forced to submit to state authority with the support of international powers incapable of (or uninterested in) making that distinction. In situations of social instability and limited resources, the state struggles to assert territorial sovereignty and legitimacy and relies increasingly on the improvised yet functional violent practices of its ground-level representatives to consolidate power. Those “make-do” practices often involve breaking or underenforcing the law.

Despite the vagueness about what is actually done or achieved in police work, this improvised form of statecraft is highly effective and, by all accounts, transformative. Police make-do work plays a vital role in upholding the rule of law in ways that take into account ordinary people’s notions of justice and

fairness concerning crime. The perspective that the regulatory space of policing can work as a tactical level of lawmaking in contemporary societies is also very eye-opening. In a world where the search for enemies (internal and external) has justified countless deaths and rights violations, the idea of police ad hoc powers to institute an economically viable and still unequal social order through acts of violence and bureaucratic rationale could explain many of the perceived inconsistencies of (at least formal) postcolonial democratic states. Although the challenges of policing diverse social orders are not exclusive to Africa, they seem steeper here. Yet, because of the size of the challenge, the answers found on this side of the Atlantic can be mighty. The books reviewed here can be excellent references for people searching for those answers.

Elizabeth Albermaz 

*Wits University*

*Braamfontein Gauteng, South Africa*

*betealbermaz@gmail.com*

doi:10.1017/asr.2023.102