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The security-development nexus. Expressions of sovereignty in Southern Africa

Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet / Cape Town, HSRC Press, 2007, 284 p.

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- 1 This anthology is a timely contribution to the predicaments and complexities of the postcolonial state in Southern Africa, and especially commendable is the aspiration to analyze the intimate relationship between state/sovereignty and “development” in different national and empirical settings. It is timely in several senses, but primarily by virtue of its dual focus which establishes the foundation for a thorough examination of notions of, for example, the ‘community policing’ and a focus on the security sector, the outsourcing or privatization of justice, the re-territorialization of rural and urban space, the ongoing re-negotiations of citizenship etc. In all of Southern Africa these specific foci – and others equally interesting are also found in the anthology – represent political and social predicaments that should be of great concern to scholars from several disciplines. In Angola and Mozambique, what the editors call ‘the security-development nexus’ is, of course, known from the ways in which, for example, the relations between tradition and state are intimately linked to developmentalist notions of local democracy and the

problems that arise from this in terms of conflation of cosmologies, potentially bifurcated citizenships, challenges to the legitimacy of the state etc.

- 2 The second reason it is timely is because of its theoretical orientation towards Agambenian notions of *Homo sacer*, *exception* and *sovereignty*. The anthology represents the application to the Southern African context of a theoretical development within the social sciences and political philosophy that is currently in vogue. The editors, however, refrains from a presentist argument, and in the introduction sets the tone of the approach by claiming that despite the radically increased political and social focus on security after 9/11, the linkages between security, development and the state/sovereignty must rather be seen as long-term in Southern Africa, as elsewhere. Focusing doubly on both institutional aspects and historical formations of the notions ‘the securitization of development’ and, contrarily, ‘the developmentization of security’, the introduction develops ideas (and relates to chapters in the anthology) that span from the ‘politics of policing’ and crime and the post-Apartheid re-ordering of development discourses to notions of internal enemies and frontiers, and to formations and reformations of citizenship forms. Sketching out its theoretical landscape, the introduction relies both explicitly and implicitly on numerous works by Giorgio Agamben (especially *Homo Sacer*, 1998 [1995]) and also earlier works by Finn Stepputat (especially *Sovereign bodies*, 2005, co-edited with Thomas B. Hansen). Retaining the notion of sovereignty as being profoundly linked to biopolitics in the (non-Foucauldian) sense of “...the exclusion of somebody from the political community...” (p. 15, italics retained), the editors contend this produces a condition of ‘naked life’ (again an Agambenian notion) characterized by unprotected subjects onto which sovereign power will and need to inscribe its power. The editors project this unto the Southern African context and contend that “... [s]overeign state violence as an overt expression of physical force and of structural violence through dispossession is therefore not an aberration, but rather an ever-present possibility and fairly common practice in contemporary African states” (p. 17).
- 3 Three parts of the anthology in various ways reflect different aspects of this theoretical orientation with six works on South Africa, two on Namibia and one each on Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The first section of the book is entitled “Internal and external boundaries” and includes three chapters. Lars Mandrup Jørgensen’s first chapter relates national and regional interest of South Africa’s foreign policy ambitions to the military operations in DRC. This is followed by Steffen Jensen and Lars Buur’s analysis of the politics of citizenship where general processes of inclusion and exclusion as well as the post-1994 reconfiguration of citizenship in South Africa into insiders and outsiders receive special attention. The last chapter of the section, written by Lalli Metsola and Henning Melber, concerns state formation and the predicament of ex-combatants – a long-standing challenge in many conflict-ridden Southern African countries – in the context of former SWAPO guerrillas in Namibia.
- 4 The second part of the book, “States, development and vernacular security”, is comprised of four chapters. Lars Buur’s chapter opens the section and is a contribution on state, people and popular sovereignty within the context of violence related to ‘service delivery’ in Soweto. Helene Maria Kyed’s analysis of Mozambique follows this and will be analyzed below. The third contribution by Guy Lamb concerns, again, SWAPO and the Namibian context, but analyses specifically the intimate and crucial links between the military apparatus and development programmes. Jacob Rasmussen’s text on housing in

inner-city Johannesburg and struggles over definition between residents, politicians and others ends this section.

- 5 The last part of the anthology is entitled “Identity, violence and rights”, and its opening chapter is an exploration by Steffen Jensen of crime and violence within the context of ‘everyday policing’ in a South African border community in which many Mozambican migrants live. Amanda Hammar follows up on this theme by delving into state cleansing and containment practices in Zimbabwe, especially focusing on local-state politics of eviction in Zimbabwe and its popular response. The section is concluded by Sideris’ analysis of the continuing violence against women despite legal advances and political transformations in post-Apartheid South Africa.
- 6 It should be evident from the above that well over half of the contributions are based mainly on South African material. Given South Africa’s geopolitical dominance, this is, regrettably, not surprising in a work on Southern Africa. Nonetheless it is unfortunate as interesting countries such as Botswana or Angola are not represented at all. However, there are numerous well-written chapters in the anthology, and Helene Maria Kyed’s chapter may serve as an example. Kyed’s chapter on the “politics of policing” in a former Renamo zone – Dombe, Sussundenga, Mozambique – represents the only full chapter based on empirical material from any Lusophone country. Kyed’s contribution is entitled “The politics of policing. Re-capturing ‘zones of confusion’ in rural post-war Mozambique” and is also one of the contributions that fits with little friction with the overall theoretical perspective, which is always a challenge in anthologies – also this one. The chapter explores the ways in which Frelimo-orchestrated discourses of unity and peace link crime and the branding of Renamo-controlled areas as *zonas de confusão*. Detailing how the recent decentralization drive in Mozambique is, in Dombe, translated into processes that are meant to create unity between police and *Povo*, Kyed manages to demonstrate both how the police presence and practices aims at (re-)affirming state control and also how the unity of police and people “...rely on the production of certain individuals and groups as security threats to the state and the wellbeing of the community” (p. 133). Kyed details the rise and fall of Renamo’s control of Dombe and what she argues is the recent reconnection of the rural population to the (Frelimo) state via the chiefs through decentralization. Kyed’s affinity with the anthology’s theoretical approach becomes clear, however, in the analysis of the practice of PRM (*Polícia da República de Moçambique*) where she invokes Carl Schmitt’s notion of sovereignty in terms of “the capacity to suspend the law” (p. 140) in her analysis. The PRM’s practice, Kyed argues, thus is an “...oscillation between playing the legal card and trespassing upon the law [being] at the core of producing and sustaining state power” (p. 141). By detailing public crime-combating meetings and the way in which Frelimo and the Mozambican state were conflated and construed as benign and, conversely, how people affiliated with crime were related to Renamo (and, hence, malign), Kyed’s text argues convincingly how sovereignty and an expansionist state in merging criminal categories and politics suspends and reinstates the law in sovereign fashion. Kyed’s contribution is a well-written and interesting case for anyone interested in the politics of decentralization and community policing in Mozambique and beyond. However, to my mind Kyed’s analysis would have been strengthened by contrasting the material at hand with a dual historical contextualization. Firstly, this concerns the whole trajectory of law within early Mozambican post-colonial legal practices as for example in the concepts, practices and legal thinking of *justiça popular* and *tribunais populares* (analysed in numerous works by

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, João Carlos Trindade, Maria Paula Meneses, Albie Sachs etc.). Secondly, the imagery and production of ‘the enemy within’ – as in the figure of the Renamo criminal – would also benefit from comparison with earlier practices and imagery – for example in the figure of *Xiconhoca* in the early Mozambican postcolonial state.

- 7 Nonetheless, as Kyed’s chapter demonstrates, the anthology is an interesting collection of works in many respects as it brings together contributions – most of them well-written and original – within a particular and theoretical framework that all texts more or less relate to. However, neither in the introduction nor in the particular chapters it is made, to this reviewer’s mind, sufficiently clear what it is about *the Southern African* condition or context – historically or institutionally – that sets it apart from the general tendencies the editors use theoreticians and analysts like Agamben, Foucault, Duffield, Hindess, Chandavarkar, de Certeau, Scott, Herbst, Wacquant, Feldman etc to develop. In other word, the volume lacks a general argument for the framing of what the editors state is a ‘security-development nexus’ within the regional context *beyond* the application of (and recourse to) notions of global political and social trends (or universalizing theories) to a pre-defined geographical region. This weakness is also evident in the editors’ lack of consistency: In their introduction Buur, Jensen and Stepputat sometimes write ‘sub-Saharan Africa’ and at other times ‘Africa’ – neglecting their erstwhile Southern African focus. The furthest they come by way of generalizing or theorizing their chosen geographical frame is when they in a few lines (p. 13) point out that “[a]ll four countries that we deal with – Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia – have emerged from protracted liberation wars followed by internal struggles between different political and ethnic factions”. This description – befitting a number of other African (and non-African) countries but also *excluding* some Southern African ones – falls short of an argument for the Southern African framework chosen. A further minor point of critique could be made about some instances where editing could have been improved as in some places where the text reads “in this paper” – underlining the particular text’s imperfect transition from conference paper/draft to chapter – or as in the presence of typos and a few instances of bad grammar distributed throughout.
- 8 Nevertheless, the anthology makes up for these minor editing flaws, the volume’s lack of specific argument for its Southern African focus and by being based on predominantly South African material (or, perhaps, one should say it has been sucked into the vortex of South Africa’s historical and current role as regional superpower) by its theoretical and analytical coherence applied to interesting and rich empirical material – as Kyed’s chapter is an example of. Its particular strengths include the novelty of the Agambenian-inspired approach to the Southern African context. This alone should make the volume of interest to scholars concerned with issues of sovereignty, citizenship and statehood in Africa and beyond.

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