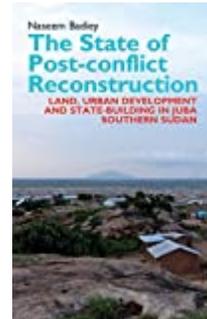




Naseem Badiy. *The State of Post-conflict Reconstruction: Land, Urban Development and State-Building in Juba, Southern Sudan.* Eastern Africa Series. Martlesham: James Currey, 2014. 224 pp. \$90.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-84701-094-0.



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In *The State of Post-conflict Reconstruction*, Naseem Badiy explores the role of local actors in the process of state building. She argues that for state creation efforts to succeed, interested parties must reconcile acrimonious histories with the competing interests of the present into an inclusive idea of citizenship. The diffusion of power in post-conflict environments makes this a complicated challenge, and the tendency of international groups to disregard or misunderstand local leaders often leaves well-intentioned initiatives stillborn. The book focuses on efforts to transform Juba into a modern capital city for South Sudan, and over five chapters Badiy examines how the competing intentions of national level politicians and local tribal leaders led a chaotic process rife with wasted opportunity and unnecessary conflict.

Questions of land use and ownership form the heart of the narrative. Badiy skillfully demonstrates how competing land titles from different regimes and a vaguely written peace agreement empowered both local and national leaders to pursue their conflicting agendas. The book correctly notes that the ability to control the allocation of land and to regulate its use âpeak to the scope, authority, and legitimacy of the stateâ (p. 16). These issues are not new, and in many ways, Badiyâs work rests on a Lockean conception of the im-

portance of property in establishing the legitimacy of a given state. The major contribution of the work, however, is to reestablish the importance of understanding the unique needs of local actors and of identifying how success is largely dependent on building acquiescence from the bottom-up rather than top-down. While Badiy engages in a degree of hyperbole in appropriating Tip OâNeilâs famous maxim to argue, âAll State-building is local,â the emphasis on local agency is important and welcome. The book effectively demonstrates the immense capacity of local agents to influence national issues and shows that state buildersâ ignorance of local concerns can imperil reconstruction efforts.

Oral histories and interviews, painstakingly gathered from two research trips to South Sudan, form the primary basis of the bookâs argument. Badiy presents a balanced account with firsthand recollections from important players on all sides of the process. The balance reinforces the overall theme of the work that state building is a collaborative process that reaches across multiple levels of governance and influence. Importantly, the interviews depict the majority of the actors as rational, and Badiy does a commendable job of providing the relevant background to the concerns and agendas her subjects raise. The attention to contextualization makes the

book more approachable for those without a significant background in the intricacies of local South Sudanese politics. However, Badiy struggles at times in connecting her use of sources to the overall argument. The desire to make use of the impressive quantity of interviews leads to significant divergences from the overall narrative, to the detriment of the work. Similarly, there is a notable difference in the quality of the prose in the introduction, first chapter, and conclusion, and the core of the book. In the former, Badiy's writing flows easily and she engages with the theories around state building with remarkable clarity. The conclusion, highlighting the importance of reconciliation, collective identity formation, and compromise, is exceptional and demonstrates the complexity of state formation in a concise and resonant manner. The clarity fades in the middle chapters, as awkward transitions in source usage and an overreliance on acronyms mar the narrative.

Despite the difficulties in the middle chapters, there

is much of value in *The State of Post-conflict Reconstruction*. It provides significant illumination into the difficulties of creating a new capital and a new nation in a war-torn section of Africa. Badiy's work also foreshadows the violence and rancor that is still undermining the state-building process in South Sudan. As a result, it is a worthy read for those interested in the region and its conflicts. The work should also resonate with readers interested in the theory and acts involved in state construction and reconstruction. The emphasis on the need to reconcile the interests of divergent actors should resonate with those familiar with US efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan or the difficulties in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Forming a national identity is neither a simple nor inevitable process, and Badiy captures that well. As a result, *The State of Post-conflict Reconstruction* offers valuable insights into a common challenge through a case study on what for many will be unfamiliar terrain. The mix of familiar and foreign, past and present, makes the book one of particular significance and a worthy read.

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