chapter almost invariably found at the start of a PhD thesis: an overview or survey of the relevant academic literature on the theme of the thesis.

Chapter 3 engages with the debate about the extent to which present-day Ghana is related to the historical entity of Ghana. It is often noted that the two do not bear much geographic resemblance to each other, although Amoah argues that the links between them are closer than is generally realized: he contends that most present-day Ghanaians could trace their ancestry to the ancient entity of Ghana. Chapter 4 includes the author’s critique of the claim that present-day Ghana is clearly differentiated from the ancient state of the same name.

The fifth chapter makes a conceptual leap to discuss why Ghanaians voted as they did in the 2000 and 2004 elections. In this context, Amoah discusses the notion of ‘the rationalization of ethnonationalism’, which for him is the main, indeed the only, way of explaining how Ghanaians voted in 2000 and 2004. He posits that ‘the political choices of voters would be skewed towards the interests of their ethnonational identity group or a preferred other closely related, for any reason, in what can be described as the rationalization of ethnonationalism’ (p. 6).

He proceeds to examine this hypothesis in Chapters 6–9. His claims are based on a 501-person survey of the industrial city of Tema, close to the capital, Accra. He then asserts that what he finds in relation to Tema – that voters are indeed often concerned with the ethnicity of the candidate they vote for – is in fact true for Ghana as a whole, even though no other surveys were conducted in the country as evidence. His discussion of the elections of 2000 and 2004 is focused simply on his hypothesis, and he proceeds to explain the victory of the NPP and President Kufuor in those terms. Crucially, however, no alternative reasons for voters voting in the way they did are presented.

Overall, this is an interesting but quirky book that mixes solid academic theory with some rather whimsical analysis of less substance. It will be of interest to those interested in Ghana’s recent political trajectory and democratization, while readers whose interests extend to the political question of nationalism in the country will also find material with which to engage.

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The question of national identity in Africa has recently become acute again. On the one hand, the civil conflicts of the past two decades have put in question the very definition of the nation state. On the other, the widespread display of xenophobia and the violence unleashed against ‘strangers’ have enflamed notions of citizenship. What a ‘nation’, a ‘state’ or a ‘citizen’ are today in Africa is not as clear-cut as political theories of development once confidently predicted. Furthermore, one of the unintended consequences of the democratization process that started in the late eighties has been the renewed instrumentalization of political tribalism (to use Lonsdale’s expression) – as the current events in Kenya, the latest in a long line of such ethnic strife, make abundantly clear.
These questions cannot but invite a rethinking of the theories and concepts we use to analyse politics in contemporary Africa. A good starting point is an acknowledgment of some of the paradoxes to be found today. First, the state may be weak, or derelict, but the nation is firmly fixed in people’s imagination—never more so than during football’s Africa’s Cup of Nations. Second, Africans may often wonder what it means to be a citizen of their country but they have no doubt about their nationality. Third, the nation state in Africa may appear evanescent but, with some historically specific exceptions, there is no desire for secession or for the break-up of existing national entities. Finally, political tribalism may be rampant again but Africans continue to see themselves as multi-faceted individuals with overlapping identities that cut across ethnicities. The picture is complex indeed.

It is to these questions that this volume speaks, explicitly but also implicitly. Although the papers published in *Making Nations, Creating Strangers* issue from a conference on ‘States, borders and nations: negotiating citizenship in Africa’ (Edinburgh, May 2004) the book has strong internal coherence. The editors have done a good job in their introduction: they raise the key questions and explain how the different contributors address them. The book is divided into four sections: ‘Inclusion, exclusion and conflict’, ‘Land and belonging’, ‘Nation building boundaries’, and ‘Present, past and future of citizenship in Africa’. The case studies discussed include Côte d'Ivoire, Zaïre, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Tanzania. In addition, there are two comparative chapters: Will Reno discusses the relevance of the question of citizenship to African rebel movements and Crawford Young revisits some of the key issues having to do with ‘nation’, ‘ethnicity’ and ‘citizenship’.

What is striking about the individual country chapters is how they confirm a general trend on the continent—including in South Africa, long seen as a special case. In broad terms, that trend confounds standard theories of development in two fundamental ways. The first is that there has not been in Africa the sort of socio-political Westernization long predicted, and still envisaged by some. What we see is an intricate mixture of what, for want of better words, one has to call ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ or ‘formal’ and ‘informal’—which explains some of the paradoxes mentioned above. Africa is modernizing but it is doing so in its own way—throwing up unexpected combinations of order and disorder that are part and parcel of the sedimentation of identity politics in the post-colonial period. The second is that theories of African politics are largely unable to account for this ‘hybridized’ form of development. Not only are the concepts they use—nation state, citizen, identity, and so on—too derivative of the Western experience, but the causalties they assume, and thus look for, are so many distractions from the careful study of what is actually taking place.

*Making Nations, Creating Strangers* does not address the theoretical question directly, except for Young’s chapter, but it provides evidence of the complexities of the issues and of the care with which habitual categories of analysis should be handled. It is a welcome addition to the growing number of studies that delve deeper into the apparently paradoxical nature of Africa’s present socio-political fabric. Perhaps it will incite scholarship on the uses of the concepts of ‘nation’ and ‘citizen’ that will provide a more searching theoretical framework—that is, one better able to make sense of Africa’s tortuous road to modernity or, rather, modernities.

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