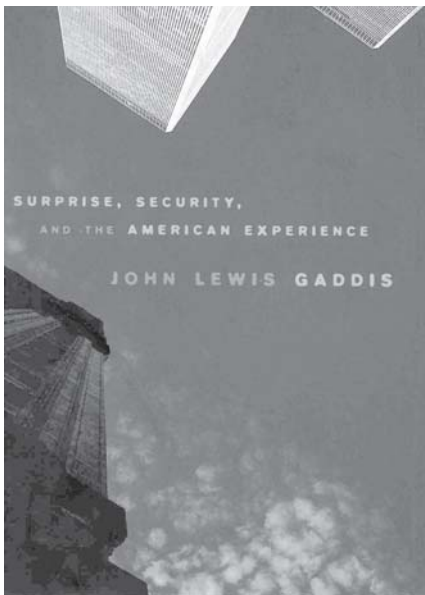


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BOOK REVIEW

SURPRISE, SECURITY AND THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

JOHN LEWIS GADDIS

Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2004



This short volume of essays is based on a series of lectures delivered in 2002 by John Lewis Gaddis, Professor of History and Political Science at Yale University, and noted authority on the history of the Cold War. Taking as his point of departure the terrorist attack of 11 September 2001 on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon (9/11 as it has become known), he argues that, as in the case of other surprise assaults on the USA, this event led to a fundamental reassessment of the principles of American strategy.

In August 1814 a British force entered Washington DC and destroyed the Capitol and the White House and forced President Madison into ignominious flight. This humiliation compelled the US government to reconsider the parlous state of its defences and the priority it had to give to these. Gaddis

identifies the author of a new grand strategy as John Quincy Adams, son of the second president of the USA, who would go on to serve as President Monroe's Secretary of State and subsequently occupy the presidency for a single term. His desired strategy was based on pre-emption, unilateralism and hegemony. Initially, the victims of this policy were the marauding bands emanating from Spanish Florida, the early nineteenth century equivalent of a "failed state". Native Americans along the frontier of western settlement ultimately were to share their fate by the end of the century, and by the 1840s the doctrine had been extended to include bordering states that *might* fail, such as newly independent Texas.

Gaddis identifies the second influential idea in the American diplomatic tradition as unilateralism: that as the USA could not depend on others to provide for its security, it had to be prepared to act alone when necessary. The Monroe Doctrine was a consequence of the collapse of the Spanish Empire in Latin America, though it did rely essentially on a confluence of interests with Britain, which was able by virtue of its naval supremacy to deter other imperial states from staking claims to South and Central America. Generally, however, the US avoided entangling alliances, and when President Woodrow Wilson brought the country into the World War in 1917, he did so as an "associated" and not an "allied" power.

Finally, there is the idea of hegemony. As early as 1811, Adams was able to anticipate that given his country's population, economy and potential, there was no need to limit the USA's ambitions in the Americas to a balance of power. This was not to say that the US sought to expand its sovereignty over the entire hemisphere, but certainly it marked it as a sphere of influence.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in Hawaii on 7 December 1941 brought another

assessment. Technological change meant that the US could not sit securely behind its surrounding oceans. It also implied that America might have to take note of radical changes in the balance of power elsewhere in the world from its immediate neighbourhood.

President Roosevelt's response did not rely on pre-emption, unilateralism or the overt pursuit of hegemony. Indeed, Roosevelt's genius was to embrace selective multilateralism with a view to promoting post-war hegemony. As the war in Europe came to an end he also rejected pre-emption against the anticipated threat from the Soviet Union. His successor, Truman, settled for containment, which implied the maintenance of American military and economic supremacy, interpreted for public purposes as a balance of power. Following the opening gambit of the Marshall Plan, assistance rejected by the Soviets and their satellites, to Washington's great relief, the US was able to convince its European allies that the benefits of its implicit hegemony were preferable to the realistic alternative.

In Gaddis's view the American rejection of unilateralism and pre-emption was crucial to victory in the Cold War. The question now was what would happen to grand strategy once the "something worse" than American hegemony evaporated. No longer was there any convincing countervailing centre of power in state form, as anticipated by balance of power theorists. In the post-Cold War world there would be many erstwhile allies who began to find it irksome to continue living in the American global sphere of influence.

Through the 1990s the US carried on more or less as before, with no external threat to concentrate strategic thinkers, until on 11 September 2001 the terrorist attack on New York and Washington demonstrated the effectiveness of asymmetric warfare in dramatic and horrifying fashion. For less than the price of a new tank, a group of *non-state* actors inflicted human, material and psychological damage on a scale unprecedented on the US mainland.

Whether international terror is to become the "something worse" than US hegemony is

a question still to be answered. As Gaddis suggests, the Bush administration's reaction to this third historic surprise, apparently has been to revert to hegemony based on unilateralism and pre-emption, a nineteenth-century option that has little appeal in the modern world. It is even possible that the grand strategy chosen, and clearly spelled out in the National Security Strategy document of 2002, will prove counterproductive in that it may multiply the numbers of those wishing to do the USA harm.

Gaddis discusses the Bush doctrine of attempting to secure a global order based on American dominance in a system in which the benign effects of market liberalisation and democratisation will achieve the elimination of tyranny and terror. He sees in the US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq the first proposed moves in a larger campaign to impose democratic regimes where there had been none. Given the complications that have since arisen in both these cases, one might wonder whether there will need to be another strategic reconsideration, in that US forces have discovered what most Middle Eastern scholars could have told them before they started, that – whatever America's military superiority – they were going to find themselves enmeshed in complexities well beyond their comprehension or capacity to address.

In this respect Gaddis probably makes too much of the links between the adoption of a new strategic outlook and the surprise of 9/11. Military action against Afghanistan was certainly launched within days of the al-Qaeda attack, but the invasion of Iraq, though it followed the premature declaration of success in Afghanistan had been planned in drafts dating back to the beginning of the Bush presidency. This would suggest that "shock and awe" were already on the policy agenda before 9/11.

For Gaddis, the most promising route out of a self-defeating unilateralist hegemony is suggested in the application in international affairs of the USA's own federalist constitutional principles, which include the allocation of equal representation in the Senate to all the Union's states, regardless of their size or population. He argues that only by building con-

sent can hegemony be sustained, and that if the US remains true to more of its founding principles, it can hope to make the world a better place. Of this patriotic message he is completely unashamed.

“We keep hope alive, as well, by taking responsibility. There’s not the slightest doubt in my mind that the world was a better place at the end of the twentieth century because the United States rejected its earlier isolationism and assumed global responsibilities during it. Who else was there to hold the line against the authoritarians who otherwise would have dominated that century? Who else is there now, at the beginning of the twenty-first”.

This collection of essays, so deceptive in its brevity, is full of such thought-provoking questions set out against a broad historical panorama. Gaddis’s prose is clear and accessible and he eschews the polemics that have dominated so much of the writing about Bush’s America. Whether one agrees with Gaddis or not, this remains a first-class example of the value of the historical view in dealing with matter otherwise more likely to inflame than to illuminate.

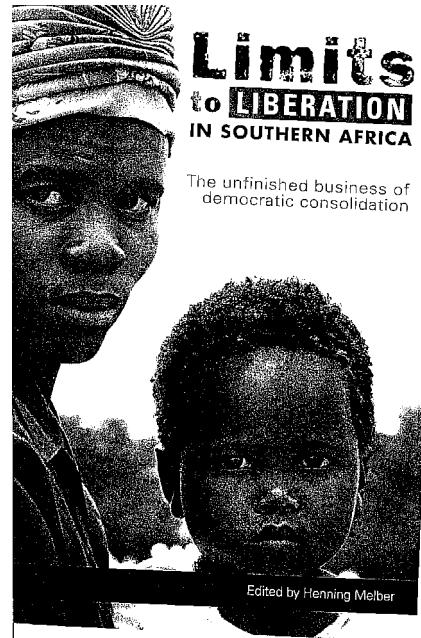
Richard Cornwell

LIMITS TO LIBERATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The unfinished business of democratic consolidation

Published by the Human Science Research Council in association with the Journal of Contemporary African Studies

When introducing the book, Henning Melber gives one the impression that its core focus is ‘the contradiction represented by the fact that the Namibian and Zimbabwean liberation movements which spearheaded mass popular struggles for liberation from colonial rule have, in power, developed into authoritarian



and, to varying degrees, corrupt ruling regimes’(page xiii). After reading the book, it is hard to agree with Melber’s introductory assertion. He short-sells the book by highlighting Namibia and Zimbabwe. To illustrate the point, of the ten chapters in this book, three focus on South Africa (8, 9 and 10), two on Zimbabwe (2 and 3), one on Lesotho (6), two on Botswana (4 and 5) and only one (Melber’s) on Namibia (7).

In chapter 1 – *Democracy and the Control of Elites* – Kenneth Good contextualises the essays that follow. He starts off with Britain and the United States. While this part is relevant, the author went to unnecessary detail to describe the situation in the United States. Details about the economic situation of Western countries without showing how that is connected to the region under discussion amount to a deviation. After that diversion, Good masterly traces democracy to its early days with Athens as an example. It would appear that this is done with the intention to raise the question: what really constitutes democracy and what are the non-negotiables? Good shows that there is an ongoing tension between daily practices and demands of democracy in Africa. As he acutely observes, in extending and attempting to extend their terms of offices, Nujoma and Chiluba, respec-

tively, relied on the authority of democracy. While Chiluba would obediently 'bow to the wish of the people', Nujoma presented himself as the ever-willing slave at the beck and call of the Namibian nation. 'I am always at the disposal of the Namibian people', declared Nujoma. Good, however, questions this benevolence. He sharply asserts: 'Singularly and collectively, the ruling elites of southern Africa have shown that their chief concerns are with self-interest and retention of power and constitutionalism counts for little in comparison' (page 7).

In chapter 2 – *Liberation and Opposition in Zimbabwe* – Suzanne Dansereau takes on the topical issue of Zimbabwe and that country's politics. She starts off by detailing the history of Zimbabwe from colonisation to liberation in the early 1980s. The chapter comes as a breath of fresh air in that she detaches herself from the prevailing 'either or' discourse that sees people being either for or against the Zimbabwean government. Dansereau lampoons the simplistic view that tends to undermine the role of labour in the liberation of that country in favour of the 'peasantry'. She skilfully marshals historical evidence to arrive at the convincing conclusion that opposition in Zimbabwe is not what some government officials parade it to be. They are not mere pawns at the disposal of the West. Dansereau shows that there has been a process that started with dissatisfaction with the ruling party elite and culminated in the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change.

Amin Kamete's chapter (3) – *In Defence of National Sovereignty? Urban Governance and Democracy in Zimbabwe* – corroborates Dansereau's thesis regarding the nature of opposition. He states: 'in the course of time, the party's cosy relationship with the enlightened urban electorate was to turn gradually into a lukewarm one before it quickly deteriorated into mutual hatred and distaste at the close of the twentieth century'. This chapter, therefore, complements Dansereau's account. Kamete's take is a nuanced one and until the 'conclusion', where he levels criticism at the ruling party, he resists the temptation of passing judgment even in the face of what appears to be compelling evidence. He, there-

fore, succeeds in giving 'both sides of the story' on Zimbabwe. His chapter would come in handy for anyone curious about developments in Zimbabwe—curious enough to go beyond the sensationalisation often found in the media.

Ian Taylor's chapter (4) – *As Good as It Gets? Botswana's "Democratic Developments"* – deals with Botswana, a country often seen as the shining example of liberal democracy in Africa. He does not mince words in expressing his views about Botswana's democracy. While duly acknowledging successes the country has achieved since gaining independence, Taylor also highlights the main impediments to democracy in that country. These include weak opposition and weak civil society organisations. As a result, Taylor suggests that Botswana is a 'de facto predominant-party system where the incumbent BDP has won each and every election by a landslide victory' (p 74). Also worrying the author is the nature of media in Botswana. He bemoans the government's interference with the media. Compounding this, he argues, is the fact that civil society and opposition parties are weak in a country where the media—though flourishing as an industry—is not up to the task.

In chapter 5—*Chieftaincy and the Negotiation of Might and Right in Botswana's Democracy* – Francis B. Nyamnjoh takes up the controversial issue of chieftainship and its scope within a democratic dispensation. He details the role played by chiefs before the time of Sir Seretse Khama and beyond. Nyamnjoh, in a very useful way, discusses the nature of chieftaincy and the impact it had on Botswana's democracy as we know it today. He steers away from the prevalent tendency that tends to overemphasise the impact of democracy (and Westernisation) on the institution of chieftainship, thereby overlooking the very real resilience and elasticity of the institution. The experiences of Botswana, as described in this chapter, stand to serve as a valuable reference point for countries currently grappling with ways and means of accommodating traditional leadership in a democratic dispensation—a real challenge for many countries in Africa.

In a similar vein, Roger Southall's chapter (6) – *Between Competing Paradigms: Post-Colonial*

Legitimacy in Lesotho – engages with the dependent democracy of Lesotho. Southall aptly paints a picture of this small country constrained by the might of the then South African apartheid state and aided by the protection in the offing from Britain. After delineating the historic twists and turns of Lesotho politics, he then proceeds to evaluate the country's current realities and challenges. Lesotho's main challenge, unlike Botswana and some other countries, remains her economic dependency as dictated by relative lack of natural resources. Anyone wishing to know the politics of Lesotho is advised to read Southall's chapter for an incisive, balanced and frank exposition.

In chapter 7, Henning Melber – *From Controlled Change to Changed Control: The Case of Namibia* – provides a critical overview of the Namibian political arena. A former activist in the liberation struggle, Melber looks at how some promises that served as the main banner of the liberation struggle are now being conveniently discarded. Melber—in a criticism that, although directed at Namibia, could well paraphrase many other chapters in the book—asserts: “Apart from the fact that there are structural and psychological effects resetting from the colonial legacy..., vested interests are re-established, and originally formulated goals of social transformation are either compromised or even totally abandoned in favour of the interests of a new elite mainly rooted in the sphere of new nationalism and its power of definition”.

Melber's specific reference to Namibia and Zimbabwe was earlier on questioned in view of the fact that the majority of chapters in the book are on South Africa. It is against this background that one jointly deals with the three chapters on South Africa—a limiting exercise on its own. Martin Leggassick, Raymond Stuttner and Krista Johnson in their respective chapters document the story of South Africa: her struggle, liberation and—with a strong qualification—her present status. In these chapters, one finds a wealth of analyses starting from the period preceding the armed struggle, the armed struggle itself and the negotiation period. The authors explain the difficulties that the African National Congress (ANC) faced in its struggle to unseat the apartheid regime and the 'limita-

tions' that this had on the nature of the ANC to date. The ANC, to paraphrase, had internal differences in its approach to governance. This is evident in the so-called leadership inside the country and that in exile.

All this scholarly engagement is useful. The only vacuum is perhaps an exposition of the political twists and turns of South Africa today. That said, however, a solid foundation for future analysis of the country has been laid by the three authors.

I recommend this easy to read book to anyone interested in the politics of southern Africa.

Buyane Tshebla

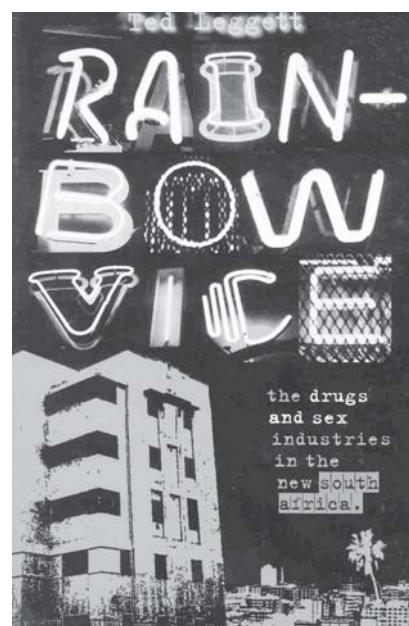
RAINBOW VICE.

The Drugs and Sex Industries in the new South Africa

TED LEGGETT

David Philip (Zed Books), Cape Town

Post apartheid South Africa is characterised by extensive socio-political and economic reforms and transformation, and besieged with massive anti-social behaviours. The search for the causes of the swath of crimes and vices in the new South Africa has occupied, not only many



criminologists and sociologists alike, but also among many other interest and stakeholders concerned with “order” and “stability”. Leggett’s book therefore couldn’t have come at a better time. What is even more, the topical issue of decriminalising or legalising sex work (prostitution) and some drugs has recently generated a heated debate in South Africa.

Many writers, such as Ryan (1997), Gastro (1998) and Gelbard (1996)¹ while researching and concerned with the security and development of post-apartheid South Africa have underlined the extent to which South Africa is being increasingly used by traffickers as both transit and consumer designated. The consequences of this, according to these researchers, have been the accentuation of crime, general violence and vices.

Crime, violence and vice are rampant in the new South Africa, but by no means peculiar to that country. Ted Leggett therefore, has simply captured on the opportunity to deliberate on the issues, first, as they exist in South Africa, second, as they affect South Africa and third, as being talked about and expressed concerns by South Africans.

The book is divided into three parts. The first dealing with drugs, with an overview of discussion on drugs facts, embodying the history in South Africa, and then delving into details of the market for the selected drugs. The second section discusses sex work issue, with an introductory chapter and then explores the ways the markets for hard drugs and sex work interact and function in urban sleazy hotels. The final section focuses on the general situation of policy on vice, the specific sex-drugs policy as currently obtained and the author’s recommendations on the way forward.

“Rainbow vice. The drug and sex industries in the new South Africa” is a sociology-cum-criminological report on drug-sex-vice condition in new South Africa. It is aimed, as the author points out in page 5, to present the real harm caused by the sale of sex and drugs, and the state’s response to these matters and possibly to chart a new course for the way forward.

Leggett’s book is distinctive. It is packed with anecdotes: personal histories, circumstances and stories of interviews in Johannes-

burg, Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria with sex workers, drug runners and merchants, pimps, drug users, brothel owners and law enforcement officials. This makes it come alive.

He endeavours to show the historical pedigree of various drugs and what personality factors or societal factors have promoted the culture of drugs and sex vice. Leggett is of the view that a peculiar drug is peculiar to the different racial groups in South Africa, namely blacks, coloureds and whites and made to be so by apartheid segregated policy. He, at the same time, has the view that the coloured race is most likely attached to the drug problems “owing to intense poverty and urbanisation” (p. 52). Gangsterism, raves and club culture are essential in trying to grasp the epidemic of drug culture and sex work syndrome in the new South Africa, Leggett seems to argue.

His illustration of the proliferation of sleazy hotels in urban centres and the safe haven that they provide for drug traffickers and sex workers in the second half is one of the best parts of the book. He also demonstrates intellectual skill here when he links these structures to the ecological approach to the understanding of crime and violence in modern cities and urban centers. He writes “In a pattern seen in urban centres around the world, what was once the central business district (CBD) of metropolis is often allowed to go to seed after moneyed interests moved to suburbs...The vacuum left in the wake of capital flight is quickly filled by the urbanising poor in search of job opportunities, and the free-for-all that follows marginalises these inner-city areas then further...” (p 122).

The book also touches on the worrisome issue of HIV/Aids as they relate to drug-sex issues. But its importance here lies in the fact that it reveals that there may not really be a positive correlation amongst these phenomena, save through the circulation of “crack cocaine”.

The author’s sympathy with the sex workers is also discernible. He seems to suggest and advise that all necessary state supports should be provided for the sex workers, short of coming out clearly and loudly in support of the decriminalising viewpoints.

In calling for prosecution, he warns of the

danger associated with dealing with these vices, as they are corrupt-inducing. The law enforcement agencies, justice system and politicians are more likely to be turned into addicted servants or into network of syndicates. Leggett writes, "Vice enforcement is a very dangerous business. If you want to keep drugs and prostitution illegal, you have to watch the people in charge of enforcement carefully. It has the potential to turn your police force into a group of addicted servants of the syndicate too busy worrying about their next hit to be of any use to society" (p 155).

While identifying the factors that promote the culture of drugs in South Africa, Leggett minces no words in mentioning gangsterism. In fact, in page 51 of the book, he intones that gangsters are the primary reasons that drugs are so prominent in the coloured community. Common as this notion is among many writers and the lay public, the truth of the matter is that it is not really so much that gangsters promote a drug culture or are the primary distributors. Perhaps, it makes sense to state unambiguously that it is the other way round. That is, drug culture promotes gangsterism.

The major shortcoming of Leggett's book is that it lacks conceptual framework and structural delineation. Leggett's approach is more one of journalism than academic and scholarship. As Charlene Smith wrote when reviewing the book in the *Mail and Guardian*², Leggett's book is by no means mediocre, but much of what fills the early pages tells any regular newspaper and magazines reader what they already know.

No conscious attempt is made for a discussion within Goldstein's³ (1985) tripartite dimensions on drug-violence nexus for example. Each of these dimensions is significance in the manner its cause-effect relationship between drug and violence is explained.

Research of this nature deserves a more concise, delineated and neat presentation of findings, quantitatively or qualitatively. It is not discernible what are the fundamental findings of the author from the numerous interviews. What are the views of people interviewed on policy matter?

It is also apparent that key respondents or

interviewees were paid fees in advance or gratified in other to participate. The result of the interviews may therefore be viewed as presumptuous and pre-judgmental.

Leggett is perhaps right to have identified Nigerians, the sleazy hotels and sex workers as acting in infusion to promoting the culture of vice in our urban centres and cities. But here the crucial issue remains, which, of these precede? Nigerians, sleazy hotels or the sex workers? The author discusses these phenomena as autarchy in themselves. That is, no reference to the fact that the South African situation is but a miniature of the global phenomenon. Good enough that the author seems to have been aware of the fact that even if all Nigerians drug runners are bundled into the next flight and exported back to Nigeria, other groups would step in and fill the lacuna. But he stops short of proffering effective measures to ensure that this does not happen again.

"Unfortunately, Nigerian syndicates are known internationally for their involvement in cocaine and heroin trafficking...The Nigerian dealers' control of crack supply has given them *de facto* over sex industry. We are all working for Nigerians" (p 139). This remarks is an overstatement and exaggeration as is his comment about Nigerians as perpetrators of the bulk of crack-heroin culture in the new South Africa.

While deliberating on his recommendations, Leggett states that Nigerians drug dealers and criminals are easily discernible; by their "passing similarities" on the streets. This looks like a throw back to the Lombroso's many decades of physiological theory of criminals. Little wonder therefore, that many innocent and law abiding people including locals have been harassed repeatedly by the police because of this "passing similarity". This is a potentially dangerous remark and has fanned *Nigeriaphobic* in the country.

One can't help feeling that, better editing and structuring would have assisted in making the book into a more gripping one. The problem undoubtedly is not with facts available to the author. But he lacks clear-cut layout and focus on each section of the book. There is too much digression and the reader sometimes loses touch with the theme. In this light,

greater use of footnotes would have eliminated the clumsiness and sharpened the focus.

There are also cases of sweeping statements, grammatical errors and oversimplification of facts or otherwise. Take for example, the claim in page 1 that swallowing condoms full of cocaine, strolling through Hillbrow in a mini skirt at 3 am and running a backroom poker game are all motivated by a desire for economic gain. This is too economic a point of view and foregoes other socio-psychological variables or motivators to engagement in vice, delinquency and criminal activities.

The fundamental policy implication of Leggett is also troubling. In one instance, Leggett, on page 15, openly declares his allegiance philosophically with harm-reduction programmes approach to dealing with drug-sex problem. Yet, he is quick to reject the "Say No to drug" approach, the centripetal and centrifugal of the demand-harm-reduction-approach. Later, on page 182, he seems more clearly to favour the "war on drug" (supply reduction approach), short of saying so. He favours heavy involvement of law enforcement agents in this regard. This is certainly a contradiction.

Leggett writes, "Rather than being a long term burden on the South African public, these foreign criminals can be exported to the land of their birth" (p 150). And in page 182, he intones "as harsh as it sounds, we can pack a good part of South African crack problem on plane and sent it to where it came from". This demeans the intractable network of participants in the illegal economy, locally and globally. Phongpaichit et al (1998) in their well researched and beautifully written book: "Guns, Girls, Gambling, Ganja. Thailand's illegal economy and public policy" have revealed painstakingly, the cobweb-like-networks of all classes of people, and of course, those connected with making policies and laws, enforcing and adjudicating them.

Overall, Leggett's book is easy to read, grasp and interpret. It reinforces the perceptions of a high trend of drug problems and sex workers in the new South Africa. It paints more clearly, the increasing scenario of drug complexities—its corrosive potentials. The book offers a refreshing insight, especially to those not familiar with

the illegal economy of drugs and sex worker in the new South Africa. It also leaves many issues unresolved. That is, the lack of theory and solid methodology. Be that as it may, it is still worthy of being recommended to students of development and social studies, policy makers, practitioners, parents and public at large.

A revised edition of the book should attempt an in-depth theoretical grounding. Efforts should also be made to contextualise the study within the emerged global economy, and the specific emerging global illegal economy. Any improvement in the methods and techniques of choosing respondents would be the singular most importance plus to the quality of the book.

Smart Otu

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