Evolution of Deadly Conflict in Liberia: From "Paternaltarianism" to State Collapse

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Description
This book represents the first attempt to holistically document and analyze the causes of deadly conflict in Liberia from its founding to the present. It reconstructs and examines the root, operational, and catalytic causes of eighteen internal deadly conflicts that transpired in Liberia between 1822 and 2003, including the 1980 coup d'état against the Tolbert regime and the Great War (1989–2003). Levitt examines a continuum of circular causation among the state of affairs that led to the founding of the Liberian State, the evolution of settler authoritarianism and nationalism, and internal conflict. The book has three major objectives: 1.) to determine the historical causes of deadly conflict in Liberia, in particular, the underlying historical phenomena responsible for birthing the Great War; 2.) to present an alternative framework to comprehend and examine the aged conflict dynamic between settler and indigenous Liberians, and within Liberian society itself; and 3.) to produce the first comprehensive study of deadly conflict in Liberia.

This interdisciplinary book spans the fields of political science, history, international law, and peace and conflict studies.

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Academic journal article African Studies Review. In a way, the two books complement one another. Levitt resurrects deadly conflicts in Liberian history to explain root causes of what he calls the 'roots of the conflict of 1989-2003. Sawyer sees the roots of conflict in an overcentralized, autocratic, and predatory state. Each book has a prescriptive intent. Levitt advocates democratic inclusiveness as an antidote to ‘settler nationalism and authoritarianism,’ while Sawyer speaks of transformational change from a monocentric to a polycentric governance arrangement.