

spheres of influence and by the multiplication of conflicts, especially in Africa. Instead of outright colonialism, trade and investment have become the main method of dispossessing indigenous people of their resources. In this process, the state is used to make dispossession more efficient. As a result, this system has produced a predatory economy in which some states produce while others play the role of vampires (sucking the life out of the producers). For example, the United States “lives parasitically to the detriment of its partners in the world system. . . . The world produces, and the United States, which has practically no funds in reserve, consumes. American ‘prosperity’ comes at the price of others’ stagnation” (198).

What is the alternative? A critical mass is needed to confront global apartheid. Africa, Bond argues, remains the leading example of “accumulation by appropriation and dispossession” (212). How can people be empowered? A process of deglobalization should be put in place. In South Africa, such an attempt would turn basic needs “into human rights” (217). According to Bond, the World Bank’s reform agenda continues to marginalize the poor while empowering the rich. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund cannot be reformed. Bond concludes that people should pressure states to force them to decommodify essential services to make them accessible.

Patrick Bond’s study is timely, as the impact of globalization and the “Washington consensus” prescriptions wreak havoc throughout the developing world, but especially in Africa. He demonstrates why liberalism is not the solution for South Africa’s economic and social development problems. Bond’s study is ideal for courses on development, global issues, globalization, international relations, and South Africa. He is right on target, especially in his discussion of South Africa’s role in the continent and its domestic issues. This is a well-written book with telling cartoons from Zapro that make it an easy read on a difficult subject.

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**Lungisile Ntsebeza. *Democracy Compromised: Chiefs and the Politics of the Land in South Africa*.** Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005. x + 326 pp. Maps. Bibliography. Index. \$38.00. Paper.

**Jaap DeVisser. *Developmental Local Government: A Case Study of South Africa*.** Antwerp, Belgium: Intersentia, 2005. Distributed by Gaunt, Inc., 3011 Gulf Drive, Holmes Beach, Fla., 34217. xix + 313 pp. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. €59.50. Paper.

As a component of both democratization and development, local government has increasingly assumed a central role in the discourse of “good gov-

ernance.” Reflecting the assumption that local government is inherently more democratic and responsive to the needs of the people, the power of local government is increasing under the rubric of devolution, decentralization, and deconcentration. In South Africa, this policy was enshrined in the 1997 Constitution, which marks local government as the “epicenter” of development. Localization marks a significant reverse of postcolonial models of state-led development in Africa. Until the introduction of structural adjustment, state-led development was also at the heart of the developmental programs of the international financial institutions. Since the early 1990s, however, development has increasingly emphasized decentralization of political and economic authority away from the central state toward various subnational units. The two works reviewed here thus represent important efforts to come to terms with the scope and nature of local government in the South African context.

DeVisser contends that decentralization is a key tool for economic development in South Africa. For him, the establishment of developmental local government must be predicated on three principles: autonomy, supervision, and cooperation. The bulk of the work consists of exploration of these three principles in the context of the South African case. However, such decentralization can be successful only insofar as the power and autonomy of local government are institutionalized in legal structures, particularly the South African Constitution. The most important source of autonomy, argues DeVisser, is the fiscal autonomy necessary to ensure that the financial resources available to local government are sufficient to satisfy their developmental obligations and responsibilities.

Reflecting the legal background of the author, DeVisser’s book is at its strongest when exploring the legal framework necessary to establish local developmental government. Indeed, the text makes extensive reference to legal debates over the nature of the emerging federal system playing itself out in South African courts. The institutional model for developmental local government outlined in the text was developed through extensive consultations with local governments across South Africa. However, the text has little to say regarding the informal power relationships that underscore relations between various levels of government in a federal system.

Ntsebeza offers a fundamentally different take on the nature and importance of local government in contemporary South Africa. Instead of focusing on the broad legal structures of national-local relations, he looks at the historical political economy of local rule. His analysis offers a more thorough and complete consideration of the historical position of local government in South Africa. Unlike DeVisser’s book, which offers only marginal comments on the historical specificity of the South African case, Ntsebeza’s text is almost exclusively historical, with most of the chapters devoted to the history of local rule in Xhalanga District, Eastern Cape, during several distinct time periods. The book offers only a brief analysis of the postapartheid system. Most impressive is the well-supported argument

regarding the antidemocratic nature of rural authorities (headmen, chiefs, traditional authorities) as shown in the concrete case of Xhalinga District—an analysis that traces the evolution of rural authority from before the establishment of white colonial rule, through apartheid, and into independence. The two books thus provide an interesting comparative reading of the role of local government in contemporary South Africa. Across Africa, colonial systems were often highly centralized, although they were also often highly dependent on local administrators and (sometimes) imposed systems of “traditional” rule, as in South Africa. The apartheid state in particular made extensive use of headmen and traditional authorities as a way to extend the rule of the state into the rural areas of the country, and the appointment of tribal authorities and headmen generally reflected the power dynamics of the apartheid system. Struggle over rural local government, where it took place, was essentially a struggle over control of the allocation of land, which represented the fundamental source of authority for the rural elite.

For Ntsebeza, the postapartheid government has reinforced the position of rural authorities even in the absence of democratization. This has led to an inconsistent and contradictory policy of maintaining nonelected and unaccountable traditional authorities while simultaneously espousing the principle of liberal democratic rule. Ntsebeza thus rejects the possibility that traditional authorities can constitute the basis of democratic governance in contemporary South Africa.

While conceding the role of local government and traditional authorities in the maintenance of the apartheid state, *DeVisser* offers a more positive spin on the democratic nature of contemporary local government, arguing that properly established local government (based on the “right institutional design”) offers a greater scope for choice, equity, and accountability. However, the focus on elected local government generally excludes the nondemocratic traditional authorities central to Ntsebeza’s work.

The different positions on the nature of local government developed by the two authors are therefore a function of the differing objects of study and the competing interpretations of the role of nonelected authorities in the modern South African state. *DeVisser* contends that the ANC government is reluctant to extend any real authority to nonelected traditional authorities and that since the 2000 elections such authorities have witnessed a decline in their powers relative to those extended to democratically elected councils across South Africa. Ntsebeza disagrees, arguing that since the end of 1997, when the government seemed poised to extend participatory and representative democracy to rural areas, the ANC government has increasingly emphasized the relative power of traditional leaders. Both agree, however, that the relative power and influence of local elected versus traditional authorities in South Africa are likely to remain a contentious political issue as the nature of South African federalism continues to evolve.

While offering a compelling comparative exploration of the role of local authorities in a democratic South Africa, the texts thus speak to fundamentally different audiences. DeVisser's work is primarily of interest to legal scholars and policymakers as an analysis of the constitutional framework for decentralization. It is far too technical for classroom use or general readership. Ntsebeza's book speaks to a wider audience, and would be of interest to policymakers but also to graduate or upper-division undergraduate classes considering the land question or the question of rural political authority in South Africa. Both texts, however, offer important insight into the contested nature of local government in South Africa.

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**Ian Taylor and Paul Williams, eds. *Africa in International Politics: External Involvement on the Continent*.** New York: Routledge, 2004. xi + 225 pp. Index. \$105.00. Cloth. \$36.95. Paper.

The editors of this useful volume begin from the premise that, despite chatter to the contrary, "Africa is not marginalized from world politics and external actors continue to play a highly visible role in the continent" (18). They have assembled a set of well-informed essays about the African policies of the major powers and certain international organizations. Rounding up the usual suspects (the permanent members of the Security Council plus Japan and—less usually—Canada), the authors analyze the concrete interests that these states pursue in Africa. Several contributors perceive a constructivist phenomenon according to which African policy provides not only a means for pursuing classic national interests but also a "means through which national and institutional self-images are developed and defined" (18). Rather than constructing empires, states now construct reputations in Africa.

This type of argument has long been a familiar one insofar as France is concerned. Despite some cosmetic changes in French policy during the years of Lionel Jospin's premiership, Daniela Krosiak sees longer term continuity in this dimension of French policy. While Jospin sought to change France's image as the "gendarme d'Afrique" (79), the notorious networks are still in place, and President Jacques Chirac reasserted the familiar French role via interventions in Côte d'Ivoire in 2002 and the eastern Congo (under U.N. mandate) in 2003. Krosiak finds that the longstanding notion that France cannot be France without Africa is alive and well. Reviewing American policy in the post-Cold War environment, James Hentz perceives some evolution from its primarily realist orientation during the Cold War toward what he calls a "meliorist" approach during the 1990s that emphasizes humanitarianism and democratization. He seems