

construction of Eurozone crisis responses more fully. There is a mention of “the ongoing revision of austerity doctrine in which the IMF Research Department had made important contributions” (p. 203), but then the focus moves on very quickly. These fascinating battles of economic ideas are, it seems, not the object of interest for *Tangled Governance*. This feels like a bit of an opportunity missed: All the ingredients are here to integrate the “did it make sense?” themes with the “why did it play out in the way that it did?” consideration that take center stage. Nevertheless, this is a superbly informative account of how the troika and related European actors addressed and responded to successive twists and turns in the Eurozone crisis, and should be required reading for European politics scholars.

**Outsourced Empire: How Militias, Mercenaries, and Contractors Support US Statecraft.** By Andrew Thomson.

London: Pluto Press, 2018. 256p. \$99.00 cloth, \$29.00 paper.  
doi:10.1017/S1537592719000483

— Eugenio Cusumano, *Leiden University*

At a time when the United States is withdrawing troops from Syria, Afghanistan, and other theaters, political scientists should be especially interested in Washington’s attempts to conduct foreign policy by proxy through violent nonstate actors, such as militias, warlords, mercenaries, and private military and security companies (PMSCs). Andrew Thomson’s *Outsourced Empire* offers the first in-depth examination of the crucial role played by each of these organizations in buttressing U.S. grand strategy from the beginning of the Cold War to the present day.

The book simultaneously explores the U.S.’ resort to violent nonstate actors in different regions of the Global South, ranging from the CIA’s backing of paramilitary groups in Latin America to contractor support for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. By drawing on Marxist approaches to the study of foreign policy, Thomson broadly conceptualizes U.S. grand strategy as an attempt to advance and preserve capital interests by removing barriers to trade and financial transactions. This hegemonic project has been pursued by means of a number of “open door” strategies requiring the stabilization of states in the Global South by coercive means. Thomson’s key argument is that these open-door strategies have been mainly pursued indirectly. Instead of (or in addition to) deploying its military abroad, the United States has often resorted to local and international proxies. The stabilization of the Global South has been pursued primarily by means of para-institutional arrangements co-opting violent nonstate actors into U.S. foreign policy.

Although several scholars have recognized the role of proxies and the inextricable connection between private interests and U.S. national security, this book is unique in

providing a systematic analysis of the local and international organizations that have been involved and co-opted into U.S. foreign policy from the beginning of the Cold War to the present. The author deploys an impressive amount of evidence, drawing on both primary and secondary sources to show the centrality of nonstate actors in buttressing U.S. hegemony, doing so more systematically than all existing scholarship to date. The book’s sharp argument, its coverage of more than 50 years of U.S. foreign policy, and the simultaneous examination of different types of nonstate actors make this work both informative and original.

All of these choices, however, are also double-edged swords that sometimes hinder the accuracy and persuasiveness of Thomson’s claims, obscuring some important aspects of U.S. foreign policy and the role of nonstate actors therein. Rather than discussing the book’s obvious merits, I use the remainder of this review to examine each of these limitations, which could serve as an invitation to build upon the author’s work in order to further advance the scholarship on great powers’ use of nonstate actors.

Thomson’s choice to conceptualize U.S. grand strategy as an imperial project is compelling, effectively capturing important continuities in Washington’s foreign policy during and after the Cold War. However, although it may help explain the rationale of U.S. intervention in the Global South, his reliance on Marxist approaches to the study of U.S. foreign policy says little about the factors shaping the conduct of U.S. foreign and security policies, glossing over some important differences in the nature of U.S. military interventions in different regions of the Global South. Specifically, the book does not systematically explain why the United States decides to deploy its military forces directly in some theaters and intervene only by proxy in others. Although the book refers to logics such as plausible deniability and casualty aversion, examining these factors would require a more extensive engagement with existing theories of security privatization. Regrettably, Thomson does not systematically examine this scholarship, nor does he comprehensively outline the added value of his argument vis-à-vis existing and possibly competing explanations of the outsourcing of U.S. foreign policy. By refraining from the attempt to develop a theory of the resort by the United States to violent nonstate actors, his narrative ultimately remains more descriptive than analytical.

Relatedly, Thomson does not really distinguish between different types of proxies, conceptualizing militias, warlords, and private military and security companies as different facets of the same phenomenon. Simultaneously investigating different types of nonstate actors does indeed help to capture some of the key overarching rationales underlying U.S. foreign policy by proxy. Lumping together different types of nonstate actors, however, inevitably blurs and downplays key distinctions between and within each category.

The analysis of PMSCs is a case in point. *Outsourced Empire* variously refers to such actors as private military companies, security contractors, and mercenaries, but does not really examine differences among them. Moreover, the analysis is sometimes too sweeping and lacking in accuracy when discussing the activities outsourced to PMSCs by the U.S. government. For instance, although contractors have played a key role in Iraq, the statement that they have provided “almost everything except giving major strategic decisions” (p. 146) is an oversimplification. Contrary to the logic of Thomson’s argument, which may suggest a willingness to outsource combat in order to offload the costs of stabilizing the Global South on nonstate actors, the United States has in fact largely refrained from privatizing direct combat activities. A more fine-grained examination of the scope of contractor support would inevitably require a greater emphasis on the role of U.S. domestic institutions, military culture, and socialization to international norms like the mercenary taboo in shaping the resort to private actors.

The risks and trade-offs arising from delegating U.S. foreign policy to nonstate actors also warrant a more in-depth analysis: Although foreign policy by proxy allows for reducing the costs of military intervention, it also entails a loss of control, increasing the risks that unaccountable nonstate actors may ultimately damage U.S. national interests. More extensive engagement with existing institutionalist and constructivist scholarship on PMSCs would have enriched Thomson’s analysis, enabling *Outsourced Empire* to better account for these nuances and dilemmas.

Lastly, the book only covers U.S. grand strategy after World War II. The focus on the in-depth, diachronic analysis of U.S. foreign policy is sound, allowing Thomson to streamline his empirically rich analysis into a lean and eminently readable monograph. However, concentrating on the foreign policy of a single country since the start of the Cold War inevitably obscures the fact that employing proxies is as old as history itself, and was a constant prerogative of European state formation and colonial warfare. British imperial policing, for instance, was regularly outsourced to warlords, trade companies, and mercenaries alike. U.S. nineteenth-century history, too, is replete with the resort to hybrid actors, such as privateers and filibusters. The substantial absence of an explicit comparative dimension is thus a missed opportunity. As illustrated by Soviet sponsorship of Marxist guerrillas in the Global South and today’s resort by Russia to PMSCs in Syria, the use of proxies is hardly unique to the United States, but it also constitutes an important component of other countries’ counterhegemonic projects. A deeper diachronic dimension and some comparative examination of U.S. resort to proxies relative to other countries would have increased the sophistication of the analysis.

These observations should not be read as an attempt to deny the merits of *Outsourced Empire*, which remains a timely, engaging, and valuable book. Students of U.S. foreign policy, security privatization, and violent nonstate actors in general should thus see Thomson’s work as an especially welcome contribution to security studies and international relations writ large.

**International Courts and the Performance of International Agreements: A General Theory with Evidence from the European Union.** By Clifford J. Carrubba and Matthew J. Gabel. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014. 252p. \$34.99 cloth.

**Strengthening International Courts: The Hidden Costs of Legalization.** By Leslie Johns. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015. 240p. \$70.00 cloth, \$35.95 paper.  
doi:10.1017/S1537592719000495

— Mark A. Pollack, *Temple University*

Prior to the turn of this century, political scientists historically paid little attention to international courts, which were seen as being of little or no importance in global politics. In recent decades, however, political scientists have taken up their study, driven by the empirical proliferation of international courts and by the availability of data about their behavior. The two books under review here both formulate and test rational choice models of international cooperation and institutional design in order to explain the contribution of international courts to the practice of international cooperation, as well as the limits of courts’ independence and impact (Clifford J. Carrubba and Matthew S. Gabel) and the “hidden costs” of strengthening international courts (Leslie Johns).

Both books begin theoretically with the decision by states to engage in international collaboration and to design international dispute-settlement systems, and both then proceed to theorize the subsequent behavior of member states as litigants and of courts as interpreters of the law, as well as the influence of court rulings on a variety of international outcomes, including (in Johns’s terminology) compliance, settlement, and stability. Johns begins her book with member-state decisions to cooperate and delegate powers to international courts, but focuses on the hidden or unintended costs of strong courts, assessing her claims through case studies of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) of the World Trade Organization. Carrubba and Gabel, in turn, put forward a general model of international cooperation and adjudication, generating predictions about the strategic behavior of both states and courts, which they test with the aid of an original data set of European Court of Justice (ECJ) decisions over four decades.

Johns begins her game-theoretic analysis in *Strengthening International Courts* from the perspective of the