Englebert's second 'policy fantasy' involves the establishment of an international certification system, according to which 'the supply of sovereignty to African states' (250) would be regulated and made conditional upon good governance. Models for doing so might seek inspiration from the European Union application of 'soft power' in Eastern Europe and the former Yugoslavia, but Englebert has something more radical, if also somewhat vague, in mind: 'if we were to adopt this approach, most existing African states might be derecognized. Botswana, Mauritius, and South Africa would endure, as might a few others that have invested more in their populations than their average counterpart. The likes of Chad, the Central African Republic, the DRC, Nigeria, Somalia, or Sudan would see their sovereignty revoked at once' (254).

His third 'fantasy' is a 'milder option', in which Western donors 'hollow out' the sovereignty of African states by increasingly bypassing central government, and collaborating instead with NGOs or 'subnational entities', thereby forcing a decentralisation of the state (259). At this stage in the argument, Englebert appears to be approaching a point in the analysis at which blanket notions of 'fragile' or 'collapsing' states could be challenged by more interesting ones such as the idea of a 'negotiated' state that arises as a result of a balance between different levels of sovereignty. Reaching such a point might also have led him to the realisation that sweeping generalisations about the African state have ceased to be interesting. But unfortunately it is at this stage in the argument that Englebert's book comes to an end.

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Turning Points in African Democracy edited by ABDUL RAUFU MUSTAPHA and LINDSAY WHITFIELD
Woodbridge: James Currey, 2009. Pp. 235, £55·00 (hbk).
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Despite the fact that democratisation in Africa constitutes the plurality of third wave transitions, there has been little in the way of transitology literature attempting to explain common or divergent patterns of regime change across the continent. Since Bratton and van de Walle's (1997) initial cross-national analysis of protests, political liberalisation, and the aptly named democratic 'experiments' between 1990 and 1994, two decades of political party development, competitive elections and associational evolution provide new data for the particular experience of democracy within each country, and suggest common patterns and interesting variations to shed light upon the study of African politics and comparative democratisation more generally. An updated analysis of regime transitions and quotidian democratic practices is needed in order to assess the diversity of outcomes and variety of trajectories. Enduring questions remain: what does democratisation signify in the African context, and what can it tell us about regime change as a more general phenomenon? How do we explain democracy's seeming durability in some cases and fragility in others?

In this light, the edited volume by Mustapha and Whitfield is a welcome addition to the scholarly and policy discourse. As the foreword by Laurence

Whitehead correctly notes, the multiplicity of contrasts and distinctions in Africa, as well as in other world regions, suggests that there is no single template or unambiguous consolidated end-state. This volume uses case studies of eleven countries (Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Zambia, South Africa, Mozambique, Rwanda, Burundi and Zimbabwe) to evaluate the consequences of democratisation for the politics of African states. It simultaneously attempts to point out why these processes matter – to ordinary people, for individual rights and representation, peace and stability – and how the processes also vary distinctly as the trajectory of democratisation is negotiated and distorted through domestic contestations. The on-going struggle for political power is highly shaped by the socio-economic environment: access to state resources remains a key predictor of enduring power.

The introduction and conclusion of the volume highlight four key themes of African politics in the era of democratisation. Whitfield and Mustapha suggest, first, that the prevalence of presidentialism means that power is extremely centralised in a single person, making it difficult to distribute tasks among various agencies and branches of government, or to execute forms of consociational or divided rule. Even when a new party is elected, alternation is swiftly followed by a new consolidation of power rather than an increasing check by other institutions or interest groups. Secondly, authoritarian era practices of political mobilisation and clientelism continue to be used in competitive politics to bind elites to the president and ruling party, and to bind citizens to local patrons. Thirdly, democratisation processes marked a concurrent shift in the social contract, from a nationalist era development strategy of redistribution and universal entitlement, to a market-driven strategy built around effective demand, cost recovery and user fees. This has left huge sections of the population with deteriorating access to vital services, with little or no safety net. Finally, the volume weighs in on the meaning of competitive elections. Given that ruling groups often embraced democratisation as a survival strategy, the case studies here suggest that incumbents use their advantages to stay in power. In general, the circle of candidates competing for high office is part of a narrow grouping that has been at the political apex for decades. This study suggests that elections are 'properly understood as the opening moves in a long-drawn-out-drama in which different social forces seek to control the state' (225). It is clear that asymmetries in power remain and voting does not occur in a power-neutral environment. While elections have yet to bring vast improvements in the quality of governance in Africa, they have still been critical in creating a degree of separation between the ruling party and the state. Though dominant parties, and the aforementioned centralisation of presidential power, predominate, they must routinely justify themselves to the electorate and continually face the prospects of electoral challenge.

While these are not particularly novel conclusions, the comparative analysis and data marshalled in support of these claims provide a useful initiation for students of African politics. And the in-depth country chapters provide expert analysis of historical sequence and shifting power dynamics in relation to the opportunities and constraints democratisation provides. The book exhibits challenges common to an edited volume, given that the country chapters cannot cover comparable material. But the goal here is to elucidate the actual

processes of democratisation and the continuing contestations over binding rules and channels to seek political power. The contributors do a commendable job of imposing overarching themes and yet portraying the nuance and complexity of each case. The book suggests that democratisation, while problematic, has been significant and meaningful – and is continually transforming. The rich contextual accounts and the strong concluding analysis make the book a must-read as both a general overview of democratisation on the continent and a contemporary assessment of key cases.

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Security beyond the State: private security in international politics by RITA ABRAHAMSEN and MICHAEL C. WILLIAMS
Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. 272, £18·99 (pbk).
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This is an important new book on the globalisation of private security and its implications for politics and international relations theory. The authors start by questioning Weber's premise that the state maintains a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, as a result of globalisation. They use the private security industry as a lens to interrogate the ways in which sovereignty and power are being restructured and respatialised under, and are constitutive of, globalisation.

A key concept developed in the book is that of 'global security assemblages', through which (in)security is effected around the world. These assemblages bring together private and public, global and local actors to govern and securitise territories and spaces. The book details empirically the scale of the global private security industry and the multiple sectors in which it is involved, from detaining asylum seekers in Australia to controlling money dispensed from ATMs. Using Bordieu's theory of economic, symbolic and cultural capital, it shows how the private security industry is able to draw on discourses and registers of security and the public interest to increase its symbolic and material capital. While security is often held to be the last domain of public interest administered by the state, it shows how new nodal networks of governance have emerged in this field over the last number of decades.

The book is based on case studies and extensive fieldwork in four African countries – Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya and Sierra Leone. The Nigerian case explores (in)security in the Niger Delta, the main oil-producing region of the country, while the Sierra Leone one examines urban security and the regulation of the diamond fields. While some of the broad details from the other cases will be known to Africanists, the South African case is particularly illuminating. The authors argue that as a result of democratisation in 1994 the private security industry went from being an upholder of the (unjust) *status quo* to being viewed with deep suspicion by the new government. However, an attempt to pass a law that stated that all private security companies in South Africa had to be national was defeated after intervention by the minister of finance. The authors trace this decision to the broader political economy of neo-liberalism in South Africa: the