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William Tordoff. *Government and Politics in Africa.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002. xvii + 326 pp. $22.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-253-21545-1.

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A Premier Text for African Politics

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Any text that goes into a fourth edition has to have a lot of things going for it. In this case the book is written clearly and confidently; the coverage is comprehensive and contextualized historically; and rather than plodding through geographic regions case by case, Tordoff treats themes and issues, regularly offering his own views and judgements, which are, on the whole,thoughtful and balanced.

As Tordoff notes in the preface, he delayed this fourth edition until after September 11, which enabled him "to cover such important issues as the developed world's response to the African predicament: to its poverty, debt and marginalization in the global economy" (p. ix). So the chapter on revolutionary movements has been replaced by one on "Political Liberalisation and Economic Reform." Compared to the previous edition, there is increased coverage to North and South Africa, while waiting until after 2001 permitted discussion of present- day problems in Zimbabwe as well as a full consideration of the Rwanda genocide and aftermath.

The roll call of chapters alone form a concise and reliable African politics course outline: colonialism and the colonial impact; nationalism and the transfer of power; state and society; political parties; administration (lamentably often ignored in other texts); the military; political liberalization and economic reform; regional groupings and the Organization of African Unity (with a few words on the transition to the African Union); ideology; the post-colonial state and development. And each chapter is packed with illustrative detail, particularly of domestic politics. Reviews of textbooks are subject to the crotchets of reviewers: I might have extended the examination of ethnicity as a concept and as a dynamic in politics, particularly in elections, where we have quite a lot of data now. I might also have spent more time on "state failure," "shadow states," and the exercise of intermittent power by warlords within territorial chunks of internationally labeled states, e.g., Congo, Somalia, sometimes Sudan, and lately, Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire. In another year or so, the "war on terrorism" may require discussion of militant Islam and U.S. military involvement in East Africa. Parallel to that is a trend toward UN and ex-colonial power presence in peace-keeping (Congo, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire) that suggests an emerging policy of "trusteeship." But if you want your text to top out at three-hundred pages, Tordoff's choices are defensible.

Tordoff, now emeritus, has enjoyed a long and distinguished career as historian and political scientist of Africa, spending years in research and teaching in Ghana, Tanzania, Zambia and England. His knowledge and views on Africa are informed by a global perspective on Third World Politics (about which he has authored a text with Paul Cammack) and North-South relations. Indeed he performs a useful service for instructors who may be more narrowly trained by relating the description of Africa's vulnerabilities and dependence, but also situational autonomy, to the overall theory of "post-imperialism" of Richard Sklar, an analysis that has contributed the concepts of "managerial bourgeoisie" and "class as relations of power in Africa" (inter alia, pp. 20, 94-95). One might detect Tordoff's own sympathies to the social democratic view of politics in his skepticism about the results of years of economic reform and his clear but balanced critique of contemporary liberalization policies enforced by the international financial institutions.

Nevertheless, Tordoff is no romantic in his account of African nationalism and anti-colonialism or in his assessment of the third wave of democratization that has fitfully flowed over the African political scene in the 1990s. His view of the efforts to democratize seems to advise to hold the cheers, because democracy and authoritarianism overlap in many African countries, "they are not so much alternatives as uncomfortable bedfellows" (p. 224).

What else is new? The text provides concise and re-

liable discussions of the events of the 1990s and makes a strong–essentially moral–case for forgiving Africa's debt and for a more concerted effort at resource transfers from the West to Africa. In terms of administrative and governance strength alone, building up these elements of the state remains crucial: "the state still has an important role to play" (p. 278).

Graduate students and beginners alike will benefit from this wise and still-challenging text.

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