But the most innovative perspective is by Misha Glenny (chapter 6) on global criminal industries which stands in contrast to the more traditional PS of John Ikenberry (#4). A comparison of these two essays, separated by that by co-editor Kaldor on global insecurity illustrates the costs & benefits of being constrained by the canons of a discipline, even a relatively benign subfield like IR. So Ikenberry holds onto more traditional, albeit ‘diffuse’ (p 95), threats to the dominance of the US, including the ‘privatization of war’ (p 101) by non-state actors with increasingly lethal violence technologies (p 102); he advocates ‘cooperative security’ (p 102) to ensure ‘security interdependence’ (p 96). Notwithstanding the global, especially US, financial crises & rise of China, Ikenberry advocates that the US ‘should recommit to & rebuild its security alliances’, so leading ‘in the reform of global security institutions’ (p 109). To ‘renew American hegemonic authority’ (p 110), he refers to the early 21st century ‘Princeton Project on National Security’, advocating global political development to reduce the risks of weak states as did early US post-colonial analysts of comparative politics.

Unrestrained by such disciplinary straightjackets, Glenny traces the rise of ‘global criminal industries’ (p 143), exacerbated by the end of bipolarity & recent financial crises. He traces how TOC defines globalization with a focus on the logistics which connect production in the global South to consumption in the North through webs of money-laundering etc, which the G8 seems unable to contain. And he suggests that criminal networks have to be ahead of states & markets to survive, increasingly focusing on cyber-crime & financial fraud (p 152) & recently counterfeit goods (p 153). Glenny notes the continuing Latin American Commission on drugs along with moves to abandon the war on drugs as well as the war on terror in the US (p 151). And now the Global Commission on Drugs has been joined by that on West Africa, as controls over supply routes in the Western Hemisphere has produced the ballooning of illegal logistics along the West African coast.

At the start, the editors note that the chapters were presented at Columbia University in December 2008 & have only been 'lightly revised to reflect the changes that have since occurred’ (p xi). Arguably the most profound changes have been analytic rather than empirical, as illustrated by the stand-off between, say, Ikenberry & Glenny. This collection reflects discourses from the last decade not the next: only a few sources date from the present decade. It presents informed public policy/diplomacy but little data & lacks a list of acronyms. There is just a trio of tables: 12.1 on types of climate change governance in multilevel networks (p 291); 13.1 on global conferences & summits (p 319); & 14.1 on models for enhancing responsiveness of the G20 (p 351). For more contemporary & empirical analysis see recent anticipation of the ‘World in 2050’ from both PwC & HSBC along with the 2013 HDR on the global South & the UN proposal for a post-2015 development agenda.

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An awful lot has been said about radical Islamism since the advent of the Global War on Terror (GWOT). However particularly on the African continent – despite the 1998 terrorist attacks in Dar-es-Salaam and Nairobi and the activities of Boko Haram in Nigeria and Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb- the extremist face of a perverse interpretation of the world’s second biggest religion remains woefully misunderstood and poorly documented. Stig Jarle Hansen’s book on Somalia’s most important jihadist faction, Harakat Al-Shabaab, makes a significant contribution to scholarship in chronicling the trajectory of the only time that fellow travellers of the Al-Qaeda network have controlled large swathes of territory and been able to govern
sizeable numbers of people in Africa. By drawing on years of courageous fieldwork in some of the world’s most hostile conditions for academic research, the monograph is able to generate valuable detail for wider analysis.

While the book is short on a solid theoretical contextualisation of a politico-military movement like Al-Shabaab and while it would certainly have benefited from adopting a more comparative dimension (if only to flesh out the specificities of Somalia’s jihadists in power), Hansen skilfully documents the meteoric rise of Al-Shabaab from a group of three dozen like-minded individuals less than ten years ago to the only political organisation of the last decades to have remained so cohesive and well-organised in a post state-collapse environment of debilitating clan politics and ever shifting business alliances. The book strikes a balance between those who have long insisted that jihadism in Somalia is essentially a local phenomenon, with strong popular support rooted in opportunistic behaviour, best not understood through the prism of the GWOT; and those who warn against naively localised interpretations of militant Islamism in the Horn of Africa, arguing that Somalia has become a key battlefront for the global confrontation sought by Osama Bin Laden, Ayman Al-Zawahiri and Anwar Al-Awlaki. Hansen rightly emphasises that Al-Shabaab’s success in 2008-2010 in controlling most of South-Central Somalia is the product of the interplay between local and global factors. Al-Shabaab’s pragmatic dealings with business elites from all clans and genuine backing by local communities grateful for the real security improvements brought by the movement in the areas it controlled are crucial. But equally important were Al-Shabaab’s ruthless dealings with rivals (and even supposed like-minded movements like Hizbul Islam), its deployment of a ferocious secret police (amniyat) against hostile civilians and its foreign force-de-frappe, consisting of hundreds of volunteers from across the ummah and dozens of violent specialists with extensive combat experience in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Yemen.

The monograph aptly demonstrates the capacity of the Shura Council leadership to be both flexible and dogmatic at the same time. On the one hand, Al-Shabaab leaders continue to manage to maintain impressive discipline and cohesion amidst their thousands of foot soldiers and cadres, many of whom joined for very different reasons, ranging from the ideological (offensive or defensive jihad) to the emotional (nationalism) to the material (regular pay) to the criminal (greed). Through a masterful use of pragmatic discourses in mosques, markets and internet websites, it manages to simultaneously attract funds and recruits from those motivated by local, national and global grievances: Diaspora groups and Mogadishu traders who harbour grievances against two decades of Ethiopian interference in Somalia; Muslim converts and Gulf charities who wish to create a Taliban-style state in Africa, a bulwark against the decadent West; and sub-clans embroiled in seemingly endless disputes over the control of the charcoal trade. Hansen does not privilege any of these groups or explanations as holding the key to the Al-Shabaab phenomenon; he argues that it is the complex, deliberate interplay between all of them that explains why, despite many predictions of the jihadists’ imminent demise, more than half of South-Central Somalia remains under their control.

Overall then, Hansen’s book should best be thought of as an essential mapping exercise of a movement about which much has been claimed, but little has ever been proven. The sheer collection of information – names, events, dates, numbers, money flows, leadership struggles- is an arduous task that many take for granted, but for which Hansen ought to be praised. This is by no means the definitive book on jihadism in the Horn or even on Al-Shabaab itself: it misses comparative analysis and conceptual depth to merit such a title, including a more solid engagement with literature on Islamism more broadly, Africa in the international political economy and/or the sprawling scholarship on violent conflict. It should also engage more with disastrous policies pursued by not just Ethiopia, but also by the US and EU- the international paradigm of state collapse itself is what reproduces much of the dysfunctions it claims to be resolving (Verhoeven, ‘The Self-fulfilling Prophecy of Failed States’, Journal of Eastern African Studies, 2009). Furthermore, this reviewer would have like to
see Hansen explore the devastating 2011 famine, during which an estimated 260,000 Somalis died from hunger or disease, in far greater detail: surely such an apocalyptic process would be worth discussing at length (rather than in a handful of pages), given what Al-Shabaab’s behaviour during the catastrophe revealed about its complex, often contradictory relationship with local communities and aid workers; about its supposed model of “Islamist economics”; and about the not so straightforward dynamics between the central leadership of the Shura Council and regional force commanders. Nevertheless, this slim volume does contain multiple insights that will allow others to make better sense of Somalia’s recent history, as well as providing some basis for a more nuanced grasp of militancy and extremism from Mauritania and Mali to Libya and Kenya. That, in and by itself, is no small contribution to scholarship— and, ultimately, to better policy vis-à-vis a country that remains very poorly understood by many of the people who make consequential decisions regarding its future.

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Christopher Adolph’s Bankers, Bureaucrats, and Central Bank Politics sets itself the task of bridging the gap between theoretical understandings of how central bankers make their decisions in an ideal situation, and how real central bankers come to make their decisions about interest rates, unemployment, and growth (p 1). The central argument of the book is that the notion of neutrality among central bankers is a myth that serves to conceal the distributional consequences of monetary policy, and which is perpetuated because central banker’s themselves have an interest in maintaining the myth (p 10). In the process, Adolph is able to ‘cast doubt on the idea that heavy financial sector influence on economic policy is new’ (p 2), and therefore provides an important contribution to the scholarship of central bank politics, but also to broader debates in political economy that suggest globalisation and the growth of transnational capital transactions have served to increasingly constrain the policy autonomy of states.

The book is framed theoretically by debates on interests and institutions in comparative political economy. It is operationalized methodologically through the development of measures for the socialization, incentives, and career backgrounds of central bankers, and by formalizing the impact of these measures in a variety of scenarios. The data used for the book’s analysis are ‘large comparative datasets that reveal something about average career effects’, and as such, Adolph acknowledges that if the ‘book were a courtroom drama, we would be building a case on a preponderance of circumstantial evidence, not a smoking gun’ (p 20). Nonetheless, the book’s analysis builds insight into questions about the extent to which central bank independence deals with the problem of politicians’ time-inconsistent inflationary preferences, and the extent to which it creates a significant principal-agent problem for governments.

Chapter two considers the effect of career socialization and career incentives on central banker behaviour in a monetary policy game to examine whether central bankers who are career bureaucrats are more or less hawkish on inflation than central bankers with a career history in the financial sector. It shows that ‘monetary policy are made according to central banker type, which [Adolph] argue[s] is well proxied by central banker career paths’ (p 54). Chapter three then goes on to consider the impact of career backgrounds on the level of inflation in industrialized countries and the effect of the ‘revolving door’ between the financial sector and the central bank. The chapter suggests that there are important links between pre-