

# Microscope or Telescope? The Study of Democratisation across World Regions

Political Studies Review  
2018, Vol. 16(2) 125–135  
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sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav  
DOI: 10.1177/1478929916645360  
journals.sagepub.com/home/psrev



**Matthijs Bogaards**

## Abstract

This review article brings together six recent books on democratisation. They cover Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, East Central Europe and the Balkans, Eurasia, and East and South East Asia. The review asks what we can learn from reading about democratisation in different parts of the world. The aim is twofold: to identify regionally specific processes of democratisation and to explore cross-regional commonalities. When viewed in combination, these regional studies of democratisation reveal the limitations of area studies and the need for comparative area studies.

Cheeseman N (2015) *Democracy in Africa: Successes, Failures, and the Struggle for Political Reform*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hale H (2015) *Patronal Politics: Eurasian Regime Dynamics in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hsin-Huang MH (ed.) (2014) *Democracy or Alternative Political Systems in Asia: After the Strongmen*. London: Routledge.

Mainwaring S and Pérez-Liñán A (2013) *Democracies and Dictatorship in Latin America: Emergence, Survival, and Fall*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Petrovic M (2013) *The Democratic Transition of Post-Communist Europe: In the Shadow of Communist Differences and Uneven Europeanisation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sadiki L (ed.) (2015) *Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring: Rethinking Democratization*. London: Routledge.

## Keywords

democratisation, area studies, world regions, comparative area studies

Accepted: 4 March 2016

This review brings together six studies of democratisation published in the last 3 years by reputable academic publishers. The books are all written from a clear regional perspective and were selected as typical examples of theoretically informed area studies. They cover

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Department of Political Science, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary

### Corresponding author:

Matthijs Bogaards, Department of Political Science, Central European University, Nador utca 9,  
1051 Budapest, Hungary.

Email: [Visbogaards@ceu.edu](mailto:Visbogaards@ceu.edu)

Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, East Central Europe (ECE) and the Balkans, Eurasia, and East and South East Asia. Normally, these books would be reviewed separately by regional experts.<sup>1</sup> Instead, this review asks what we can learn by reading these studies in combination. The aim is twofold: to identify regionally specific aspects of democratisation *and* to explore cross-regional commonalities.

Four questions guide the exercise. First, what is the concept of ‘region’ in these studies and how important is the self-imposed geographical delimitation of the analysis? Second, how unique are democratisation processes in the various regions in the eyes of the authors? Put differently, are there claims of a typical East European or Latin American path towards democracy? Third, do the authors make an attempt to look beyond the region? And if so, what are their conclusions? Finally, is there anything specific about the way democratisation is studied in different regions? In other words, when we study democratisation in Africa, do we need a different set of theories, methods and concepts than when we study democratisation in Asia?

Taken together, the answers to these four guiding questions should yield insights in comparative democratisation that cannot be produced by looking at the books under review in isolation. This collective and comparative review of studies of democratisation in different world regions helps to demonstrate the potential of comparative area studies, an approach that is still all too rare in comparative politics (Ahram, 2011; Basedau and Köllner, 2007). To do justice to the individual books as significant contributions to area studies, the main argument of each book is briefly summarised and discussed. But it is not enough to ask what these books have to say about democratisation in their own region. The more interesting questions are what each study can tell us about democratisation in other parts of the world and, in turn, how studies of democratisation elsewhere feed back into regional scholarship. This is the point where area studies become comparative area studies.

## Africa

Nic Cheeseman’s monograph *Democracy in Africa: Successes, Failures, and the Struggle for Political Reform* is published by Cambridge University Press as part of a book series entitled ‘New Approaches to African History’. In some ways, the book is a classic specimen of area studies: It does not feel the need to define ‘Africa’ and never explicitly states that it is restricted to sub-Saharan Africa. Direct comparisons with other regions are rare and intra-regional differences are only mentioned in passing.

The content of the book should be uncontroversial, as it aptly summarises the mainstream literature in political science on the causes, trajectories and outcomes of democratisation in Africa. The analysis carefully balances domestic and international factors, colonial legacies and the choices made by post-independence African leaders. There are only a few surprises: it is not clear why the author decided to introduce his own typologies of modes of transition and party systems, but the section on witchcraft surely adds to the literature on democratisation.

The starting point is modernisation theory, which links democratisation and even more so democratic consolidation to a country’s level of economic development. The first table in the book shows how far Africa trailed the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and Latin America, though not South Asia, in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, leading the author to write about democratisation ‘against the odds’ (p. 4) and calling the very existence of democratic states on the

continent 'remarkable' (p. 3). Democratisation is explained, following Robert Dahl, by looking at the costs and benefits of repression versus reform for the incumbents. This framework of analysis helps the author identify three background factors that make reform less likely: great natural resource wealth, weak institutions, and ethnic diversity. Although readers might suspect that sub-Saharan Africa has more than its fair share of these three problems, Cheeseman refrains from making an inter-regional argument that highlights Africa's predicament. Instead, he introduces three other 'key developments' that combine into a 'worst-case scenario' for democratisation: neo-patrimonial rule, the gatekeeper state, and the mixed legacy of the nationalist struggle (p. 13). Again, this suggests there was something special about the process of democratisation in Africa, but unfortunately Cheeseman does not develop this insight.

In sum, Cheeseman's study does not define the concept of region or its spatial boundaries; it occasionally situates Africa in a broader context but refrains from making direct comparisons with the process of democratisation in other regions; and it highlights regional specificities, but continues to rely on universal theories, thereby leaving the reader to wonder how different the African experience really is and how it should be approached.

## Asia

The edited volume on *Democracy or Alternative Political Systems in Asia: After the Strongmen* contains two comparative overviews and seven case studies. For our purposes, the comparative chapters are the most relevant. In the opening chapter, the editor, together with L.C. Russell Hsiao, asks what happens after the demise of strongmen all over Asia. Instead of one model, they find three types of transition processes and outcomes: (1) democratisation with political reform and consolidation, (2) democratisation with limited political reform and instability, and (3) sustained authoritarianism. These trajectories are very general: there is nothing Asian about them, nor are these the particular legacies of rule by strongmen. In fact, one looks in vain for a definition of 'strongmen' and the various case studies use the term in a rather loose sense.

In his contribution, Laurence Whitehead tries to remedy these deficiencies and the omission of Singapore. Whitehead discusses strongmen in the context of personalist rule and explicitly deals with the question of region, asking whether there are 'underlying contextual traditions or constraints that may cause styles of personalist leadership in East and Southeast Asia to diverge in any systematic way from their counterparts in other large regions' (p. 23). His answer is a partial yes: the post-war strongmen in the region were self-made men (i.e. they did not inherit their positions) and they were more technocratic than populist.

Whitehead then compares Asian strongmen to arrive at an 'inductive typology' (p. 35). At one extreme, Deng Xiaoping (China) and Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore) headed well-structured authoritarian party-based regimes displaying continuity despite leadership change. At the other extreme, Ferdinand Marcos (Philippines) and Suharto (Indonesia) failed to institutionalise their regimes and succumbed to 'democratization by rupture' through mass protest (p. 25). The four intermediate cases are less easily classified, but Whitehead distinguishes between Roh Tae Woo (South Korea) and Chiang Ching-Kuo (Taiwan), who had long-term horizons and engaged in 'anticipatory democratization' (p. 26), versus Mahathir Mohamad (Malaysia) and Thaksin Shinawatra (Thailand) – 'delegative democrats' guided by short-term considerations. In the first case, opposition victory resulted in orderly alternation, whereas the latter suffered from disorderly succession.

Whitehead's analysis therefore addresses all four questions guiding this review: it explores the notion of region, identifies regional specificities through a quick comparison of the same phenomenon in other world regions, and develops a typology based on the Asian experience. The fact that the author cannot make the final step of exploring the broader applicability of that typology is understandable given his brief and the limits of space.

## The Middle East

*The Routledge Handbook of the Arab Spring: Rethinking Democratization* offers a multi-disciplinary kaleidoscope on the surprising events that challenged authoritarian regimes across the Middle East and beyond in 2011. The 49 chapters provide a wealth of information on countries and selected themes, including democratisation, women's voices, civil society, and the role of media and the arts. Several countries are covered in more than one chapter, adding to the diversity of perspectives. In his preface, the editor situates the Arab Spring in a worldwide series of protests. Although the editor maintains that 'the Arab region remains a cohesive cultural sub-system' (p. xxxiv), it is left open what exactly typifies the region, what sets it apart from other regions, and what its boundaries are.<sup>2</sup> For example, the notions of 'Arab' and 'MENA' (Middle East and North Africa) are used interchangeably throughout the volume.

The political science contributions to the handbook grapple with the same questions that have been at the heart of comparative democratisation for decades: why now, why in some countries but not others, what for, and what will happen next? Laurence Whitehead therefore concludes in his chapter that the Arab Spring has put a dent in the myth of 'Arab exceptionalism' (p. 26).

The final part of the handbook puts the Arab Spring in a global context. Several chapters report on the way in which the Arab Spring was perceived by authoritarian regimes in different parts of the world. The most relevant chapters are those that compare the Arab Spring with regime change in other regions. Shamil Jeppie proposes a comparison with Southern Africa, without making clear what can be learned from a focus on revolutionary movements or why Southern Africa is the most obvious sub-region to look at. Molina Allende and Hattinger compare Spain and Egypt. They do not justify their case selection but seem to suggest that what these countries have in common, at the time of writing, is an authoritarian regime (p. 596). This surprising conclusion can only be explained by their disappointment with liberal democracy in Spain.

The lack of a definition of region, uncertainty about its boundaries, and the arbitrary and haphazard cross-regional comparisons weaken the contribution of this collection to our understanding of the Arab Spring as part of the third wave of democratisation. So far, the Arab Spring has most fruitfully been put in a comparative perspective in a series of journal articles. In a summary of this literature, André Bank (2015) notices that although intra-regional comparisons dominate, cross-regional comparisons of the Arab Spring are on the rise. Noticeable examples are Lucan Way's (2011) summary of the lessons of 1989 for the Arab Spring, Kurt Weyland's (2012) study of the similarities with the revolutions of 1848, and David Patel et al.'s (2014) comparison with the colour revolutions in some of the post-communist countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

## Eastern Europe

Post-communist Eastern Europe offers a mixed picture. Dividing the region into ECE (Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Poland) and the Balkans (the Yugoslav

successor states, Bulgaria and Romania), Milenko Petrovic (2013) explains the different trajectories of these sub-regions through the characteristics of communist rule. He argues explicitly against accounts that trace the roots of contemporary differences in Eastern Europe to the interwar period or even further back. Petrovic shows that the Balkans, overall, were not less democratic or less developed in the interwar period than the states of ECE. Ethnic tensions in the former Yugoslavia were not ancient, but date mostly from the Second World War. Although in the introduction the author proposes an approach that combines pre-communist legacies with the communist past (p. 6), the empirical analysis focuses squarely on the communist experience.

The Balkan countries made slow progress in joining the European Union because their citizens elected governments that showed little interest in political and economic reform. Petrovic explains this outcome by highlighting three aspects of communist rule. First, in the ECE countries, domestic communists were weak. They only survived because of Soviet support. In contrast, in the Balkans, communist leaders established long-standing personal dictatorships that were able to survive on their own. Second, where communism improved people's living standards, this gave their rule performance legitimacy. Also important was how the people's gratitude for the benefits of modernisation was mediated through feelings towards Russia. The third distinguishing factor is the role of the church, which was forced to cooperate for sheer existential reasons in the Balkans but enjoyed more autonomy in the ECE countries.

Of the four books reviewed so far, Petrovic's study pays most attention to the importance of region, which is no surprise as he engages in a systematic intra-regional comparison. In fact, his analysis even includes a third region, the Baltics, which he normally groups together with the ECE countries.<sup>3</sup> It is not clear, though, what role the Baltics play in the research design. Are they a test for a theory developed for a different set of cases or merely an extension of the empirical scope of the theory? Petrovic (2013: 167) explicitly refers to democratisation in his region as 'a unique historical process', but it is still possible to detect a more general theory behind the rich detail and regional specificities. If one frames the narrative in more general terms, one can say that democratic transitions succeeded without delay in countries where the authoritarian regime was organisationally weak, had low legitimacy, where the population was adverse towards the autocratic regional power, and where independent organisations did exist.

## **Eurasia**

In a monumental study, Henry Hale presents a comprehensive analysis of two decades of post-communist politics in Eurasia, the territory that was once part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), including four unrecognised entities (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria). To understand the 'dynamic continuity' of regimes in the region, Hale introduces the term 'patronal politics'. 'Patronalism' refers to a particular kind of society, a 'social equilibrium in which individuals organise their political and economic pursuits primarily around the personalised exchange of concrete rewards and punishments [...]' (p. 20). Politics in a patronal society is characterised by 'competition among different patron-client networks' (p. 21), which can take two broad forms: a single pyramid or competing pyramids. To make a long story short, patrons and presidents will always have a tendency to build single-pyramid networks. Without exception, this process goes together with political closure. The only chance for

democracy, however imperfect, is when networks, themselves remarkably fluid, compete for power. This happened in Ukraine between 2005 and 2010 and this constellation is helped by what Hale calls 'divided-executive constitutions', political systems in which a prime minister and president have independent positions and power bases. Unfortunately, such constitutions are rare and vulnerable to change. Patronal presidents lose power and single-pyramid networks get disrupted when old age or term limits make them a lame duck and lack of popularity prevents them from putting in place their hand-picked successor in multi-party elections. What follows might be either the building of another single-pyramid network or competing-pyramid networks. Even revolutions that take place outside of the electoral cycle cannot disrupt this pattern but are in fact part of it.

Hale's case studies are organised by the different phases in the regime cycle – building, consolidating, disrupting and rebuilding power pyramids – and trace these processes in great detail. His theory applies to hybrid regimes in which multi-party elections fill the most important political offices in the polity. Therefore, he does not have much to say about the dictatorships of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. One of the most controversial notions in Hale's analysis is the central role for expectations, which he describes as 'a more fundamental determinant of patrons' power than either resources or organization' (p. 34). For democrats, the good news is that this logic awards a prominent role to public opinion.

Patronal societies are said to be the norm in the past (p. 28) as well as the present (p. 39). If that is true, Hale could have opted to write about any country or region in any time period except for the developed Western democracies. The justification for case selection is only provided in the final chapter. There, Hale presents post-Soviet countries as a 'pristine' set of cases that allow for the study of patronal politics in a pure form. Eurasia as a region is said to have two distinctive features: high patronalism, also because of the legacy of totalitarianism that 'destroyed preexisting institutions and ideational commitments' (p. 456), and low linkage with and leverage of Western democracies. In that sense, the notion of region is informed more by a set of shared experiences under communism as part of the same country and political system, than by geography.

Out of a total of 538 pages, only 14 deal with patronal politics in the rest of the world. For Eastern Europe, Hale (2015) arrives at a conclusion similar to Petrovic (2013), noting how, despite their highly patronalistic societies, Bulgaria and Romania could develop into 'patronal democracies', thanks to their ties to the EU. In Latin America, the democratising linkage with the United States holds in check patronalistic tendencies. sub-Saharan Africa 'would appear to resemble post-Soviet countries' (Hale, 2015: 466). The Middle East and the Arab Spring 'appear to follow the broad logic of patronal politics' (Hale, 2015: 467). In Asia, India is compared to Georgia under Mikheil Saakashvili (Hale, 2015: 470), while Singapore and Mongolia are singled out as hopeful alternative futures of his Eurasian cases. The general prediction for patronal politics in Eurasia, though, is more of the same, pending social transformation.

Summing up, because Hale (2015) treats the boundaries of the USSR and Eurasia as coterminous, he does not have to make explicit what defines Eurasia as a region. Of all the studies reviewed here, Hale makes the most extensive effort to test how far his theory can travel beyond the region for which it was developed. The region itself is said to be special, but there is nothing Eurasian about his theory of patronal politics, which is universal in scope.

## Latin America

In *Democracies and Dictatorships in Latin America: Emergence, Survival, and Fall*, Scott Mainwaring and Aníbal Pérez-Liñán (2013) advance and test a new theory to explain why democracy flourished in the region after the third wave of democratisation. They systematically dismiss both structural and actor-based accounts, opting for a middle way that focuses on three factors: the normative preferences for democracy and the radicalism of policy preferences of the main political actors (presidents, parties, labour unions, the military, among others), and the regional environment.<sup>4</sup> Their empirical analysis combines quantitative studies of all Latin American countries for the period 1945–2005 with case studies of Argentina and El Salvador that go back to the beginning of the last century. The analysis rests on a unique database that contains the authors' own codes for the main dependent variables (democracy, semi-democracy and authoritarianism) and the independent variables. According to Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán, a normative commitment to democracy, deradicalisation of policy preferences, and a positive regional environment for democracy explain why all Latin American countries except Cuba made a transition to democracy from the 1970s on and why very few countries (Bolivia, Peru, Haiti, Honduras and Venezuela) suffered breakdowns, mostly temporary.

The book is presented as an empirical contribution to understanding political regimes in Latin America, defined as all 20 countries in the Western hemisphere that were colonised by Spain, France or Portugal (p. 8). For a book that self-consciously promotes the importance of region, there is little reflection on the concept. In an earlier publication, Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2007: 201) define regions as 'geographically bounded parts of the world'. Following this definition, the subject of the book should have been Central and South America, not Latin America. It is not clear what relevance a shared colonial legacy has for normative preferences and policy radicalisation, the two main domestic explanatory factors. A common language could facilitate communication and the diffusion and dissemination processes highlighted under the heading of regional influence, but this point is not made explicit. Why should the theory work in Haiti but not Jamaica or Guyana?<sup>5</sup>

The part of the book dealing with the question 'Can the Theory Travel Beyond Latin America?' has only two pages (Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán, 2013: 275–277) and fails to address the main question: Is their theory of democratisation regionally specific or universal? Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 'illustrate' how selected experiences outside the region are consistent with their theory, covering three episodes (two in Spain, one in Germany) in a total of three paragraphs. Latin America may have been a good testing ground because other theories of democratisation are said to perform so poorly there, making it easier to demonstrate the theory's added value, but why do the authors shy away from stating the obvious: that they invented a new theory of democratisation with a universal scope?

Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán's work shows that it is not sufficient to define and delineate one's concept of region; scholars should also explain their choices and justify them theoretically. Latin America is unique because standard accounts of democratisation such as modernisation theory do not work well there. But there is nothing to make us believe that the reverse is true; that Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán's theory only works or works best in Latin America, even though the authors seem hesitant about drawing this conclusion.

**Table 1.** The study of democratisation across world regions.

	Region covered	Definition of region, delimitation of area?	Regional comparison?	Claim to regional uniqueness?	Regionally specific account of democratisation?
Cheeseman (2015)	Africa	No, no	Incidentally	Yes	Yes and no
Hsiao (2014)	Asia	One chapter only	One chapter only	One chapter only	No
Sadiki (2015)	Middle East	No, no	In some chapters	In some chapters	In some chapters
Petrovic (2013)	Eastern Europe	Yes, yes	Intra-regional	Yes	Perhaps not
Hale (2015)	Eurasia	No, yes	Yes, briefly	Yes	No
Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2013)	Latin America	Yes, yes	Very briefly	Yes	No

## Conclusion: From Area Studies to Comparative Area Studies

Table 1 summarises the answers to the four questions guiding this article. Surprisingly, for books that concern themselves explicitly and purposely with one region of the world, there is little reflection on the notion of region, and regional boundaries are sometimes left unspecified. To wit, Africa is understood to mean sub-Saharan Africa, Eurasia stands for the former Soviet Union, Latin America is defined in terms of colonial legacy, and what constitutes the Middle East is deliberately left open. By consequence, the reader learns little about the relationship between region and space and place (see Lewis and Wigen, 1997) or how regions are politically constituted and socially constructed (see Godehardt, 2014).

All studies reviewed here seem to think that their region is special in one way or another, yet very few look beyond their own region. When they do, the aim is usually to stress similarities (Hale; Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán; Petrovic; Sadiki). Only Cheeseman occasionally contrasts Africa with other continents in order to highlight its specificities. This points to a broader discrepancy: although all books reviewed here assume that there is something unique about democratisation in their region, none advances a regionally specific account of democratisation. Cheeseman provides a start, listing three factors that hinder democratisation in Africa, but does not follow up on this observation. Hale and Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán develop universal theories, not regionally specific accounts. They suggest that their theories have broader relevance, but never openly state the full scope.

Some of these problems could have been avoided if the authors had engaged in what Paul Pierson (2003) calls 'contextualized comparisons'. The first strategy under this heading is 'the introduction of explicit temporal or spatial boundary conditions on the hypotheses that are entertained' (Pierson, 2003: 356). The second is to investigate directly which aspects of context matter and how. This context can be communism in one study and colonial legacy in another; area specialists will have an advantage in analysing the way in which social and political interactions are embedded.

This article started out with two aims: to identify regionally specific aspects of democratisation and to explore cross-regional commonalities. The conclusion has to be that studies of democratisation in a single world region are ill-suited to help us meet these aims. Unless and until we directly compare democratisation across regions of the world, we will not know what, if anything, is special about democratisation in Africa, the Middle East, Eurasia, and so on. In other words, taken together, the books reviewed here reveal the limitations of area studies and the need for *comparative* area studies.



Basedau and Köllner (2007) identify three types of comparative area studies: intra-regional comparisons, inter-regional comparisons, and cross-regional comparisons. Intra-regional comparisons are the most common type of comparative area studies, and Petrovic and some of the chapters in Sadiki provide good examples. Sadiki also contains two chapters that engage in cross-regional comparison, while Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán refer to three cases outside of Latin America. Unfortunately, these exercises remain superficial and raise questions about case selection. Hale has elements of both cross-regional (comparing countries from different regions) and inter-regional (comparing entire regions) comparison. The purpose, though, is not to identify regional peculiarities and commonalities, but to demonstrate the global reach of his theory. As Mehler and Hoffmann (2011: 89) observe, ‘the ability of concepts “to travel” from one regional context to another has yet to be investigated in an appropriate way’.

In other words, the studies reviewed here reveal a tension between the universal and the particular. Halliday’s (1995: 15) recommendation to match ‘analytic universalism with historical particularism’, while generally sound, does not solve the problem at the heart of regional studies of democratisation: a discrepancy between the empirical scope of the study and the empirical scope of the theory. This tension manifests itself in two ways. First, when universal theories are applied to a particular part of the world, regional peculiarities are identified, but no attempt is made to feed the regional experience back into a rethinking of universal theories (Cheeseman). Second, when theories are developed in a regional setting but their relevance for other regions is left open, despite suggestions of broader applicability (Hale; Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán).

A possible remedy for the first problem is to explicitly adjust universal theories to the regional context. A possible solution for the second problem is to explicitly address the question of empirical scope and to set up a test of the boundaries of the theory’s applicability. The first strategy might be called ‘zooming in’ (the ‘microscope’ from the article’s title) and the second ‘zooming out’ (the ‘telescope’ in the title). An alternative to both strategies is ‘going sideways’: to engage in cross- and inter-regional comparisons to determine more directly the specificities and commonalities of democratisation around the world. Kurt Weyland’s (2014) recent comparison of democratisation in Europe and Latin America is a good example.<sup>6</sup>

In sum, all six books reviewed contribute in their own way to our collective knowledge of democratic transitions and the quality of democracy. Yet the self-imposed limitation to write about a single region ultimately hinders these scholars in clarifying what makes their region special. This is less a shortcoming of the publications selected for this essay than a limitation inherent in area studies, hence the need for *comparative* area studies.

## Acknowledgements

A previous version of this paper was presented in the Department of Political Studies at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in October 2015, during my stay as the Van Zyl Slabbert Visiting Professor at UCT. I am grateful for the comments I received there as well as from the students in my course on Comparative Area Studies at the Central European University.

## Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Notes

- 1 For example, see the review of Cheeseman (2015) on the website of *Africa at LSE* (Hitchen, 2015), Hale (2015) in the *Russian Review* (Simons, 2015), and Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán (2013) in *Americas Quarterly* (Kornblith, 2015).
- 2 For an attempt to specify what is different about politics in the Middle East while avoiding the trap of 'regional narcissism', see Halliday (1995: 12). For an attempt to define the 'Arab' in the 'Arab' Spring, see Brownlee et al. (2015).
- 3 In the final chapter, Petrovic adds a fourth sub-region, turning his attention to the prospects of the *Western Balkans* – Albania plus the former Yugoslavia, minus Slovenia – joining the European Union.
- 4 If they are right that 'whether political regimes survive or are replaced depends on how powerful the coalitions are that support them' (Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán, 2013: 12), the unit of analysis should be coalitions, not actors, and more of an effort should have been made to describe the formation, cohesion and dynamics of what are loosely described as 'incumbent' versus 'opposition coalitions'.
- 5 For a critique of the concept of Latin America, see Lewis and Wigen (1997: 181–182).
- 6 See Bogaards (in press).

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### **Author Biography**

Matthijs Bogaards is a Visiting Professor in the Department of Political Science at the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary. He previously held positions in the United Kingdom, Germany and South Africa. His research focuses on the challenges of democracy in divided societies, comparative democratisation, and institutional design. His latest book is a comparative study of consociational parties in seven countries around the world.