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Mémoires d’une combattante de l’ALN : un devoir de mémoire
KHEDIDJA MOKEDDEM

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The Rise of Ali Mazrui

Ali Mazrui arrived in the world of scholarship in the 1960s. This was when postcolonial Africa was being, and still is being, called to the Third World. Ali Mazrui was attracting special attention from the Superpowers, and when the discipline of International Relations (IR) -- and other disciplines -- was seriously tactics of the Cold War, the Third World, including Africa. Mazrui debated the issue of international justice versus international order with prominent scholars like Hedley Bull, who was one of the fathers of the IR scholars in the second-half of the twentieth century. In fact, Bull recognized Mazrui as a formidable intellectual adversary. Shortly after he published his influential book The Anarchical Society in 1977, Bull (1978:1390) wrote: Ali Mazrui is not only the most distinguished writer to have emerged from independent Black Africa, and the most penetrating and discriminating expositor of the Third World, as Bull indicates, but he is also a most illuminating interpreter of the drift of world politics...[T]he issues that interest [Mazrui], the audience to whom he addresses himself, even the values he embraces, are not simply black or African or Third World, but global.

Mazrui first made a name for himself by publishing, “On the Concept of ‘We are All Africans’” in the American Political Science Review in 1963. As it turned out, this was to be a landmark in the evolution and development of Ali Mazrui as a scholar. The article was one of the first major writings in that journal about postcolonial Africa written by a postcolonial African scholar. American political scientist Herbert J. Spiro (1967:91) noted: “Mazrui’s article identified him as a perceptive and original voice of African political thought”. By publishing in the journal, Mazrui declared that he was ready to engage intellectually one of the most vibrant communities of scholars in his field. It was also significant that the article should be published in a journal about political science based in an increasingly influential country in the world – the United States.

Additionally, later in the decade, Mazrui (1969:89-83) published another article in another major journal, World Politics. The article, ‘From Social Darwinism to Current Theories of Modernization’, was significant for two reasons. It further problematized the North-South divide, impossible to a cultural element to it. But the publication of the article was also indicative of how relatively more receptive the discipline had been not only to Northern intellectuals but also to a different perspective which informs it.

Mainstream IR, of which Hedley Bull was a part, was thus pulled up and engaged him because there was a concerted effort and genuine commitment to understanding international re-

Postcolonial Constructivism: Ali Mazrui’s Theory of Inter-Cultural Relations?

Seifudein Adem

Postcolonial Constructivism: Ali Mazrui’s Theory of Inter-Cultural Relations?

Postcolonial theory, or postcolonialism, emerged in the mid-1980s (Zeleta 2003: 12). It can be defined as a disciplined critique of power and modernity, an articulation of the dissatisfaction of the Third World with its condition of existence; the challenge and rejection of Eurocentric narratives and exposure of what they represent or misrepresent; and the formulation of alternative narratives about the postcolony (Chowdhry and Nair 2002:26; Beier, 2002:87;Matin, 2011:359; Rita Kiki Eodie and Pei Soyinka-Airewele, 2010:376).

Julian Go (2013:29) says postcolonial theory is “a loosely coherent body of writing and thought that critiques and aims to transcend the structures supportive of Western colonialism and its legacies”. Philip Darby (1997:14) outlines the major endeavors of postcolonial theory as: “emphasis placed on subjectivity, the critique of modernity, the challenge to positivism and the rejection of European universalism, the prizing open of the nation-state, and the commitment to the marginal”. Extracted deliberately from wide-ranging sources, the above definitions of postcolonial theory affirm, to me, one thing. It is next to impossible to introduce any definition of Ali Mazrui’s scholarship spanning more than half a century in which he was not engaged in some aspect of these postcolonial undertakings. Ali Mazrui’s postcolonial theory but without, to borrow a phrase from Paul Zeleza (2005:13), “postcolonial theory’s obfuscated language and inflammatory rhetoric”.quantification and formal models and the steady marginalization of culture as an important variable in the study of international relations. But Mazrui refused to change his approach and kept relative distance from the theoretical exchanges which characterized this pe-

conversion of ephemeral perceptions. The incessant pressure to reduce the dynamics of world politics into concepts and bewildering terminolo-

gy. But, even more specifically, it was as if if it had not been for the relative predominance of Anglo-American IR...it would have been nice to have had a chapter on [Ali] Mazrui or [Takashi] Inoguchi.

On Postcolonial Theory and Social Constructivism

Postcolonial theory, or postcolonialism, emerged in the mid-1980s (Zeleta 2003: 12). It can be defined as a disciplined critique of power and modernity, an articulation of the dissatisfaction of the Third World with its condition of existence; the challenge and rejection of Eurocentric narratives and exposure of what they represent or misrepresent; and the formulation of alternative narratives about the postcolony (Chowdhry and Nair 2002:26; Beier, 2002:87;Matin, 2011:359; Rita Kiki Eodie and Pei Soyinka-Airewele, 2010:376).
But Mazrui’s vast scholarship also exhibits some of the attributes of social constructivism. While social constructivism is ‘broadly’ accepted today in the discipline, its relevance was ‘discredited’ until very recently (Hurd 2008:301). Social constructivism has a rich variety (see, for example, Ruggie 1998: 855-885; Zeitfuss 2002; Adler 2002: 94-118; Hedley Bull 2002: 298-316). Yet, it virtually all paradigms of thought about society, social constructivism too is based on specific assumptions about the nature of social knowledge, the relationship between the knower and what is to be known, and, of course, the best way of acquiring knowledge. I maintain that social constructivist assumptions inform much of Ali Mazrui’s scholarship (see, for instance, Mazrui, 2007, 1976a:399, 1967b, and 1975).

Mazrui has also occasionally articulated (or anticipated) some of the major social constructivist postulates in a language strikingly similar to that of social constructivists. For example, social scientist Alexander Wendt (1999-25) wrote in relation to the role of ideas in world affairs: ‘US military power means one thing to Canada, another to Communist China’. About a decade earlier, Mazrui (1989b:162) put the same point in this way: ‘Although Brazil is much larger than Iraq, Brazil’s nuclear capability would be less of a global shock than Iraqi nuclear weapons. Pakistan’s explosion of nuclear device would create greater fears than a successful explosion by China’. Wendt (1999:31) also unveiled the useful concept of ontological security, defining it as ‘the human predisposition for a relatively stable expectation about the world around them’. Wendt (1999:48) clarified the concept thus: ‘…along with the need for physical security, this [predisposition] pushes human beings in the direction of sharing and to seek out recognition of their standing from their society’. In a very different context, Mazrui (1971:48) elaborated a roughly similar idea about folklore: ‘The unspoken and unspoken threat of security afforded by the familiar’.

Social constructivism emphasises the role of inter-subjectively shared ideas, norms and values; highlights their constitutive as well as regulative roles; and refuses to privilege structures over agents, and vice versa. Mazrui tended to explain things much more than indicating which explanations are suitable and why. And yet, a Mazrui reader could feel the presence of an organizing ‘theoretical’ principle in his scholarship, too, one which is rooted in the study of languages and their role in the ‘construction of subjects’, with his emphasis on deconstructing the local and the universal. It allows for total nuclear disarmament, but it must be noted, however, that Mazrui’s argument about nuclear weapons is based on moral calculus rather than on the logic of deterrence. Mazrui (1980) is for total nuclear disarmament, but he is also against ‘nuclear apartheid’; his advocacy of nuclear proliferation was premised on the assumption that ‘a dose of the disease becomes part of the necessary cure’. As he later elaborated: ‘Some degree of proliferation may shock the five principal nuclear powers out of their complacency. The proliferation would gradually convince them that this system of a few select nuclear powers cannot be long sustained. Therefore we should aim for global nuclear disarmament, universal renunciation of these evil weapons for everybody, not just for all but the five countries with nuclear weapons’ (1998:5). In the late, incidentally, Mazrui’s position seems to be winning some following among empirical political theorists, too, such as J. David Singer (2008:256). In any case, Mazrui’s advocacy against nuclear Apartheid speaks to the postcolonial impulse in him.

Mazrui has also advanced arguments which are in tune with the liberal theory of IR. Indeed, it is arguable that much of Mazrui’s scholarship shows such impulse, particularly as it was articulated more fully in his most ambitious book, World Federation of Cultures (1976a). Like liberalism, Mazrui’s theory places greater emphasis on the utility of institutions.

Mazrui parts company both with realism and liberalism in important ways; he is more complex in his views. He is as committed to looking at groups, flexibly defined, constitute important units of analysis of world politics and that both hierarchy and ancestry co-exist in and define the contemporary international system. In Mazrui’s framework, the state also ceases to be the primary and unitary actor in world politics. For Mazrui, in fact, nothing is far from the truth than the suggestion that postcolonial African states are ‘like-units’. The state is just one of multiple players in world politics. Depending on the issue, indeed, a tribe could be a more significant unit of analysis than the state did in his framework. Mazrui’s reliance on different levels of analysis speaks to the constructivist impulse in him. As Ian Hurd (2008:306) has noted: ‘[For constructivists] for any given puzzle in international relations there are undoubtedly important elements of the answer to be found at all levels of analysis’.

In general, it is impossible to pigeonhole Mazrui in theoretical terms, as a realist or a liberal, a fact which did not necessarily augur well for his place in IR. This is so simply because the role of the game in North America and Europe has changed; it became, in the words of James Der Derian (2009): ‘without a label, a box or a school, one does not exist’. But with his emphasis on deconstructing liberalism, with his deep interest in the study of languages and their role in the ‘construction of subjects’, with his special attention to inter-subjectively shared ideas, norms and values, with his longstanding fascination about the issues of culture and identity formation, and with his openness about the permissiveness of normative bias in social inquiry, Mazrui’s scholarship rhymes more naturally with (post-)social constructivist than with any other ‘-ism’ in the mainstream discipline. But, as I elaborated above, Mazrui’s constructivism has a strong postcolonial bent – giving us possibly a new paradigm of postcolonial constructivism.

Mazrui’s Postcolonial Constructivism

Ali Mazrui is a postcolonial theorist par excellence. He is also a social constructivist. Unlike postcolonialism, however, social constructivism endorses the idea that much of Africa has ‘come West to deal with issues primarily affecting the West’. If so, how could we invoke social constructivism to describe Ali Mazrui’s addressing of postcolonial concerns? How can postcolonialism and social constructivism be united in postcolonial constructivism?

Mazrui’s work on race is an example of bringing African ideas out of their historical and cultural context and applying them to postcolonial Africa. He does not reject European ideas out of hand; he does not seek to invent for Africa a different paradigm of thought; he does not believe that if there is another alternative. Instead he often strives to domesticate and use ‘foreign’ ideas to deepen our understanding of the African condition. He had maintained that the best way for Africa to minimize the negative consequences of (some) Western ideas, values (and institutions) is to make them more relevant to Africa’s needs. As he (Mazrui 2012) reminded us recently: 1 demonstrated how Edmund Burke, J. J. Rousseau, and V. I. Lenin could be made more relevant for Africa… I applied Burke’s philosophy to an African situation… I also used in an African context J-J Rousseau’s philosophical distinction between the general will of all as applied to a postcolonial society. All these were efforts (to make Western ideas relevant for Africa) without necessarily disengaging from the global heritage.

Thus Mazruinowplaysdown the Europeanism of ideas, even if he also takes issues with their (sometimes presumed) universality. He Africanizes those ideas. By doing so, Mazrui offers not only an alternative reading of Africa that is fresh but also enriches the borrowed ideas by adding a new dimension to them, and without adulating the Africanness of his perspective in the process.

Postcolonial constructivism is, as Mazrui notes, what emerges from the cross-fertilization of Mazrui’s postcolonialism and his social constructivism. Postcolonial constructivism can be simply defined as an articulation of postcolonial concerns, with a social constructivist accent; it is also a systematic interrogation of power and modernity. Methodologically, postcolonial constructivism represents a form of analysis which accommodates ethical considerations by integrating questions of justice, legitimacy and moral credibility into its concepts. In other words, empirical theory (observation) and value theory (moral judgment) are fused in postcolonial social constructivism.

Displaying a determination to unmask aspects of the ‘received truth’ either for the sake of knowledge (for sharpening the mind) or for transforming or, at least, influencing the course of events is a strong mark of postcolonial constructivism. And so is a disciplined challenge of dominant narratives, a challenge which is based on basic counter-hegemonic instincts. Apart from providing a means to overcome ideological and normative orientations, postcolonial constructivism has a particular interest in the role of cultural forces in world politics, the unity of the ideal and the material, the subjective and the objective, the empirical and the normative, and the local and the universal. It allows pursuit of disciplined inquiry without disciplinary restrictions and expressions of unity of opposites. This is a keen hint of analytical contradictions.

The theory of postcolonial constructivism has a place for divergent issues and conflicting claims (see, for instance, Mazrui 1995:25; 1980). Because coherence has no special priority in his system, deviations are not systematically weeded out and paradoxes are not concealed. But how does postcolonial constructivism successfully relate contradictions in social reality without introducing outright inconsistencies to its narratives? Postcolonial constructivism accomplishes this task through several inter-related (and overlapping)
strategies, including: classification or the usage of perceptive typologies, macro-history, and multi-disciplinary and qualitative data orientation.

Classification makes it unnecessary to scan out deviant cases, opening the door wide for seemingly conflicting observations. Mazrui has a special liking and gift for classifying different events, concepts, and processes in an original way. In the positivist social sciences, the necessity of classification, even its possibility, is likewise almost taken for granted. A related issue which arises is this: if classification occupies such a central place in the positivist project, and if postcolonial constructivism is anti-positivist in its orientation, then how can we resolve the apparent tension between postcolonial constructivism and positivist social science? Let me start, first, by re-stating the three reasons why I say that Mazrui’s scholarship (or postcolonial constructivism) is anti-positivist. Mazrui does not believe that a knowable reality exists out there which is driven by immutable natural laws and mechanisms, that inquiry takes place through a one-way mirror in which values are prevented from influencing findings, and that manipulative and experimental method of inquiry is the ultimate path to knowledge. Mazrui’s scholarship is thus an assault on the foundational principles of positivism.

Postcolonial constructivism deploys macro-history in search of broad changes and patterns in social processes. When Bull (1978:1) depicted Great Britain as ‘a most illuminating interpreter of the drift of world politics’, he was drawing our attention to Mazrui’s acute sense of macro-history. Mazrui himself had made it clear quite early on when he declared his commitment to ‘the study of global trends and their moral implications’ (Mazrui 1976a:xi). It was also remarkable that, despite the mutual respect each had for the other, Bull and Mazrui strongly disagreed on a macro-historical issue – international justice (Bull, 1977:74, 93-94). Postcolonial constructivists thus look for not only contradictions in social reality but also for linkages between sometimes seemingly unrelated phenomena. Macro-historical orientation in research makes the endeavor more sensitive to contrasts in social reality than micro-historical perspective as it presupposes wider knowledge and does not easily let its practitioner fall prey to absolute positions or pre-scientific claims and aspirations. With a clear sensitivity to the notion that ‘social reality’ is too complex, postcolonial constructivism crisscrosses disciplinary boundaries with utmost ease. Mazrui’s works show how totally unconcerned he had been about the imaginary boundaries between different disciplines (see, for instance, Mazrui 1994; 1991; 1990; 1983a; 1983b; 1976b and 1977).

With its emphasis on qualitative and historical method and with no prior commitment to quantitative measurement and operationalization, postcolonial constructivism is also less constrained about the range of concepts it could use or the domain of data it could target. Mazrui relies most minimally on ‘quantitative’ data; his writings usually have no tables or graphs; they also generally lack footnotes and bibliographies. Postcolonial constructivism is not only accommodative of concepts which may not be operationalizable, it also rejects the notion that the data which is useful and reliable should come solely from empirical observation. In this sense, Mazrui is a ‘transfactualist’ (borrowing a useful term from Jackson (2010:36-37)) who ‘holds out the possibility of going beyond the facts to grasp the deeper processes and factors that generate those facts’. Postcolonial constructivism is centered on overcoming rationalist limitations by allowing usage of data obtained through means other than observation and document analysis has other decisive advantages such as its openness to what pre-literate societies have to offer through non-written data. Mazrui (2001-99) has explicitly rejected the assumption, as he put it, that ‘thought is not thought unless it is also written’. His own writing style is testimony to the oral-written continuum.

Conclusion

More than four decades ago, John Nellis (1974:831-833) observed that Mazrui was ‘frequently and severely criticized by radical social analysts who find his traditional scholarship irrelevant and his liberal principles infuriating…’. Mazrui’s “traditional scholarship” that was under attack, was one which anchored itself in the historical method, eschewed fetishes of numbers, and accepted permissiveness of normative bias in social inquiry. The issues raised by mainstream scholars in the 1970s about Mazrui’s scholarship in this way closely mirrored the fundamental schism which exists today between positivism and post-positivism. Mazrui’s corpus of writings and contemporary trend in IR seem to suggest that early in his career he was, in effect, breaking a new theoretical ground of social analysis, which may be called postcolonial constructivism.

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1978, Times Literary Supplement, London, December 1 [Extracts from Reviews of Writings by A. I. Mazrui, n.d.unpublished manuscript]


On the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Cape Town in March 2013, I chaired a book launch starring Nigeria’s formidable first female finance minister, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, re- splendent in her trademark African traditional dress and matching head-gear. She talked unpretentiously, without the affected foreign accent of some Nigerians that have spent two decades abroad.

She had recently published a book titled Reforming the Unreformable on her time – between 2003 and 2006 – as finance minister of Africa’s largest economy, the world’s eighth most populous state, and its sixth largest oil-producer. She had been the architect of the deal to pay off Nigeria’s $30 billion debt (the second largest such debt deal with the Paris Club of creditors at the time), and led a team of technocratic reformers seeking to tackle corruption, build efficient public and private institutions, obtain Nigeria’s first sovereign debt rating, and transform the country into an emerging economy.

Without any notes, Okonjo-Iweala gave a fluent, inspiring, and intrepid 30-minute presentation, breaking down complicated economic concepts in ways that were easy for the general audience to digest. She berated Nigeria’s failure to create a system of sound planning and financial management of its oil resources; described herculean efforts to fight vested interests at great personal cost; detailed how she had used her impressive international network to achieve Nigeria’s debt deal; observed that Nigeria’s political class appeared to be intimidated by its economic technocrats; and brushed off concerns about women not being equal to men. Nicknamed Okonjo-‘Wahala’ (Troublemaker) by Nigeria’s lively press, this was a virtuoso performance to a South African audience fed on a constant staple of stereotypes about corrupt Nigerian drug-traffickers.

My impression of Nigeria’s ‘Iron Lady’ was of an incredibly competent, courageous, and intelligent individual with a strong sense of public service. I, however, also had the impression of a diva who was aware of her own importance, clearly enjoyed her celebrity status, and came across as a ‘head-of-state in waiting’. Okonjo-Iweala is not shy about blowing her own trumpet and her role in the Nigerian reform team, talking of the ‘legitimacy and dynamism that I brought to the team’. Forbes named her among the ten most influential women in the world in 2011, while Foreign Policy listed her among the top 100 global thinkers in the same year. The 60-year-old technocrat’s brilliant economic credentials are from the prestigious Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), obtaining her doctorate in the latter institution. It is clear that the poor grasp of complex economic issues that many of Nigeria’s political leaders and parliamen- tary dandies have exhibited is what has given technocrats like Okonjo-Iweala their immense power, and a belief that they can take better decisions than the leaders they seek to advise.

In her book, Okonjo-Iweala describes in brutally frank terms the mutual antipathy between politicians and technocrats: ‘We would keep away from politics, since in any case most of the politicians left a lot to be desired. In fact, I could sense that the politicians felt our team did not appreciate them and regarded them with disdain. During the Cape Town book launch in March 2013, Okonjo-Iweala made the rather intriguing point that she eventually came to see no difference between politicians and technocrats, and noted that she had had to become a politician (while longing to no party) in order to be able to do her job effectively. This phenomenon of political technocrats was particularly prominent during the era of the ‘Super Permanent permanent secretaries’ of powerful mandarins under mili- tary rule in the early 1970s. It produced such prominent figures as Allison Ayida, Philip Asiodu, Abdulazeez Atta, and Ahmed Joda, who dominated Gener- al Yakubu Gowon’s ‘kitchen cabinet’.

Okonjo-Iweala grew up in a solidly middle-class Nigerian family with both parents being professors. Her upbringing was bringing a happy, idyllic full of ballet classes and piano lessons until the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970 forced her family back east, having lost all their savings. Her father was recruited into the Biafran army. Liv- ing on one meal a day, watching children dying, and sleeping on the floor of a bunker were formative experiences that made Okonjo-Iweala determined to succeed, and perhaps also contributed to her three-decade exile in graduate school and at the World Bank in Washington D.C., where she rose to become vice-president in 2002.

Okonjo-Iweala avoids such personal details in Reforming the Unreform-
able and focuses squarely on her time as finance minister between 2003 and 2006. The book took her four years to write. Despite the technical subject matter, it is highly readable, rich in detail, and devoid of complex economic jargon. It is told and presents a bird’s eye view of Nigeria’s chronically underperforming and staggeringly corrupt state. Her six-month stint as economic advisor to President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2000 had led to Okonjo-Iweala establishing a Debt Management Office and given her insights into the country’s parlous policy-making environment. The book covers the strategies of Okonjo-Iweala’s ‘Economic Team’; the actual implementation of goals to address the structural constraints to private enterprise in Nigeria’s economy through privatization, deregulation and liberalization; restructuring the civil service, trade, tariffs, corrupt state agencies; the battle against corruption; the successful and titanic struggle to achieve the annullment of Nigeria’s debt; and the lessons learned from the reform process.

Okonjo-Iweala herself recognises at the outset: ‘Nigeria has always been complex to govern in a way outsiders do not often understand or fully grasp’. She describes the country’s three decades of military rule as ‘politically and economically disastrous’ and castigates Nigeria’s ‘kleptocratic elite’ which she notes has ‘a very limited vision’. The country’s Lilliputian leadership had failed to generate 400 billion of oil earnings since the 1970s. Okonjo-Iweala observes that the same rapacious elite may be one of the largest obstacles to reform, as it continues to feed at the trough of a parasitic state.

She describes the deleterious impact of the ‘oil curse’ on Nigeria’s agricultural and other sectors, as well as its destruction of the country’s moral and social fabric. She condemns ‘white elephant’ projects such as the Ajaokuta Steel Mills, which were squandered without any concrete results.

Before embarking on her reforms, Okonjo-Iweala obtained advice from Brazil’s former deputy finance minister and a World Bank board member, Amaury Bier. In an impressive example of South-South sharing, based on Brazil’s own reform experiences, she sought advice from like-minded ‘Economic Team’ to fight the tough bat- tles in cabinet; have a comprehensive strategy; and ensure the sustainabil- ity of reforms by underpinning them with binding legislation. In crafting the Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2007, Nigeria also looked to what Brazil had done and sought to adapt this example to its own legislation. The ‘Econom- ic Team’ – including individuals such as Marta Elena Al-Ruhi, Obiageli Ezekwesili, Nenadi Usman, Nuhu Ribadu, and Bode Augusto – crafted the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) which set out to tackle four key challenges: poor economic man- 600 billion of oil earnings since the 1970s. Okonjo-Iweala observes that the same rapacious elite may be one of the largest obstacles to reform, as it continues to feed at the trough of a parasitic state.

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most damaging corruption; developing measurable indicators for success; and withstanding personal intimidation – also seem rather academic and do not seem capable of addressing this cancer systematically at its roots. Part of the obvious problem which Okonjo-Iweala is unwilling to spell out is that fish rots from the top: many of the political leaders with whom she is working are part of the problem of corruption she is seeking to tackle. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) arraigned five governors in 2007, convicting two; Nigeria’s Inspector-General was convicted and sentenced to six months in jail; while several billions of naira in stolen money was recovered. The EFCC was, however, clearly used selectively to intimidate and neuter his opponents. Was, however, clearly used selectively by Obasanjo as a political instrument to intimidate and neuter his opponents.

This rich narrative demonstrates the importance of cultivating influential people in order to achieve key goals: in this case, the annulment of Nigeria’s debt in 2005. US President George W. Bush and his Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice; British Prime Minister Tony Blair and his Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown; Mexican finance minister, Francisco Gil-Díaz; World Bank president, Jim Wolfensohn; the IMF’s first deputy managing director, Anne Krueger; deputy German finance manager, Caio Koch-Weser (Okonjo-Iweala’s former boss at the World Bank); senior deputy Director-General in Japan’s finance ministry, Kyiyo Koshiro (a former World Bank colleague); Secretary-General at the Paris Club secretariat, Emmanuel Mouldin (a former alternate World Bank Executive Director); and the World Bank’s Nigeria country director, Hafiz Ghanem – all play an instrumental part in Nigeria’s debt drama. It almost seems as if Okonjo-Iweala’s two-decade career at the World Bank had prepared her for this historic role.

In one particularly memorable passage in the book, the author recounts a visit to the White House in May 2005 during which President Obasanjo struggles to convince George W. Bush to back the annulment of Nigeria’s debt. Okonjo-Iweala steps in, realising that this may never get such an opportunity to state Abuja’s case. Her points about Nigeria being a poor, infrastructure-starved country with a large population and high population growth, and that she asks for a letter setting out Nigeria’s arguments, eventually obtaining American support for the debt deal. In another passage, Okonjo-Iweala describes how she managed to ambush Italian-American Jagdish Bhagwati, who wrote an op-ed piece in the Financial Times in 2003 warning that the IMF’s cold, technical language that is devoid of pathos – and what critics dub ‘trickle-down economics’ that is obsessed with growth – has earned her many enemies in the intellectual left, though she often acted more pragmatically in government, moving to promote state intervention when she thought the right course to take.

Though a competent economist, Okonjo-Iweala can sometimes come across as politically naïve. Critics have charged her with lacking a political antenna: she received much blame for the bungled effort to eliminate oil subsidies of $8 billion in Nigeria in October 2004. She had underestimated the widespread anger and cynicism of the Nigerian public towards a corrupt and corpulent political class that was not trusted to spend any surpluses resulting from the removal of oil subsidies for the public interest. Six people were killed in the ensuing demonstrations. She again came in for scathing criticism when she pushed for removal of oil subsidies in her second stint as finance minister in 2012, which led to nation-wide demonstrations, and the government of Goodluck Jonathan eventually negotiating a compromise.

Okonjo-Iweala sometimes describes issues such as the impact of the removal of fuel subsidies on the poor and massive retributions of workers in cold, technical language that is devoid of empathy. It is almost as if workers are units of labour rather than real people with flesh and bones, and families to feed. In April 2014, she declared that the Boko Haram terrorist threat had been “isolated” in Borno and Yobe states; the group certainly had a much wider reach. In terms of gender issues, Okonjo-Iweala also appears to promote the fight by individual leadership rather than by waging specific gender-focused battles, opening her up to charges that, like the original ‘Iron Lady’ – Britain’s Margaret Thatcher – she is no different from her power-seeking male colleagues, and often fails to promote the cause of women systematically.

Okonjo-Iweala also Pulls herself in her complex relationship with President Olusegun Obasanjo, who was in power from 1999 to 2007 and 2011, and who, sometimes using ‘strong-arm tactics’ to describe an autocratic leadership style. She tried unsuccessfully to resign a few weeks into the job in 2003 after Obasanjo announced publicly the moving of the Budget Office from the finance ministry to the presidency without consulting her. A compromise was eventually reached that, otherwise, the democratic wishes of African populations, are extremely muted. Many of the officials of these institutions are often technically gifted but staggeringly ignorant about the political, social, and cultural environments in which they are operating, leading them often to cause more harm than good. Okonjo-Iweala unsurprisingly comes across as an ideological proselytiser for World Bank doctrines of growth, ‘good governance’, property rights, and private enterprise. Her economic orthodoxy – and what critics dub ‘trickle-down economics’ that is obsessed with growth – has earned her many enemies in the intellectual left, though she often acted more pragmatically in government, moving to promote state intervention when she thought the right course to take.

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ment and poor governance; the coun-
ytry’s public institutions remain weak,
while the state is still failing woefully
to deliver public services in areas such as
electricity and water. The author herself
notes that Nigeria would require
$10 billion annually in infrastruc-
ture investments—the amount that the
country spent on food imports in 2010,
even though it clearly had the capaci-
ty to feed itself. Despite $1 billion an-
nually being channelled into poverty
reduction programmes (a condition of
Nigeria’s debt annulment deal), such
programmes have clearly failed to have
any appreciable impact on relieving the
poverty line. The country’s public health
and education sectors have crumbled, as
much of its infrastructure. Corruption,
which began since her rampant state at MIT,
was poised to regional economic devel-
OP and she served as Nigeria’s
domestic development efforts to
the Economic Commission for
West African States (ECOWAS).

Despite these shortcomings, Nige-
ria’s ‘iron Lady’ should be credited for
her incredible achievement in annul-
ing the country’s $30 billion external
debt and for bringing some sanity to the
country’s financial management. Ever
the optimist having survived the trau-
ma of living through a civil war, Okon-
jo-Iweala’s faith in Nigerians seems
undiminished: ‘This is an entrepre-
neurial country. Everybody’s hustling’.
Moving from the local to the continen-
tal level, the author also recognises the
potential of Pax Nigeriana in noting:
‘When Nigeria succeeds in transform-
ing itself, it will transform Africa’.

Introduction

The two volumes under review offer
rich insights into the check-
ered histories but also the present
and future prospects of the Great
Lakes Region (GLR) of east and central
Africa and the Southern Africa region.
The volumes lay out in greater depth
the varied social struggles and politi-
cal contests that have defined the two
regions in quite important ways. These
volumes have intersecting and con-
trasting thrusts. While Murindwa-Ru-
tanga’s Politics, Religion and Power in
the Great Lakes Region (hereafter PRP)
is largely steeped in historical inquiry
– the precolonial and colonial power
struggles and the role of religion, with
rare glimpses into contemporary
implications – Region-Building in South-
ern Africa (hereafter RBBS) starts off
with a somewhat truncated histori-
cal reference but proceeds to give con-
siderable attention to contemporary at-
tempts at ‘region-building’ in Southern
Africa. On balance, the former volume
has a more scholarly orientation while
the latter is more policy-focused. Tak-
en together, however, the two volumes
complement one another in offering
novel historical analyses and contem-
porary insights on the two regions.

This essay takes each volume in
turn, starting with PRP, showing what
each title promises and delivers, and
the extent to which the authors do justice
to the stated project. The review essay
has three parts. The first part highlights
PRP’s central claims, pointing out
how it advances our knowledge of the
Great Lakes region but also underlining
some lapses that inevitably attend ev-
evry scholarly work. In the second part,
I turn to the second volume, highlighting
the same set of issues. In the third and
final part, I offer concluding reflections
and recap the major findings and key
messages conveyed by the two vol-
tumes. At the core of both volumes is the
colonial origin of contemporary
power dynamics in the two regions.

Precolonial antecedents to anticolonial struggles

PRP is an important ad-
dition to the huge corpus of scholarship on anti-
colonial struggles across Africa. The book
has a more scholarly orientation while
the latter is more policy-focused. Taken
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gian commander to the Acting Gover-

nor of the Uganda Protectorate:

Last warning to commanders of Burundian troops: By numerous let-
ters I have informed you that I con-
side any forward movement of your troops [as] tantamount to an attack on our position. My force... will open fire from now, and you destroy yourself along and entirely the heavy re-
sponsibility of the armed conflict
which you are provoking.

The British on their part reacted to this

stem warning by informing the ‘Bel-
gian government immediately that the British forces in Mfumbiro [the con-
tested area] had been ordered not to

make any forward movement without instructions directly from London.

But the author’s meticulous investiga-
tion finds that the British were issuing this

pacificist assurance when in fact pre-
paring for war with a standby force of

800 King’s African Rifles. In any event,
a major World War between 1910 and

the mid-1930s (p.102). The movement

was anchored on Nyabingi indigenous

religion. All the contestations and negoti-

ations marked the forging of the Great

Lakes States as they are known today’ (p. 229). This is by far the boldest and

most important statement of this work,

mor.

The British were Kaigirirwa, Wahire, Chand

ers were mystic, troubling, and dif-
ficult in eradicating the beliefs is

in religious belief like the Nyabingi,

and Nyabingi resistance con-

quering the way colonial rule was received in

the GLR, imperial rivalry raged on at the

same time that a people’s anticolonial

struggle under the Nyabingi Movement

mobilized successfully the manner in which indige-

nous African reacted with hostility to

colonial invasion and waged protracted popular struggle against it. Secondly,

PRP brilliantly illuminates the organiz-

ing role of indigenous religions, which

brings to the fore a less appreciated

role of African religions as distinct from the usual romanticized sacri
craft that had fascinated for long West-
ern-Eurocentric scholarship.

Equally important to note is that,

in the Nyabingi Movement has a written a work of social

history that is nothing short of subaltern historiography in its orientation, analyt-
cical rigor and methodological thrust. To

brilliantly write subaltern history using

official sources is truly admirable.

The author is quite impressive in his ability to carefully and patiently read official colonial documents and bring out cru-

cial messages, voices, and even silenc-
es seldom intended by the authors.

In the end, he skilfully weaves a narra-

tive that straddles the worlds of social

movement literature, social history, and

the legacies of colonial rule.

Finally, PRP shows the early forc-
bearing on subsequent agitations

that spurred Nyabingi fighters. Since

the author makes mention of today’s

GLR states in the book’s concluding

cha, it would be expected of him not

only to outline the excesses of colonialism and local resistance but also comment on contemporary political mismanage-

The anti-colonial and anti-apartheid provenance of southern African region-

alism is unmistakable. The struggle

against white minority rule in South

Africa and Rhodesia, coupled with the

protracted resistance against the lin-
gering Portuguese colonial presence in

Angola and Mozambique, provided the

initial impetus for southern African

unity. The regionalism started with

the lobe of colonial rule.

The book’s concluding chapter, it would be expected of him

to? The crucial reader will feel a bit dis-

appointed that the book starts off quite

promisingly as a study of the Great

Lakes Region but quickly narrows down to southwestern Uganda in a way that

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The book has five major parts. Part one, ‘Historical Legacy,’ has chapters by the distinguished Kenyan scholar Gilber Khadiagala, a former Executive Secretary of SADC. Khadiagala offers a broad but remarkably incisive introduction to the origins and processes leading to the formation of SADC in 1992. Mbuye and µ Mbuye and QuoBo, respectively assess the contrasting
authors – Mzukisi Qobo and Nomfun-gerali’s chapter is complemented by the
insider’s view’ of the workings and failings of SADC. Part two
by Chris Saunders), and gender and peacebuilding (by Elizabeth Otiotdo and Antonia Porter). The third part
ment in southern Africa. It has constructed an elaborate structure to deal with economic, political and security issues…’ (p. 16).
What the Book Accomplishes
This volume has many accomplishments; I will focus on only a few. First, part one of the book, especially the chapter by Khadiagala, brilliantly traces southern African regionalism back to the 1960s and the informal Mulungushi Club (later FLS) of Presidents Kenneth Kaunda and Julius Nyerere. Khadiagala’s chapter is complemented by the ‘insider-view’ chapter by SADC’s former Executive Secretary, Kaire Muenda, who speaks of engaging with African institutions on a multilateral basis, its Africa policy has been largely bilateral, a ‘divide and rule tactic’ (p. 289).
In the concluding chapter, the editors draw from the foregoing sixteen chapters of the book to end with a prescriptive message for more region-building to tackle the region’s practical problems. In sum, the book undertakes a sweeping assessment of a complex set of issues in southern Africa with SADC as the pivotal player. Since its formation in Windhoek, Namibia in 1992, underscored by the editors in the introduction, ‘SADC has been the most important regional organization in southern Africa. It has constructed an elaborate structure to deal with economic, political and security issues…’ (p. 16).
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For decades, exiled author Nuruddin Farah has dreamt, written and carried Somalia, ‘the country of his imagination,’ throughout his nomadic existence. His eleven novels, one non-fictional study, are all drawn from the Somali diaspora, articles, essays, broadcasts and interviews bear testimony to this fact and are literary manifestations of the tragic turn of events in postcolonial Somalia. He was forced to flee Somalia, after having incurred the wrath of Mohamed Siyad Barre, for his satirical and critical remarks against the Barre regime in his second novel, A Naked Needle (1978). Today, Farah has earned a distinguished and rightful place for himself among Anglophone-African writers and internationally. A Naked Needle is one of his least Somali novels and a very silly work, (when compared to his later works that engage explicitly with Somali politics, culture and society), as Farah puts it across in a conversation with Kenyan author and journalist Binyavanga Wainaina.

Farah’s trilogies entitled, Variations on the theme of an African Dictatorship (1978-83), Blood in the Sun (1986-93) and the latest, Past Imperfect (2004-11), are fictionalized accounts of the chaotic and turbulent periods of Somali history – the authoritarian and tyrannical regime of Siyad Barre (1969-91), the war with neighbouring Ethiopia over disputed Ogaden (1977-78) and the pitfalls of nationalism, the neocolonial dependency of the 1980s, the civil war of 1991, and the subsequent state-collapse of Somalia in 1992. On a broader basis, the books deal with the culture of silence and fear imposed by dictators on the people and other representations of dictatorship, the pitfalls of nationalism and how foreign aid can thwart cultural development and cause an erosion of self-esteem in people’s psyche and much more. The three books comprising the trilogy – Links (2004), Knots (2009) and Crossbones (2011), historize Somalia’s post-collapse era starting from the abrupt withdrawal of the U.S. troops in 1993, and the U.N. Mandate, in Mogadishu to the infighting that followed much later between the Transitional Federal Government and the hard-line Islamist factions.

An overwhelming sense of foreboding and gloom descends on Crossbones, the final book of the trilogy, as the narrative revolves around the disappearance of a young Minnesota-based Somali lad, rumoured to have joined the Al-Shabaab, the booming piracy business off the shores of Somalia, the alleged collaboration of charcoal and timber生意 with Al-Shabaab, and the impending Ethiopian invasion of Somalia of 2006. The Somalis’ resentment towards their ‘age-old enemy Ethiopia, ‘the bully next door,’ further complicates matters in the Somalia contextualized in Crossbones (2012). The Somali radical relativists are waiting for a confrontation with Ethiopia in the hope of pitting the Somali people against the Christian-led Ethiopia, in spite of the fact that Ethiopia has a stronger military power, is an ally of the United States and has definitely more chances of gaining an upper hand in any future conflict. The world is closely watching the developments in deep contemplation, muses over the caved in or a bullet-riddled statue, Malik, that lingers over houses with their insides trashed warfare are inscribed on the city,Promptu remark, ‘Mogadiscians have the ruin and rubble and also to learn of the Western countries for the first time, Farah’s novels do something similar for as evidenced by the visit of the Task Force Rangers, of the infamous ‘Battle of Mogadishu’, to commemorate the twentieth anniversary and, as an act of remembrance, revisited the war sites and wreckage, around this point, Farah is also a recurring theme of the Past Imperfect trilogy. Hence we find, Jeebleh of Links, Cambara of Knots, Jeebleh, Malik and Ail of Crossbones, go around the city to survey, contemplate and carry around the ruin and rubble and also to learn of things firsthand, in contrast to the biased and partisan outsider perceptions of the ongoing conflict in Somalia: ‘Standing by the ruins’ of ‘somalia’, in Seigneurie’s opinion, is one of the ways in which societies address the dark chapters in their history.

Besides, their visits to Mogadishu are timed when the city is tossed among the warlords, religious wars and the American and Ethiopian interventionists, though sadly there is hardly any difference among the religiousists, warlords or the Federalists as opioids by Bile, an ex-officio of the Al-Shabaab, in both Links and Crossbones. Journalist Malik’s impromptu remark, ‘Mogadiscians have seen warlords of all varieties...’ sums up the bitterness and disillusionment experienced by the Somalis caught in the crosshairs of various tendencies (225, 57).

However, the Mogadiscio that Kechin, the central protagonist in A Naked Needle, inhabits was totally different from what Jeebleh gets to see of the same city twenty four years later. Mogadiscio had known centuries of attrition; one army leaving death and destruction in its wake to be replaced by another and another and yet another, all equally destructive: the Arabs arrived and got some purchase on the peninsular, and after World War Two the British left, commerce and along with it the Islamic faith, they were replaced by the Italians, then the Russians, and more recently the Americans... (Links 14-15).

Links is set in a Mogadishu with tell-tale marks of the American ‘intravasion’. Jeebleh, the central protagonist sees for himself ‘the bullet-stared, mortar-stuck, machine-gun showered’ three-storey building and pieces of metal of the black hawk helicopters that were shot down during the infamous Battle of Mogadiscio of 1993, the subject of the film Black Hawk Down, showing the war from a totally American perspective (Links: 71).

But when Malik, the journalist in Crossbones with expertise in reporting from the major conflict areas of the Somalia he has covered, wants to focus his concentrated energy ‘on boning up everything Somali,’ he encounters a city that is ‘disoriented by fresh ruins from the latest confrontation between the warlords and the Courts...’ (26). As in a typical war novel or a film that lingers over houses with their insides caved in or a bullet-riddled statue, Malik, in deep contemplation, muses over the ruin and rubble which ‘seldom divulges the secret sorrows it contains’ (26).
What is most tragic about the victims of civil war or natural disasters or calamities, according to Nuruddin, is that often no one knows how many have perished. What is worse, ‘One never gets to hear the last words that passed their lips, or what, in the end, caused their death: a falling beam, a failing heart, a spear of bullet-shattered glass. Or sheer exhaustion with living in such horrendous circumstances day in and day out’ (26). Sadly, forensic technology is unable to help in such matters and inadequate documentation on the dead intensifies the tragedy.

As the governance of the city passes from one hand to the other, Mogadishu, acquires a different dimension and character which in turn is reflected in ‘the attitudes of the city’s residents, their dress habits and even… diet… depending on the political contours of the country’s competing factions (Farah, The City in My Mind). Hence, in Links, Jeebleh is privy to the great-divide in Mogadiscio, indicated by a green line demarcating the territories controlled by the two major warlords, Mohammed Farah Aideed and Ali Mahdi. And, by the time veiled Cambra of Knots is in Mogadiscio, the power-scales have tilted towards the Islamists and the Union of Islamic Courts, UIC, imposing rigorous cultural codes and taboos, especially on women, but also making up new ones.

A pervasive sense of authoritarianism enforced by the puritanical-religious is strikingly evident in the few first pages of Crossbones, even as Cambra, propped in a body tent which appears more like a theatre prop or just a mere costume, saunters about the run-down East Wardhigley district of Mogadiscio. Crossbones contextualizes the time period during which the UIC took over the reins of Mogadiscio, in the early 2000, and had expanded the rule of Sharia law making veiling de rigueur. Women in trousers and less restrictive dresses were blasphemed for supposedly sabotaging the Islamic way of life and ‘American-inspired bra contraptions’ were condemned.

Beard-sporting youth clad in white robes are a common sight in the Mogadiscio depicted in Crossbones while some others are in military or ‘ill-matched uniform’ formed variously from post-colapse loyalties’ (26). Overall, Mogadiscio’s political contours have changed, suggesting ‘an empire of a different thrust… at work in Somalia’ (25). One hears echoes of the general frustration of many Somalis oppressed by the religious factions that is conveyed through Bile’s work when he states that he prefers a spineless secular state to a religious one run by a bearded cabal (120).

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References

, 13 December 2010, ‘Young Thing,’ The New Yorker.


Environment, Agriculture and Cross-border Migrations
Edited by Emmanuel Yenshu Vubo

This book brings together contributions on the challenges of the environment, agriculture and cross-border migrations in Africa; key areas that have become critical for the continent’s development. The central theme running through these contributions is that Africa’s development challenges can be attributed to its human and natural ecology. Contrasted with the Cold War epoch, current developments have ushered us into a world of long and uncertain transitions characterized by a search for new pathways including investment in large-scale agriculture by big financiers, attempting to rectify existing agriculture and reworking of social policy. A major threat relates to environmental questions, especially climate change and its global effects, leading to all forms of cross-border migrations and the emergence of new areas of strategic interest such as sub-regional developments as in the Gulf of Guinea. This book provides some intellectual clues on how to interpret these emerging predicaments and chart a way forward into a new era for Africa.
Le Soudan face aux dissidences
Mustapha Medjahdi


La crise soudanaise, aux yeux des auteurs, ne peut être analysée sans prise en considération des rapports entre le centre et la périphérie. La première application de cette distinction entre les deux concerne justement les mêmes, puisqu’il est fait la distinction entre ceux qui occupent le centre (il s’agit des pays ayant des frontières avec d’autres pays arabes seulement), et les autres, ceux qui se situent à la périphérie comme le Soudan et la Mauritanie, par exemple. Ces États s’étendent géographiquement dans des aires différentes et regroupent, par la nature de leur situation géographique, des ethnies, des cultures différentes, sans oublier d’autres différences liées aux questions linguistiques et religieuses. Cette relation ne peut pas fonctionner, selon les auteurs, de manière normale sans une compréhension mutuelle de part et d’autre des liens de parenté (pays africains) des enjeu auxquels ces pays sont confrontés et sans élargir le sens du dialogue et d’inter-culturelité avec les pays limitrophes comme l’Érythrée, l’Ethiopie, le Sénégal, le Mali, le Cameroun, le Niger, et le Tchad.

La deuxième entrée, relative à la dualité centre/périphérie, prend une autre signification. Il s’agit en fait des rapports entre le centre et la périphérie à l’intérieur du pays lui-même. C’est ainsi que les contributions incitent à repenser l’État dans son rapport avec la gestion de ses régions, celles qui se situent au centre et les autres dans la périphérie, aux différences et divergences qui existent à plusieurs niveaux et qui sont liées aux questions culturelles, et aux différences ethniques, religieuses et linguistiques. Et si ces éléments paraissent, pour les auteurs, extrêmement importants, c’est parce qu’ils sont devenus l’objet de conflits récurrents en Afrique et dans le Monde Arabe. Pour eux, l’échec dans la gestion de ces différences se pose non seulement comme problème primordial, et la sortie de la crise du Soudan avec un minimum de dégâts exige un fondement nouveau basé sur l’égalité et la justice dans la distribution du pouvoir et de la richesse dans l’équilibre des relations entre les États. Le défi est dans un État uni dépend de la disparition du sentiment d’injustice en matière de distribution de la richesse, et le rêve, et c’est cet sentiment d’ailleurs qui a déclenché la guerre au Soudan.

Effets de l’ingérence
L’échec du pays s’est fait « de manière limitée et dans une légitimité incontestable » du moment qu’il s’agit de l’application d’un droit absolu, du droit des habitants du Sud à l’autodétermination, ce qui a été accepté entre les deux protagonistes (le Nord et...
Environnement, changement climatique et sécurité alimentaire en Afrique

Compréhension des enjeux et pistes pour l’avenir
Ahmadou Makhzar Kané

Ce volume contient des contributions portant sur les questions environnementales et climatiques traitées à l’aune de critères sociologiques, économiques, politiques, juridiques et éthiques. Chacun des intellectuels, à sa manière, a montré que pour inquiets que ce soient, ils sont, les enjeux environnementaux et climatiques opèrent comme une opportunité encore faiblement exploité par les acteurs de la pensée optimiste. Nul doute que le lecteur se rend compte que ce livre témoigne de la façon dont des intellectuels africains du XXIe siècle portent le souci de l’environnement et du changement climatique et comment ils exploitent des pistes de réflexion critique pour un avenir adaptée et des réponses durables pour une Afrique moins émettrice de désempio et plus résiliente.


Pages : 164
e Portugal à son penseur, Eduardo Lourenço (né en 1923). Dans la grande diversité de son œuvre d’essayiste, il n’est s’est en somme consacré qu’à l’étude de son pays, dont il s’est fait le confronter avec le psychanalyste. Le quarantième anniversaire de la « Révolution des Œillets », coup d’État militaire qui, en avril 1974, a mis fin au régime dictatorial de Salazar, a incité deux chercheurs, Margarida Calafate Ribeiro (de l’Université de Coimbra) et Roberto Vecchi (de l’Université de Bologne) à rassembler, avec la collaboration de l’auteur, quelque vingt-cinq textes, dont tous ont trait à la relation profonde, complexe, ambiguë des Portugais avec le colonialisme. Le premier de ces écrits date de 1960, le dernier de 2000, le Note préliminaire, « 40 années de colonisation », Eduardo Lourenço en février 2014 : nous avons donc là plus d’un demi-siècle de réflexion sur ce que d’autres appelaient trop vite l’« idéologie coloniale mais que notre historien-philosophe, avec ses éditeurs, préfère, reprenant le titre d’un ouvrage précédent, designé comme l’« impensé » du Portugal.

Et à vrai dire, le colonialisme portugais, même à l’époque où il fleurissait dans les discours officiels, était moins un système raisonnable et durement appliqué (comme la plupart des colonialismes européens) qu’un « fantasme », une formation imaginaire, un rêve, devenu cauchemar à partir des années 60. Au-dessous ou en-deçà de cette politique gouvernementale plus ou moins consciente, il y avait la réalité vécue des centaines de milliers de Portugais enracinés depuis des générations – disons même depuis des siècles – à Timor, à Goa, au Mozambique, à S. Tomé et Principe, en Angola, en Guinée, pour ne rien dire du Brésil, devenu État indépendant dès 1822. Ainsi, l’« empire portugais » a de beaucoup précéder l’imperialisme, idéologie concomitante de l’expansion économique et coloniale de 1874 à 1974, le Portugal est encore une nation agricole et la mentalité de son peuple, celle de gens simples, proches et souvent analphabètes, encadrés par un clergé traditionnaliste et respectueux (sinon complice) de ses limites nationales actuelles qu’il a de toutes les faiblesses et les complexes qui ont fait du peuple portugais l’image, ou plus précisément la meilleure illustration de l’« impalpe », c’est-à-dire totalement invisible, de la capacité de ses concitoyens à prendre acte de la réalité de leur perte, tant la conscience nationale n’explique évidemment pas, à elle seule, l’objectivité du regard (clinique) que a porté, tout au long de ces décennies, sur sa patrie, sa langue et sa culture. Son temporellement intellectuel, sa formation universitaire, sa longue fréquentation des milieux culturels européens, allemands et surtout français, ses lectures assidues de Camus, de Sartre et de Freud, ses voyages, tout un très riche tissu de contacts et de circonstances ont aiguisé sa vision, et affermi son interprétation du « mal portugais », de ce mal national dont la célébre « saudade » ou mélancolie – est le symptôme le plus voyant.

De même qu’il arrive qu’un romaniste reste fidèle d’un bout à l’autre de sa production à un petit nombre de personnages, desquels il ne cesse d’approfondir l’étude psychologique et qui sont autant d’images de lui-même, Eduardo Lourenço, dont la curiosité est cependant universelle, s’est concentré, dans un mixte évident d’attraction-répulsion, sur l’âme lusitanienne, sur sa genèse et son destin. Il va sans dire que cette âme, il l’a trouvée d’abord en lui-même et qu’il l’a (presque) sufi d’auto-analyser pour mettre au jour les complexes qui ont fait du peuple portugais, à la fois, un naif et un menteur (ou, pour rappeler l’ambivalence chère à l’auteur, à la fois un Don Quichotte et un Sancho Pança. Âme partagée, âme double, hésitant selon les moments de son histoire en questionner l’ordre qui l’a illustré par l’épopée nationale que sont les Lusiades – 1572 – de Camões) et un excès d’humanité nationale tel qu’il y fait volontiers écho la chanson populaire. Le lecteur du recueil se plaira à suivre, au long de quarante ans de réflexion continue, les lignes de force d’une pensée intellectuellement hostile à la « mauvaise foi » (dans l’acception sartrienne du mot), au mensonge à soi-même. Si les éditeurs, après un très méritoire travail de dépouillement d’archives (à commencer par celles d’Eduardo Lourenço lui-même), ont, très naturellement, opté pour une présentation chronologique des textes, ils ont cependant voulu mettre en relief des phases distinctes de la pensée critique d’Eduardo Lourenço, phases déterminées par des dates significatives de l’histoire du Portugal contemporain.

La première, constituent un « seuil », évoque les « contours et images impériales » tels qu’ils se présentaient jusqu’en 1960, le Brésil, nation multiraciale, servant alors de « caution au colonialisme portugais ». C’est cependant fragile quant à une époque où l’Afrique du Sud n’est pas encore prête à renoncer à l’Apartheid dont la formule trouve de nombreux défenseurs dans les colonies portugaises. La deuxième période commence en 1960, année des indépendances dans l’Afrique dite francophone au bélgique d’aujourd’hui, premiers mouvements d’insurrection dans l’Empire portugais sont galvanisés par ce vent de liberté et, malgré un inévitable déclin de réalité, le régime de Salazar essaie de se maintenir en, de la métropole, des contingents de soldats de plus en plus nombreux. C’est au cours de ces années, qui vont de 1960 à 1974, que la « Critique de la mythologie coloniale », titre du chapitre 1, élabore un concept crucial en portugais (cependant fragile) « conscience nationale » à la réalité de la crise coloniale, dans des textes mordants restés inédits jusqu’à ce jour.


Après le deuil, l’héritage ou plutôt les « Héritages vivants », comme s’intitule le dernier ensemble de (neuf) textes. Comment le Portugal, entrant dans la communauté européenne, allait concevoir son identité maintenant qu’il était ramené aux dimensions exiguës de son territoire national ? Cinq cents ans après la découverte du Brésil, promis à devenir une super-puissance, est censé sur la langue portugaise que se reporte le rêve portugais d’universalité. C’est pourquoi il faut « célébrer le Brésil » et les grands pays africains luxophoniques. En rejoignant enfin l’Europe, nous ne sommes pas sortis de l’imaginaire ni de l’impensé : reste, proprement philosophique, d’une désincarnation complète de la pensée et de l’imaginaire hégémonique » (selon l’excellente formule de la préface). Tâche qui revient à l’Europe elle-même même qu’au Portugal. L’œuvre scientifique d’Eduardo Lourenço s’est attachée à cette désincarnation intellectuelle. Entreprise colossal de déconstruction dépassant les forces d’un penseur (« à coups de marteau ») longtemps resté isolé dans sa propre patrie ! L’opportune publication de ce recueil peut être entendue comme un appel à de nouveaux collaborateurs, au Portugal et en tout lieu.

Le Portugal et son impensé colonial
Cristiana Robalo Cordeiro
Mémoires d’une combattante de l’ALN : un devoir de mémoire

Khedjïda Mokeddem

Mémoires d’une combattante de l’ALN, Zone autonome d’Algérie
par Zohra Dríf

par Zohra Dríf

Sa naissance et sa famille


Son instruction et sa vie de lycéenne et d’universitaire


La défaite de la France à Diên-Biên Phu, la libération du Maroc, de la Tunisie et du Maghreb, enfin, l’illusion de la France invincible. Le massacre des indigènes de Skikda août 1957 ont également été un moteur dans son engagement patriotique.

Son passage à l’université était aussi un élément fondateur de cette identité nationale.


Conclusion

Le livre est émouvant et riche informations, Zohra Drif a réussi à communiquer son émotion au lecteur. On sent sa sincérité lorsqu’elle raconte la vie au quotidien de toutes celles et ceux qu’elle a côtoyé : les héroïnes et héroïnes, les habitants de la Casbah. Ce livre facile à lire se caractérise par un regard, à la fois, perspicace et impressionnant sur le passé. Une démarche qui a réussi à Zohra Drif de produire un roman biographique, avec des personnages vrais, vivants, mettant la dynamique sociale au cœur de l’histoire. L’œuvre jouit d’une valeur documentaire socio-historique sur une période précise de l’histoire, ce qui lui donne le mérite d’avoir sa place dans l’écriture de l’histoire de l’Algérie contemporaine.

Elles étaient au courant de tous les événements nationaux et internationaux. Ainsi, Zohra Drif a réussi à communiquer son émotion au lecteur. On sent sa sincérité lorsqu’elle raconte la vie au quotidien de toutes celles et ceux qu’elle a côtoyé : les Algériennes et des Algériens, contrairement à la propagande de la presse coloniale.


Son passage à l’université était aussi un élément fondateur de cette identité nationale.


Conclusion

Le livre est émouvant et riche informations, Zohra Drif a réussi à communiquer son émotion au lecteur. On sent sa sincérité lorsqu’elle raconte la vie au quotidien de toutes celles et ceux qu’elle a côtoyé : les héroïnes et héroïnes, les habitants de la Casbah. Ce livre facile à lire se caractérise par un regard, à la fois, perspicace et impressionnant sur le passé. Une démarche qui a réussi à Zohra Drif de produire un roman biographique, avec des personnages vrais, vivants, mettant la dynamique sociale au cœur de l’histoire. L’œuvre jouit d’une valeur documentaire socio-historique sur une période précise de l’histoire, ce qui lui donne le mérite d’avoir sa place dans l’écriture de l’histoire de l’Algérie contemporaine.
À

lain Mabanckou, jeune écrivain congolais, commence à être connu et reconnu dans le monde entier pour ses œuvres issues du terroir avec une portée universelle. Ce compte rendu porte sur son roman intitulé Lumières de Pointe-Noire, paru en janvier 2013, qui peut s’installer dans le second volet d’une trilogie inaugurée par Verre Cassé. Afin de mettre en scène la pertinence du roman Lumières de Pointe-Noire, nous avons pensé qu’il serait plus attrayant de le mettre en corrélation avec un autre texte appartenant au même auteur. Dans Mémoires du porc-épic, il est question de la symbolique des animaux qui anime fortement le second texte, dans le sens où, ils s’entremêlent dans la symbolique des valeurs humaines.

Dans le second texte, il s’agit d’une histoire singulière que va vivre, durant des années, un porc-épic, Kibandi qui, après un initiatique à l’âge de 10 ans, se dédouble d’une part, en son alter ego animal, un porc-épic, et d’autre part, en un autre lui-même, personnage semi-humain, Alain Mabanckou nous fait découvrir une Afrique mystérieuse, énigmatique, ironique et déroutante, avec des personnages insolites dont les aventures vont émerveiller le lecteur en haleine. Le personnage de ce roman est un porc-épic, tout d’abord parce qu’il apparaît dès le titre du roman : Mémoires de porc-épic. Ce récit met en avant un double néfaste qui, à la nuit tombée, réalise les pulsions maléfiques de l’homme qu’il hante. L’auteur a choisi le porc-épic, cette rondeur hérissée et répugnante généralement détestée par les humains. L’animal raconte comment il devient le “double nuisible” d’un jeune garçon de dix ans et met ses piquants au service semi-humain. Alain Mabanckou nous apporte lui-même, alter ego animal, un porc-épic, et d’autre part, un personnage nommé des années, un personnage nommé des valeurs humaines.

Le second volet d’une trilogie inaugurée par Verre Cassé figure déjà dans la dernière sélection du Renaudot et obtient plusieurs récompenses, dont le Prix RFO du roman. Après trois ans dans le Michigan, Alain Mabanckou rejoint en octobre la prestigieuse Université de Californie à Los Angeles (UCLA). Le lundi 6 novembre 2006, le prix Renaudot 2006 lui est attribué pour Double nuisible et devient le leitmotiv des personnages dans le sens où chaque partie renvoie à une dénomination de film. Au bout de ce voyage quelque peu labyrinthique, sa démarche devient plus clairvoyante dans la mesure où il comprend et intègre le fait que son pays, en qui vit, il n’est plus le sien, mais l’auteur demeure fidèle sur un plan mémorial et émotif.

Ce texte témoigne d’un fils égaré qui revient au Congo afin de (re)voir et de (re)convoquer les souvenirs, (re)trouver ses origines. Il est question de double nuisible qui, à la nuit tombée, réalise les pulsions maléfiques de l’homme qu’il hante. L’auteur a choisi le porc-épic, cette rondeur hérissée et répugnante généralement détestée par les humains. L’animal raconte comment il devient le “double nuisible” d’un jeune garçon de dix ans et met ses piquants au service semi-humain. Alain Mabanckou nous apporte lui-même, alter ego animal, un porc-épic, et d’autre part, un personnage nommé des années, un personnage nommé des valeurs humaines.

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Dans cette même lignée thématique, nous pensons que la trilogie a permis à Alain Mabanckou d’assister à la disparition de la langue française, dont le principal personnage, Berkane, revient en Algérie après cinquante ans d’absence et de vide. Il est dévoré par l’exil et tente de réactualiser sa mémoire. Le récit de Mabanckou convoque cette intense émotion, ce leitmotiv mémorial qui vient également en miroir de Demein j’aurai vingt ans, et accomplir un bel écho à l’œuvre de Danny La ferrière, L’Enigme du retour. Le lecteur examine la dimension spatiale et temporelle selon un dispositif cinématographique, dans le sens où chaque partie renvoie à une dénomination de film. Au bout de ce voyage quelque peu labyrinthique, sa démarche devient plus clairvoyante dans la mesure où il comprend et intègre le fait que son pays, en qui vit, il n’est plus le sien, mais l’auteur demeure fidèle sur un plan mémorial et émotif.

Notes

3. Écrivain, et scénariste canadien d’origine haïtienne, vivant au Québec.

Regional Economic Communities Exploring the Process of Socio-economic Integration in Africa

Akinpelu O. Olutayo and Adebusuyi I. Adeniran

This book examines how existence of overlapping regional-based institutions has presented a daunting challenge to the workings of various RECs on the African continent. Majority of the African countries are members of overlapping and, sometimes, contradictory RECs. For instance, in East Africa, while Kenya and Uganda are both members of EAC and COMESA, Tanzania, which is also a member of the EAC, left COMESA in 2001 to join SADC. In West Africa, while all former French colonies, such as Mali, Côte d’Ivoire, Togo and Benin Republic belong to the ECOWAS, they simultaneously keep membership of the UEMOA, though unrecognized by the African Union (AU). Such multiple and confusing memberships create unnecessary duplication and dins the light on what ought to be priority. Various chapters in this book have therefore sought to identify and profile solutions to related challenges confronting the workings of the RECs in different sub-regions of the African continent. The discussions range from security to the stock exchange, identity integration, development framework, labour movement and cross-border relations. The pattern adopted in the project engages devotion of related discussions from the general to the specific; that is, from the continental level to subregional case studies.


Pages : 148
Quelle place pour le sport dans l'identité africaine ?

Tayeb Rehail

Sports, identités culturelles et développement en Afrique noire francophone, la sociologie des jeux traditionnels et du sport moderne au Congo-Brazzaville.

Par Joseph Bouzoungoula,

Le sport moderne fut présenté comme vecteur de transmission des valeurs culturelles du colon qui exerçait une politique de domination et d’assimilation des indigènes en vue d’in térgrer dans la vie moderne ou occidentale. Dans ce cadre, la France a appliqué une politique d‘organisation du sport faite sur le plan international, le pays va acquise le 15 Août 1960, le Congo Brazzaville commence à adhérer aux organismes sportifs internationaux afin d‘exprimer sa souveraineté (identité, maturité,…). Commencent alors à paraître, à partir de 1960, des textes réglementaires sur l‘éducation physique et le sport. Pour son rayonnement florissant sur le plan international, le pays va imiter l‘organisation du sport fait pour un autre peuple, une autre culture, une autre économie, et butera sur des difficultés économiques importantes qui marqueront sa vie sociale et économique, laissant émerger la pratique du sport dans des installations toujours « archaïques » et insuffisantes.

Le sport s‘organise alors en fédérations et associations sportives (au nombre de vingt-trois en 2008).

Notes
2. Ibid.

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