

Reviews

African Renaissance: roadmaps to the challenge of globalization

by FANTU CHERU

London and New York: Zed Books, 2002. Pp. 253. £45.00; £14.95 (pbk.).

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Many academic investigations of African politics and economics consider the myriad problems attached to development issues. Yet few dare to outline comprehensive policy solutions. Therefore, Fantu Cheru's recent *African Renaissance: roadmaps to the challenge of globalization* is an interesting and provocative addition to the literature on African development because it takes on the ambitious task of identifying the local dimensions of global reform in Africa. Cheru's vision of an 'African renaissance' embodies a 'guided embrace of globalization with a commitment to resist' (p. xv). Thus, he pays particular attention to the role of national governments in reform, and sets out the broad contours of pre-emptive national and regional strategies. The great strength of the book lies with its nuanced analysis of the effectiveness of a wide range of prominent development approaches. Its only weakness is that in offering broad contours for reform, it risks falling into the trap of over-generalising about the continent.

African Renaissance seeks to ascertain the conditions under which state or market approaches to economic development offer a greater chance of success. Cheru's suggestions are courageous because, in attempting a synthesis, he leaves himself open to criticism from *both* pro- and anti-globalisation camps. His clear objective is to challenge African governments to address the multiple obstacles to economic development, which contribute to the current crisis. Chapters of the book detail these obstacles by explaining the need for governments to renew democracy, invest in education, revitalise agricultural production, reduce poverty, strengthen regional economic cooperation, manage urbanisation, and prevent conflicts. Cheru argues that governments can only take advantage of what opportunities the global economy offers *after* they have addressed these obstacles.

Cheru's nuanced analyses of the pros and cons of state- and market-led development strategies make the book well worth reading. However, his policy prescriptions leave open the question of how they should be achieved, as well as what priorities African states should set in achieving so many of them simultaneously. This question is undoubtedly difficult to answer since the solutions to some problems exacerbate others. For example, as states become more responsible and accountable to their citizens, policymakers become *less* insulated from civil society, and thus less able to make tough decisions about development economics. Cheru refers to the success of the developmental state in Asia. However, he does not consider that the Asian states entered the world economy under very specific historical and geo-strategic contexts; these states were not consistently democratic as industrialisation progressed through the region. Similarly, he argues that the leadership in each African country matters. It would have been interesting to

know specifically how African societies can develop effective leadership in the absence of democratic political institutions, and specifically how an African leader takes responsibility for his/her wrongdoings.

These problems with how to arrive at Cheru's prescriptions raise the broader issue of internal and external agency on the continent. Cheru's focus is on the internal dimension, and thus any suggestions for how outside actors should, or could, facilitate the process of an African renaissance may well extend beyond the scope of his investigation. However, if outside actors are even partially to blame for the problems, their actions will potentially contribute to, or hinder, the renaissance. Without considering questions connected to outside actors' agency, the book thus omits an important dimension to reform. For example, what role would transnational non-governmental organisations (NGOs) most effectively play in facilitating a renaissance? What role would members of the African diaspora most effectively play? Absent the requisite government activity Professor Cheru calls for, should NGOs, transnational corporations, and/or multilateral agencies *disengage*? Or engage local non-state actors to facilitate the process?

The fact that the book compels the reader to reconsider so many aspects of African economic development is testament to the significant progress it makes in taking on these issues to begin with. *African Renaissance* marks an important reference point for students of African economic development who aim to move beyond the debates of the 1980s and 1990s, and work to foster future new strategies.

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Refiguring the Archive edited by CAROLYN HAMILTON, VERNE HARRIS, JANE TAYLOR, MICHELE PICKOVER, GRAEME REID and RAZIA SALEH
Cape Town: David Philip, 2002. Pp. 368. US\$67.00.
DOI: 10.1017/S0022278X04224442

This impressive collection of articles is the result of a project hosted by the University of the Witwatersrand together with a number of South African archival institutions. This project was an attempt to address the concerns of historical researchers and archival practitioners. At the same time though, scholars also tried to grapple with the idea that archives are more than just physical records. This means that the eighteen chapters of this book contain straightforward articles, dealing with concrete archival material, as well as philosophical papers addressing concepts like social memory, the production of knowledge or public history. The overall idea is to try to understand how material – or knowledge – is preserved, why certain material is included or excluded, what kind of power relations are involved, and how all this develops over time.

When reading this book, the main feature that stands out is its diversity and the comprehensive way in which the concept of the archive is dealt with. Broadly speaking, the essays are collected around three themes: the first five chapters are rather general and theoretical, next there are some chapters on the making of the archive, and finally the term archive is expanded as also comprising literature, art or even DNA. Also within these three themes though, there is a great deal of variety, in such a way that not only the concept of the archive is discussed, but that the reader also gets some insight into many historical, social and cultural

aspects of South Africa and beyond. The fact that the contributors are mainly South Africans and that most of the illustrations are taken from South Africa adds to the symbolic value of the book. Since the end of apartheid, reconstruction of the historical archive has been a key question in this country, amongst others through the work of the TRC. Therefore, South Africa is an ideal country to illustrate the significance of an archive *vis-à-vis* the past, the present and the future.

Not only is the level of the scholarly essays high, but the layout of the book also deserves admiration. Most of the articles are supplemented with text fragments or pictures, and there is an interesting stylistic mix of genres – besides regular articles, also interviews, spoken lectures and testimonies are used as discursive styles.

In sum, *Refiguring the Archive* is an impressive piece of work, which addresses social and historical questions that have a global relevance. Because of its formal and thematic diversity it is open to a wide audience, giving academic information in an accessible way.

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Religion and Conflict in Sudan by YUSUF FADL HASAN and RICHARD GRAY
Nairobi: Paulines, Faith in Sudan Series, 2002. Pp. 208. US\$10.00 (pbk.).
DOI: 10.1017/S0022278X04234449

The role of religion in domestic and international conflicts, its potential to divide as well as to unify, gets more and more visible, at least as mobilising force for good or ill. Sudan holds a prime position on such a blacklist. The mutual interplay between the three local religious traditions with political strife, has been the most immediate and commonly accepted explanation of the conflict that has shattered the country since independence, periodically threatening to destroy it. The question here is whether this is the result of religion in itself or fanaticism and fundamentalism?

The editors of this volume have collected papers from a conference at Yale University in May 1999. They are perfectly aware that the conflict in Sudan concerns many types of power – military, economic, social, etc. – and involves many cleavages and grievances. Religion has been used to promote goals that are non-religious. However, attention is deliberately focused on the religious and ideological components. The panel of contributors offers a comprehensive analysis because they are heterogeneous enough in terms of values, methodology and disciplines.

The combination of the Sudan's history of indigenous rituals, Christianity and Islam, and their impacts on institutions and social fabric, is well known. One of the outcomes of the widespread adoption of Islam was the emergence of the new identity of an Arabised and Islamised Sudanese: being a Muslim meant becoming an Arab, even among those who hardly spoke Arabic. On the other hand, the marginality of Sudan amongst Arab nations and in the Muslim world was a possible cause of the success of an extreme Islam. The way was paved for Mahdism, which was at the same time a religious revival and a political revolution (for many Sudanese al-Mahdi is the Father of Independence). This was the starting point for the ambiguities and contradictions in the construction of Sudanese nationalism, including reformist zeal and ideas of modernisation.

The paper by Yusuf Fadl Hasan, the first and the most committed of the thirteen chapters of the book, argues that the antagonism is not between North and South, or Islam and Christianity, but between fundamentalists (mainly Islamists) from one side, and secularists from the other side, whatever their religious beliefs. The colonial administration bears a heavy responsibility because it did not prepare for the transition in time. The Southern Policy, aimed at separating the South from the North, as a first stage of the integration of the South into Uganda, was doomed and had a long-term negative impact. The idea of a unified state was endorsed only a few years before independence. The collection studies the almost fifty-year war, interrupted by some elusive peace agreements, from various perspectives (model of state, exercise of power, law and jurisdiction, human rights) by the different authors (many of them academics). It would be unfair to try to summarise the narrative and interpretations of all of them in a short review. In general the papers are updated to the last turning point in the current regime with the split between al-Bashir, the strong man of the coup which took power in 1989, and Turabi, the representative of the Islamist movement that supported the military.

The Catholic pattern of the publishers and the logo of the series in which the volume was included does not indicate a bias. The arguments presented are free, stimulating, and to some extent, happily unorthodox. A clear positive prejudice is the desire for peace and reconciliation. The last chapter, by Lilian Craig Harris, sketches the guidelines for facilitating a peace dialogue. One can lament, nevertheless, as Richard Gray acknowledges in the epilogue, the lack of a paper from someone capable of representing the perspective of the Islamist movement. At the same time, the Nuba peoples, many of whom feel themselves to be Muslims or Christians, and who are endowed with a strong ancestral culture of humane tolerance, appear a bit neglected in comparison with the pastoralist world of the Nuer and Dinka.

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Politics in South Africa: from Mandela to Mbeki by TOM LODGE

Cape Town: David Philip, 2002. Pp. 314. £19.95 (pbk.).

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Despite the title, this is not a textbook on the politics of post-apartheid South Africa. Rather it is a series of brilliant, reflective essays on different aspects of the country's new dispensation. Thus, there is no coverage of either the 1994 or 1999 general elections, but there is a chapter on the municipal elections of 2000, which is preceded by a chapter outlining the context of local government reform in which the elections took place. This approach reduces the value of the book to anyone approaching South African politics *de novo*, even though there is much that an intelligent reader new to the subject would glean from this volume, provided he or she recognises the need to fill in gaps from other books. However, its great merit is that it allows its distinguished author to examine some neglected aspects of politics in South Africa in considerable depth, making it essential reading for anyone wanting to focus on the politics of South Africa beyond the miracle of the country's transition to democracy. The opening chapter of the

book discusses the iconic status of Nelson Mandela within the new democracy; the closing chapter analyses the Mbeki presidency.

The former underscores the importance of Mandela's cult in legitimising the new dispensation. The latter includes a discussion of Mbeki's main failing, his reluctance to face up to the scale or causes of South Africa's AIDS epidemic and his embrace of the views of dissident scientists such as Peter Duesberg who have contended, for example, that AIDS has been caused by anti-retroviral drugs. More disturbing than Mbeki's conversion to such eccentric views is the overwhelming impact of his attitudes on the government's approach to the issue, despite the weight of expert opinion to the contrary and the growing death toll from the disease. Yet the capacity of determined heads of government to follow a course of action contrary to the evidence provided to them by expert opinion is not a uniquely South African or even Third World problem, as the war against Iraq illustrates. But what Lodge is unable fully to explain is why Mbeki, who in every other area of policy has proved to be an intelligent pragmatist, should have, seemingly quite suddenly, succumbed to the view that there is no necessary link between HIV and AIDS.

Other themes tackled by Lodge include the question of who really rules South Africa, regional government, delivery through the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), land reform, the implications of the political dominance of the African National Congress (ANC), corruption, civic movements, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and the notion of an African renaissance. On each of the themes, Lodge presents considerable factual detail before arriving at a summation. When he expresses his own opinions, he is often incisive. Thus, he is quite clear that the answer to the question of who governs South Africa is the ANC, but argues that the interests it represents are amorphous so that 'no social group holds undisputed power' (p. 31). He is forthright on the value of regional government, despite its weaknesses. An obvious gap in the book is that Lodge has little to say about South Africa's relations with the rest of the world, except rather tangentially in the chapter on the African renaissance. In this context, he overlooks a significant limitation in the working of the TRC, its unwillingness to delve into the issue of support for apartheid by Western governments. But what is of far greater importance than any gaps in his analysis is just how well Lodge is able to convey a sense of how South Africa is governed today at different levels, in the context of continuing inequalities and the tensions that arise therefrom.

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Ethiopia: the challenge of democracy from below edited by BAHRU ZEWDE and SIEGFRIED PAUSEWANG

Stockholm: Elanders Gotab, 2002. Pp. 216. £16.95/US\$27.95 (pbk.).

DOI: 10.1017/S0022278X04254441

This book is a collaboration between the Chr. Michelsen Institute for Development and Human Rights in Bergen (Norway) and The Forum for Social Studies (an independent policy research institution in Ethiopia established in 1998); and it has produced a very welcome work on the political and economic situations in Ethiopia. The studies, based on field research, offer a lot of information

about current situation in the country. The book is arranged in four parts and presents several research articles by different authors. The studies in the book reveal the peoples' quest for democratic participation, which the political leadership muzzles.

Ethiopia is one of the least economically developed countries in the world, and suffers from droughts and insurgencies. Despite involvement by NGOs and International Financial Institutions, one finds few promising signs of either political or economic development. Human rights abuses and exclusion of the peasants from participation in policies and decision-making that affect their lives are ever worrying factors. The avenue for democracy has been progressively narrowed down as civil organisations lack necessary freedom and autonomy to function, and remain controlled by the Ethiopian government, as well as donor governments. This argument is presented in Part II of this book (which concentrates on government–peasantry relationship in policy implementation) and in Part III (which reflects on the status of civil societies, NGOs, and decentralisation).

The studies in Part I, save the chapter by Aadland, reveal that it is the government and not the people that lack readiness for democracy. They indicate that unlike the dictatorial government system, the traditional systems of ethnic groups in Ethiopia represent impressive participatory democracies with the only weakness pertaining to the exclusion of women and artisan groups in public decision-making. The studies in Part I emphasise, on the one hand, the importance of taking into account these traditional systems for building democracy in Ethiopia and, on the other hand, the resilience of the traditional systems to external pressures. For example, the *seera* traditions owe their survival to bad governance and lack of the rule of law (cf., pp. 25–6, 69–70), for in the absence of the latter and good governance, they have offered avenues to breathe, alternatives for participation and assuring justice. The studies in Part IV highlight the importance of giving equal place to the voices from below, if a genuine democratic development of Ethiopia is to emerge. The collection indicates that some among diplomatic circles continue to propagate the idea that Ethiopia is not ready for democracy, and with this they tend to turn a blind eye towards serious human rights abuses and the growing tendency of the government towards highly centralised authoritarianism, if not totalitarianism.

One area of weakness in the book is the conclusion to Aadland's study of the Sidaama tradition of *seera* in Part I, which is affected by either misinformation or misunderstanding. He identifies the concept of *halaale* (truth-justice) of the Sidaama with *seera*, which has three meanings for the Sidaama: a self-help organisation with its own agreed rules, rights and duties; a set of rules to be respected (procedural rules in court, in dialogue and discussion); and injunctions or fines imposed on those who transgress the communally agreed rules and procedures. This misunderstanding leads to the conclusion that the Sidaama tradition offers a difficult context for developing a genuine democracy (see pp. 30, 42). Moreover, the Sidaama artisan groups do participate fully in public deliberations (*pace* Aadland) except in rituals and intermarriage. His continuous emphasis on the Sidaama world-view as 'mythic' also begs explanation.

Apart from the mentioned discrepancy, and although the book needs further editing to clear up some imprecision, grammatical and orthographic errors (e.g., F. Azeze's article [see joke 1, 6, and couplet 11 where the Amharic version of the

couplet is out of place]), it is highly informative and recommended for academics, policy-makers, politicians, diplomats and developmentalists.

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Security and Politics in South Africa: the regional dimension by PETER VALE

Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2003. Pp. 251. US\$53.00/£43.50.

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As the tenth anniversary of the South African ‘miracle’ approaches, this book is a stark reminder of the transition’s broken promises and lost opportunities. For all the celebrations that accompanied the end of apartheid, Peter Vale contends that very little has changed in the field of security in southern Africa. According to Vale, this is primarily because the region’s security narratives have remained trapped within a realist, state-centric paradigm, which privileges the security of states rather than of people. Drawing on critical theory, Vale aims to reveal the constructed character of these narratives and through this interrogation, point to new, alternative forms of security and community in southern Africa.

Vale’s starting point is the observation that the state in southern Africa is a Western, colonial imposition, entirely ‘inappropriate to the needs of the region’s people’ (p. 17). After providing a brief overview of the aims of critical theory as applied in the book, chapter 2 accordingly turns to the formation of states in southern Africa, noting that this was not a process of natural ordering. By implication, it is possible to conceive of other ways of organising the region, but Vale argues that the practice of state sovereignty has systematically undermined the more open frontiers and communities associated with pre-modern Africa.

Chapter 3 explores the continuities of South Africa’s security discourses, and argues that security continues to be pursued via military strategies of deterrence and force for national ends (p. 81). The resilience of state-centric security practices is explained partly by reference to South Africa’s ‘closed epistemic communities’ (p. 53), and a recurring theme in the book is the complicity – and responsibility – of intellectuals in the country’s policy choices. Epistemic communities, spear-headed by think-tanks like the Institute for Security Studies, are seen by Vale to have monopolised knowledge on security and thus to have ensured the continuation of the status quo (pp. 111–12). The results are seen for example in South Africa’s armed intervention in Lesotho in 1998 (discussed in chapter 5), regarded by Vale as an example of the endemic violence of a system of sovereign states (p. 108). Another expression of the deficiencies of state-centric security surfaces in South Africa’s approach to migration, which continues to be seen as a threat to national security (chapter 4). Vale’s characterisation of migration policy as a form of neo-apartheid is incisive and an instructive illustration of the exclusionary practices that follow from state-centric security.

The remaining two chapters of the book are dedicated to exploring possibilities for alternative conceptions of security and community in the region. Stating that ‘southern Africans believe that the state system no longer offers solutions to their everyday problems’ (p. 135), Vale gives examples of communities that have formed across boundaries, including Christian churches and cultures of popular

music (pp. 153–5). For Vale, these are communities still to be imagined, and his vision is of a region of people, not states, and the emancipatory potential of community is to be found in new ways of remembering the region's hidden past (p. 158). These two chapters are interesting, but somewhat brief on the extent to which these communities can become *political* communities, the extent to which they contain their own forms of exclusionary practices (a main reason for criticising states), and how these communities are to interact, if at all, with states. All in all, however, this is a challenging and interesting contribution to the literature on security in southern Africa, which succeeds in broadening the debate about the region's possible futures.

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